

WHITEWASHING *SOUTHERN LIVING*:  
THE SOCIOCULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 1966 MAGAZINE LAUNCH  
IN BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

---

A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Graduate School  
At the University of Missouri

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

---

By  
SUMMER HILL VINSON  
Dr. Earnest L. Perry, Jr., Dissertation Supervisor

MAY 2011



The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the  
dissertation entitled

WHITEWASHING *SOUTHERN LIVING*:  
THE SOCIOCULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 1966 MAGAZINE LAUNCH  
IN BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

Presented by Summer Hill Vinson,

A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

And hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

---

Professor Mark M. Carroll

---

Professor Berkley Hudson

---

Professor Earnest L. Perry, Jr.

---

Professor Yong Volz

---

Professor Robert E. Weems, Jr.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation would not have been possible without support from my family,  
who ensured I had time to write.

My parents, David G. Hill and Maryann Trevillion Hill, are born educators, believing that learning never ceases. They are also Mississippians who are unafraid of addressing the most difficult questions, and I am fortunate they shared them with me.

This dissertation is for them.

This dissertation is also for my husband, JP, who patiently listened to every detail of it from beginning to end. We have already walked many difficult roads together.

Thank you for your endless support and love.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my son, Jacob. My tiny child, I look forward to a lifetime of surprises with you. When you are old enough to read this dissertation, know this: you were the sweetest of distractions during this process, a reminder that life waits

for no one. I hope you will remember Dr. James Silver's wisdom:

"The strongest preservative of the closed society is the closed mind."

I love you beyond measure.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research began at the University of Mississippi, where I found a home in the journalism department among many fine professors and instructors. Dr. Samir Husni, Mr. Magazine, so adores magazines that his enthusiasm is contagious. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture fostered my interest in southern history, politics, and literature. It was in a Southern Studies class that a professor first asked me about the southerner in *Southern Living*. I am especially appreciative of Dr. Kathryn McKee, whose guidance extended beyond the classroom.

Many kind and knowledgeable people aided me in my research at the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, Texas A&M University, and Southern Progress. I am especially indebted to Lauri Self, the former librarian at Southern Progress. The staff at the Missouri School of Journalism's library spent hours upon hours aiding me in my research, and I will miss their expertise.

The University of Missouri's history department challenged me in ways I never anticipated, for which I am grateful. The Missouri School of Journalism has unlimited potential in the number of brilliant people associated with it, and I am honored to have been a small part of it.

My dissertation advisor, Dr. Earnest L. Perry, Jr., has been a guide to the many mysteries of the doctoral education, and I appreciate all the wisdom he has imparted. My sincerest thanks also to my committee members: Dr. Mark M. Carroll, Dr. Berkley Hudson, Dr. Yong Volz, and Dr. Robert E. Weems, Jr. They have all graciously invested their time and energy toward my academic growth.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	v
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. CHAPTER ONE.....	16
A Precursor to the 1960s.....	24
Race in the American South.....	27
“Bombingham” .....	33
3. CHAPTER TWO.....	44
The Men Behind the Launch.....	46
Diversification Plans.....	52
Convincing the Board.....	56
The Time Is Now.....	66
4. CHAPTER THREE.....	70
Nunn’s Loyalty to Farming.....	72
The Archaic Structure of Progressive Farmer Company.....	78
What is <i>Southern</i> ? .....	81
Researching the Audience.....	91
Putting on the Brakes.....	96
5. CHAPTER FOUR.....	100
Targeting the Audience.....	104
Streamlining the Editorial Concept.....	107

Outside Advice.....	115
Publicizing the Launch.....	121
6. CHAPTER FIVE.....	128
Travel Promotion.....	132
Economic Boosterism.....	137
Regional History.....	142
Defining Southerners.....	148
Shifting Content, Steady Message.....	157
7. CHAPTER SIX.....	161
Refining the Editorial Content.....	163
The Response to <i>Southern Living</i> .....	168
Changes at Progressive Farmer Company.....	185
8. CONCLUSION.....	193
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	205
VITA.....	215

WHITEWASHING *SOUTHERN LIVING*:  
THE SOCIOCULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 1966 MAGAZINE LAUNCH  
IN BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

Summer Hill Vinson

Dr. Earnest L. Perry, Jr., Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine Progressive Farmer Company's 1966 launch of *Southern Living* magazine in Birmingham, Alabama, in its sociocultural context. The publisher of *Progressive Farmer*, the largest magazine in the South, launched *Southern Living* when Birmingham was at the epicenter of the civil rights movement. The primary research question was: How did *Southern Living* magazine reflect or reject its sociocultural environment? This study examined more than one thousand archival documents and reviewed *Southern Living* magazine's first four years of content. It found that *Southern Living* was the result of extensive preparation to target a new audience of affluent urban and suburban southerners. Struggles between company leaders at Progressive Farmer Company over *Southern Living*'s content mirrored tension between white southerners in the region. Overall, the magazine was a rejection of the significant societal change in the region. It represented a way to reconfigure white southern identity in a nostalgic way that allowed readers to escape the tension of the 1960s, but it also negated the place of African Americans in southern culture. This research extends scholarship on the role of magazines in American culture, contributes to the understanding of Birmingham, Alabama, during the civil rights movement, and is the definitive history of *Southern Living* magazine's launch.



## INTRODUCTION

Since January 2007, more than 200 employees have lost their jobs at the Southern Progress Company headquarters in Birmingham, Alabama.<sup>1</sup> The media landscape has undergone an earthquake of change in recent years, from mergers and sell-offs to a myriad of demands on audience attention and advertising revenue. This change has not spared the magazine industry, which is experiencing its own identity crisis. The revenue triangle of advertisers supplementing the cost of publication in exchange for access to a niche audience is no longer necessarily sustainable.

*Southern Living* was one of a trend of niche magazines during the 1960s. Progressive Farmer Company (now renamed Southern Progress) launched it in 1966 to reach prosperous southerners moving off the farm and into cities. It recognized a hole in both advertising and editorial content that targeted the American South, and it formulated the magazine to fill that gap. A small group of men planned the launch, and they also shaped *Southern Living* in their image—the magazine was their representation of southern identity, made for southerners by southerners. The launch was successful nearly from the start, as its founders navigated the potential pitfalls of behind the scenes dissention and disagreement about what the magazine should represent. In the end, the individuals who pressed for a cheerful depiction of the good life prevailed, and within a matter of months, *Southern Living* was profitable. When in 1985, nineteen years after the magazine launch, Time Inc. bought *Southern Living* and its parent company, it paid more

---

<sup>1</sup> Jimmy DeButts, “Southern Progress Cuts More Jobs as Advertising Revenue Slips,” *Birmingham Business Journal*, 12 November 2009, available from <http://birmingham.bizjournals.com/birmingham/stories/2009/11/09/daily31.html>.

money for them than any other magazine company in the United States had ever received in a buyout.

Now, more than two decades later, the magnificent stone-and-steel Southern Progress headquarters still stands. It was designed to highlight the natural beauty of the foothills of the Appalachians just southeast of Birmingham, but the building is a reminder of better times. *Southern Living* was once a prized possession to a media empire; now its future is less certain. The weak economy has compounded pressure on traditional media companies. Perhaps as a sign of the things to come, in January 2007 Time Inc. sold *Progressive Farmer*, the magazine that started it all, and now a small staff publishes it just a mile down the road from *Southern Living*.<sup>2</sup> One of the reasons for the sale was that Time Inc. had a number of “niche brands” that did not fit into the company’s plans for the future.<sup>3</sup>

The story of *Southern Living* magazine’s launch is about magazine specialization in the United States during the 1960s, a time when the future of magazines was anything but secure and when understanding audience wants and needs proved particularly necessary to survive the changes. It is also about the Butler family whose lives intertwined with Progressive Farmer Company, specifically Eugene Butler who helped turn a family business into a publishing powerhouse. Finally, this story is about white southerners clinging to an idyllic identity and a tenuous status quo during the turbulent

---

<sup>2</sup> Jimmy DeButts, “*Progressive Farmer* Parent Sold for \$445M,” *Birmingham Business Journal*, 19 September 2008, available from <http://birmingham.bizjournals.com/birmingham/stories/2008/09/22/story9.html>.

<sup>3</sup> “*Progressive Farmer Magazine Sold*,” *LA Times*, 3 January 2007, available from <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/jan/03/entertainment/et-magazine3>.

years of the civil rights movement. The story of *Southern Living* magazine's launch has yet to be chronicled in its entirety.

This dissertation has one overarching question: How did *Southern Living* magazine reflect or reject its sociocultural environment? In exploring that question, this research seeks to answer the following questions: Who were the Progressive Farmer Company employees responsible for the launch of *Southern Living*, and how did they implement it? Why did Progressive Farmer Company create a new magazine? What themes were present in *Southern Living*'s first four years of content?

This research contributes to the scholarship on Birmingham, Alabama, during the civil rights movement and extends the research on magazines during the rise of specialized publications in the 1950s and 1960s. It investigates the dynamics of the decision-making process that culminated in Progressive Farmer Company's launch of *Southern Living*, and it presents a thorough examination of *Southern Living* magazine's early content, identifying themes and exploring how those themes corresponded to the social environment surrounding the magazine.

*Southern Living*'s relationship to the time and place of its birth has received little scholarly attention. In fact, magazines as a medium have been understudied. David Abrahamson has identified magazines as being areas of weakness in historical research, particularly compared to other media. Academic scholarship has overlooked them as

being a medium for entertainment, but as products and representatives of culture, they deserve more research that explores their relationship with society.<sup>4</sup>

Magazines have a unique connection to their audience “as the most dialogic of all media.”<sup>5</sup> As a medium, magazines must create a dialogue with readers and build a community among them. Magazines only thrive because of the communities they form with their audiences, and overlooking that relationship misses an opportunity to investigate the larger needs and wants of that community. It is not what *Southern Living* said in just one month or even two; it is its reinforcing of ideals month after month, reflecting back at readers what they desired to see and influencing cultural ideals in the process. Diane Mossholder argued in her thesis that magazines, in their “fostering a sense of community,” aid in the preservation of that community, and they provide a target reality to which readers can aspire—the best vacation, the tastiest dessert, or the loveliest flower garden.<sup>6</sup> A magazine like *Southern Living* had the ability to form an ideal for its audience, in this case affluent white southerners wishing to solidify their identity as unique and special.

How does a magazine create a sense of community among a diverse readership extending from Missouri to Florida and Delaware to Texas? For her master’s thesis, Megan Norris Jones considered what *southern* meant to the magazine’s editorial staff in interviews she conducted in 2005 and 2006. She determined that the editors’ conception

---

<sup>4</sup> David Abrahamson, *The American Magazine: Research Perspectives and Prospects* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa St. University Press, 1995) xix; David Abrahamson, *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Postwar Periodical* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press Inc., 1996), 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Carolyn Kitch, *Pages from the Past: History and Memory in American Magazines* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2005), 9-11. See also: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised Edition* (New York: Verso, 1983, 2006), 46.

<sup>6</sup> Diane Mossholder, “Patterns of Success: Three Regional Magazines,” (Master’s thesis, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1994), 100.

of southern identity was two-pronged: it meant both the geographic region widely considered to be the American South and a “conveyed sense of comfort” through familiar “food, people, places, and even plants.” She also argued that the magazine’s vision of southern identity originated with readers, whom editors strove to please with content that readers would recognize as authentic.<sup>7</sup> Identity is an amorphous entity, grounded both in half-truths and total fiction, and magazines that present a regional identity must define it in a way that resonates with readers, even if that means sustaining stereotypes.

Katherine Fry’s dissertation “Regional Consumer Magazines and the Ideal White Reader” focused on publications that represented the Midwest, the South, and the West. She contended that the commodification of regional culture, or the selling of products that target a regional identity, largely excludes minorities and reinforces stereotypes.<sup>8</sup> She also emphasized the fluidity of geographic identity; its basis often relies on a collective memory, or the joint remembrance of a group of people, that may shift and change.<sup>9</sup>

Historian James Cobb explained that the whitewashing of history in *Southern Living* occurred in the aftermath of the civil rights movement, when white southerners scrambled to find an identity that was unique but unrelated to racism: “For many of them that search seemed to begin at the very end of the civil rights era with the cleverly commodified vision of Southernness as it appeared in the comforting and aesthetically

---

<sup>7</sup> Megan Norris Jones, “Defining the Southern in *Southern Living*” (Master’s thesis, University of Missouri, 2009), 86-87.

<sup>8</sup> Katherine Fry, “Regional Consumer Magazines and the Ideal White Reader: Constructing and Retaining Geography as Text,” in *The American Magazine: Research Perspectives and Prospects*, ed. David Abrahamson, (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995), 186-204.

<sup>9</sup> Katherine Fry, *Old South, Agrarian Midwest, and Frontier West: Discourses of Repression and Consumption in Southern Living, Midwest Living, and Sunset Magazine* (Ph.D diss., Temple University, 1994), 9.

pleasing pages of *Southern Living* magazine.”<sup>10</sup> He argued that it was no accident that a magazine for white southerners launched in the later years of the civil rights movement, but even while he broadly discussed the magazine’s content, he provided few examples of it. His focus was less about the actual pages of *Southern Living* and more about the mentality it represented.

Journalist Diane Roberts wrote that *Southern Living* has provided proof for white southerners that their region “*is distinct, is special, perhaps even chosen*” and in a good way. Between its glossy pages, it has offered respite from a world that might have chided the South for being stuck in the past or distinct in its backwardness. *Southern Living* said just the opposite, that the South was unique, maybe even eccentric, in so many positive ways.<sup>11</sup> That “mirage” hid so much pain, as American Studies professor Allen Tullos explained in his 1979 article “Azalea Death Trip”: “Not only are the historically rich folkways given an eye-catching or sentimental treatment which ultimately trivializes them, but sanction is given to a way of looking at life which eliminates its unpleasant tragic realities, its historical burdens and its future obligations.” By looking the other way, the magazine endorsed a lifestyle that romanticized reality and let white southerners off the hook for their role in the events taking place around them.<sup>12</sup>

In her article “Consuming Southern Landscapes” published in 1998, Susanne Dietzel primarily focused on the glamorizing of landscapes in *Better Homes and Gardens*

---

<sup>10</sup> James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 223.

<sup>11</sup> Diane Roberts, “Living Southern in *Southern Living*,” in *Dixie Debates: Perspectives on Southern Cultures*, Eds. Richard H. King and Helen Taylor (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 96.

<sup>12</sup> Allen Tullos, “Azalea Death Trip: A Journey Through the Land of Southern Living,” *Southern Changes*, 1, no. 10 (1979), 32, available from [http://beck.library.emory.edu/southernchanges/article.php?id=sc01-10\\_005](http://beck.library.emory.edu/southernchanges/article.php?id=sc01-10_005).

and *Southern Living* magazines, as well as, oddly, a catalogue called *Tweeds*. Through her admittedly “cursory” review of their content, she concluded that whether or not magazine content actually represented reality, it certainly “shap[ed] Americans’ conceptions of the region,” and she asserted that the conception was detrimental. Southern landscapes that focus on the gardens of the wealthy and highlight an upscale lifestyle hide “the South of poverty, backwardness, and conservatism.”<sup>13</sup> Dietzel argued cogently that *Southern Living* and publications like it romanticize a perception of southern identity to not only magazine readers but also to people living outside the region, giving them the notion that an ideal even exists.

John White, author of the 1994 article “*Southern Living* Reconsidered,” defended the magazine against criticism from historians and cultural scholars. He argued that it began to shift its whites-only image in the early 1990s by featuring a few African Americans and acknowledging civil rights museums as tourist destinations. He linked some of this shift to the tenure of then-editor John Alex Floyd Jr.; yet, the rhetorical vision of the magazine has remained foggy. White quoted Floyd as saying in a January 1992 issue of the magazine: “Only in the South do you find a magazine like *Southern Living* and loyal readers like yourselves.”<sup>14</sup> Why is *Southern Living* only possible in the South, and what makes it so unique? This sort of reassurance of the importance of southern identity is characteristic of *Southern Living*, and John White overlooked the obvious in staving off critics. *Southern Living* is fantastically successful at exuding

---

<sup>13</sup> Susanne B. Dietzel, “Consuming Southern Landscapes: Visual Representations of the American South.” *The Southern Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1998), 39-40.

<sup>14</sup> John White, “Safe to Have on Your Coffee Table: *Southern Living* Reconsidered,” *Alabama Review*, 47 (July 1994), 208.

regional pride, and it has moved toward consciously including a token few minorities in its pages; however, it is its image throughout its history that provides a rich landscape for understanding those who created and published the magazine and those who hung on its every word.

A few manuscripts address *Southern Living*'s entry into the marketplace. In 2000 John Logue and Gary McCalla wrote a memoir about their time as company employees and ultimately editors of *Southern Living*. They provided fascinating details about the inner-workings of the company, but as employees and friends of many of the key individuals involved, Logue and McCalla's version of events must be understood within that context. They did not use footnotes, references, or a bibliography to make any of their research verifiable; thus, their book is useful only within the confines of a memoir.

The most significant research on *Southern Living* is Tracy Lauder's 2004 dissertation, which focused on the magazine's launch: how Progressive Farmer Company organized it, the editorial niche, and the rhetoric the magazine espoused. Lauder, a former *Southern Living* employee, argued that magazine editors reinforced the social status quo, underscoring "class structures, intensify[ing] racial divides, and limit[ing] roles for women."<sup>15</sup> In 2007 she published an article based on her dissertation research that echoed those findings.<sup>16</sup>

Lauder suggested that the magazine was simply making a wise business decision when it targeted frustrated southerners: "Other magazines during that time were doing

---

<sup>15</sup> Tracy Lauder, "The Birth of *Southern Living* in the 1960s," (Ph.D. diss., University of Alabama: 2004), 191.

<sup>16</sup> Tracy Lauder, "The *Southern Living* Solution: How the Progressive Farmer Launched a Magazine and a Legacy" *Alabama Review* 60, no. 3 (July 2007): 186-221.



much of the same thing—providing editorial material that reflected what readers wanted, which rarely included advocacy articles.”<sup>17</sup> In fact, the magazine industry as a whole at this time was transitioning from a mass circulation model to a diversified system where publications with smaller circulations delivered specific audiences to advertisers, who in turn supplemented newsstand and subscription sales.<sup>18</sup> As a niche publication, *Southern Living* did need to please its specific readership in order to succeed.

While Lauder provided great insight into the magazine’s inception, there is room to extend the research. Lauder reviewed *Southern Living*’s content—letters from the editor, personality profile features, and the “Singular Southerners” department—but her research only examined a small amount of the magazine. My dissertation explores magazine issues as comprehensive packages of editorial and advertising content in an attempt to view the denouement of Progressive Farmer Company’s planning as readers might have seen it. I consider all the magazine content to identify themes present and to probe how those themes related to the social environment surrounding *Southern Living*. Lauder focused more of her effort on the rhetorical vision of the magazine and its portrayal of women and minorities. My research searches for a deeper understanding of *Southern Living*’s relationship to the social history of Birmingham, specifically the mindset of white southerners in that time and place. Finally, Lauder’s approach explored *Southern Living*’s launch as an organizational one; my research is more focused on what the archival documents show about the individuals involved in the decision-making

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>18</sup> John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America 1741-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 246.

process. Though Lauder incorporated archival material from *Southern Progress*, I also expand the archival search into material available in both Mississippi and Texas.

While others have argued soundly that *Southern Living* stereotyped regional identity, excluded African Americans, and confined women to the home, its founders most likely never intended to do more than reach out to discontented southerners. They ignored outside advice on how they would structure the magazine and what content they would provide, and they made the magazine in their image, what they believed southerners like themselves would want. Of course they portrayed women within the realm of the home, because in their world most men worked outside the home, while women worked within it. *Southern Living*'s founders overlooked African Americans because they did not view them as part of their community or their audience. Furthermore, engaging in debates about race would only stir up the same sort of trouble that had imploded Birmingham in the 1960s.

These men had every right to create a magazine that represented southern life as it fit their ideals. They had a specific viewpoint, and they deliberately structured their magazine around it. They were reaching out to all the families like themselves who had left the farm within the last generation or two but still cared deeply about their homeplaces. These men recognized the changes around them, and their magazine was phenomenally successful because its tone was authentic. They knew their audience because they were their audience. They too felt the embarrassment, frustration, and fear of many white southerners across the region in response to the violence, racial demonstrations, and massive change that was occurring in the 1950s and 1960s. Their ingenuity was in producing a lifestyle publication that targeted discontented white

southerners who were thrilled to find a magazine that spoke directly to them. Had these men launched a different magazine at the same time to the same audience, it most likely would have failed, and had they launched the same magazine at a different time perhaps it would have failed as well.

It is significant that these men ignored African Americans in their magazine, while paying tribute to a stereotypical white conception of southern identity. The Myth of the Lost Cause, at the junction of history and memory, was much more about what individuals wanted to believe than whatever actually existed. In ignoring African Americans as members of the white sociocultural community, these men were also perpetuating a racism that denied the African American place in southern culture. This covert racism not only whitewashed blacks from southern culture but also romanticized the Lost Cause of the Confederacy in a way that demeaned everything violent and oppressive about that past for African Americans. The problem in producing a lifestyle magazine for white southerners was in its narrow definition of southern identity that left out so many who lived in the region. *Southern Living* was less about southerners at all and more about glamorizing the lives of the upper-middle-class white people who lived in the region.<sup>19</sup>

In the political upheaval of its time and place, the magazine's content is significant, because it spoke to people who wanted to dream of a better place. The fact that such an intimate group of businessmen created not just a magazine but *their* magazine provides a unique vantage point into their worldview. *Southern Living* exists

---

<sup>19</sup> David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 2002), 3-7; Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 110.

as much more than a well-executed business model or a pretty magazine; it is a window into a volatile time and place where white southerners clung to myths about their communities—and themselves. The story of *Southern Living*'s launch, its editorial mission, and its content is also the story of many white southerners during the 1950s and 1960s, which is why the magazine succeeded beyond its own creators' wildest imaginations.

To establish the major players in the magazine launch and how the launch itself unfolded, this dissertation employs valuable archival material, including interoffice memorandums, minutes of company meetings, feedback from advertisers, reader letters, and brochures promoting the new magazine. Eugene Butler, president of Progressive Farmer Company in the 1960s, lived in Dallas, Texas, and regularly corresponded with his staff in Birmingham. As a result, he left a wealth of information behind about the company's financial stability, the competing opinions of staff members about the editorial mission of *Southern Living*, and his intention in starting a new magazine. This material exists at two public archives: the Eugene Butler Papers at Cushing Memorial Library at Texas A&M University and the Eugene Butler Papers in the Manuscripts Division of the Special Collections Department at the Mitchell Memorial Library at Mississippi State University. The two archives together contain twenty-seven boxes of material. No known publication on *Southern Living* has incorporated these documents.

The third archive I visited was Southern Progress Company's private library housed at its headquarters in Birmingham, Alabama. Gaining access to the documents there is extremely rare. The only research resulting from them is Tracy Lauder's 2004 dissertation and her subsequent *Alabama Review* article. Lauder gained access to the

archives through her connections as a former employee. I had the fortune of contacting the librarians in the weeks after Time Inc. announced it was closing Southern Progress's library permanently as a cost-cutting measure. The two librarians willingly opened the archive for me, even as they prepared for their own termination, and I had the freedom to peruse the documents at will. I collected more than one thousand pages of documents from Southern Progress.

The archival material at Texas A&M University, Mississippi State University, and Southern Progress offer an opportunity to witness the planning and execution of *Southern Living*'s launch. The Progressive Farmer Company employees responsible for the launch are no longer living, but the documents they left behind provide a window into their hopes and dreams for the magazine. Certainly, they sought to improve the outlook of their publishing company that targeted southern farmers, an unsustainable market, but they also identified discontented white southerners as their future. They purposefully chose their audience and their mission, and they crafted arguably the most successful regional magazine to date. Their objectives and the subsequent success of *Southern Living* suggest the breadth and depth of the sociocultural changes that were occurring in the region. Because of its location in Birmingham, Alabama, at the heart of the contentious struggle for equal rights for African Americans, examining a lifestyle magazine that spoke to an up-and-coming audience, while ignoring the realities of the region's troubles, presents an opportunity to better understand white southerners in that time and place.

In addition to archival research, this dissertation includes a review of *Southern Living* magazine's content from 1966 through 1969, including the feature well,

departments, and advertising. Most scholarly mentions of *Southern Living* are either based on perceptions of the magazine or on a brief overview of its content, rather than on a thorough examination of it. In order to fully understand the magazine's concept and the aspirations of the men involved, one must delve into the actual product they created. I explore the magazine's themes, how its content changed over the first four years, and in what ways that content might relate to the social environment surrounding the magazine. Though my analysis is descriptive in nature, it is much more thorough than any previous research on *Southern Living* because I sift through every article and advertisement in forty-two issues of the first four years of publication in an attempt to understand the magazine as its creators intended it and as it actually was. My purpose in including this content review is to buttress the archival research with a discussion of the Progressive Farmer Company's final product.

This dissertation begins with the history of Progressive Farmer from 1886 until *Southern Living*'s launch in 1966. The first chapter interweaves details about Birmingham and the region to ground the experience of Progressive Farmer Company and its employees into the happenings around them.

*Southern Living*'s timing was impeccable, and it was no accident that Progressive Farmer launched the magazine when it did. The second chapter explores the precursors to company's decision to produce *Southern Living*, as well as the important figures involved in the planning and execution of the launch.

The third chapter provides a look at the decision-making process in launching *Southern Living*, from the disagreements over the tone of the magazine to the interoffice

memorandums discussing every detail of the planning. It investigates some of the pitfalls Progressive Farmer Company experienced in 1963 and 1964.

The fourth chapter details how the company redoubled its efforts in 1965 and 1966 to repair organizational dysfunction among the staff planning the magazine, to streamline the editorial approach, and to promote *Southern Living* to new readers and advertisers. This section culminates with the February 1966 magazine launch.

The fifth chapter delves into the actual final product, examining the first four years of the magazine's editorial and advertising content. It explains what themes were present in that content and how those themes related to the sociocultural environment surrounding *Southern Living*. It also investigates what the final product might say about the men who produced it and the families who read it.

The sixth chapter explores reader and advertiser response to *Southern Living* and the events at Progressive Farmer Company in the years after the launch from 1966 to 1969. It also includes actual feedback to the magazine and examines how the company changed as a result of *Southern Living*.

The last chapter offers my conclusions. Only a small group of individuals had editorial license to construct *Southern Living*, namely the leadership of Progressive Farmer Company and its president Eugene Butler. They sought advice from media professionals and journalism school deans about their new magazine's editorial mission, its advertising base, and potential personnel hires; yet, the decision-making was really left up to a hand full of men who carefully charted and executed every detail of the new magazine. *Southern Living* was a direct product of the small group of people who shaped it.

## CHAPTER ONE

Magazines do not exist in a vacuum, and they are more than just pictures and text on paper. In a dialogue with readers, magazines suggest everything from fashionable trends to hobbies to political opinions. They create a community with their readers, who have the luxury of perusing their content over weeks, months, and even years. They also are a reflection, of sorts, of the people who produce them, even if that reflection is distorted. Many magazines present fantastical versions of reality for readers, but even so, that stylized portrait still provides evidence of the aspirations of an audience willing to pay for issue after issue. *Southern Living* is no exception. The magazine was a product of its times. It was the creation of a small group of men, who very carefully shaped its image and designed its debut, and within its history are clues about these men and their world.

The story of *Southern Living* magazine begins with *Progressive Farmer*, a small-circulation farming newspaper. Leonidas LaFayette Polk<sup>20</sup> circulated the first issue on February 10, 1886 from Winston, North Carolina; the next year he moved the publication to Raleigh.<sup>21</sup> *Progressive Farmer* was part of a larger educational trend that addressed agricultural methods and technologies, and in its earliest days, the publication was little more than a newsletter authored by a small group of men. It was one of 7,500 periodicals

---

<sup>20</sup> Polk's famous second cousin was also named Leonidas Polk. He was a Confederate officer, an Episcopalian bishop, and a large North Carolina landowner. See: "L.L. Polk (Leonidas LaFayette), 1837-1892," Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina website, available from <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/polk90/bio.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Eugene Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TMs, 1903-1913 Section, Folder 29, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 1.



launched in the United States from 1885 to 1905, but unlike more than half of them that folded or merged, it survived and continued to grow its readership.<sup>22</sup> In fact, through its influence, Polk advocated for major changes in farming in North Carolina and for advanced agricultural education across the region. He worked alongside Stephen Lee, Mississippi A&M College's first president, to establish land-grant agricultural schools and extension services in every southern state.<sup>23</sup>

After Polk died in 1892, ownership of the publication transferred to his wife until her death in 1901. Her estate sold *Progressive Farmer* to the publication's business manager and her son-in-law, J.W. Denmark. Two years later he sold it to its twenty-three-year-old editor, Clarence Poe, and four investors for about \$7,300. By that point, the newsletter's circulation had fallen 70 percent from a high of 20,000 at Polk's death.<sup>24</sup> Poe was passionate about the education of rural children, who often had as little as a few months of schooling a year. Families needed the labor of their children, but Poe saw this as shortsighted. An education meant more options later in life, and he thought an educated population was better for society as a whole. By 1908, Poe had increased *Progressive Farmer*'s circulation to 36,000 when he merged it with Mississippi's *Southern Farm Gazette*, created by Tait Butler. Butler, the first veterinary professor at

---

<sup>22</sup> John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America 1741-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 68.

<sup>23</sup> Eugene Butler, "Progressive Farmer's Educational Crusade," TD, Folder 9, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Eugene Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TD, 1903-1913 section, Folder 29, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 1; "Publications Purchased By Progressive Farmer," TD, Folder 32, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

Mississippi A&M (now Mississippi State University), was also a champion for farmers and was adamant about their education, much like Polk and Poe.<sup>25</sup>

*Progressive Farmer* maintained a unique system with two separate editions. Clarence Poe continued to edit the eastern edition from North Carolina, while Mississippi's Tait Butler maintained the western one, which was really only a renamed *Southern Farm Gazette*. In 1908 they relocated The Progressive Farmer Company's printing plant to Birmingham, Alabama, a more central location that had extensive rail service, and three years later, the company moved its editorial offices to the city. From Raleigh, North Carolina, Clarence Poe continued to guide Progressive Farmer Company until 1953, but it was the Butlers who became firmly entrenched in the company. Eugene Butler followed his father into the business in 1917 as an assistant editor. He had graduated from Mississippi A&M in 1913 and toiled for four years extending his education both through actual farm labor in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Arkansas and through coursework. At Cornell University, he earned a second bachelor's degree, and then he received a master's degree in agronomy with a minor in journalism from Iowa State.<sup>26</sup>

In 1922, Eugene Butler moved to Dallas, Texas, to oversee the Texas edition of *Progressive Farmer*, an outgrowth of *The Texas Farmer*, a newspaper the company had

---

<sup>25</sup> Emory Cunningham, *Eighty-Nine Years of Service in the South: The Story of the Progressive Farmer Company* (New York: Newcomen Society, 1975), 8-11; John Logue and Gary McCalla, *Life at Southern Living* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 2000), 23-24; Tebbel and Zuckerman, 68; Butler, "Progressive Farmer's Educational Crusade," 2,10; Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," 1903-1913 section, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Lin H. Wright, *Shy Giant of the South* (Starkville, MS: Mississippi State University, 1988), 6-7, 49; Carolyn Green Satterfield, "An Interview with Fowler Dugger," TDS, 18 July 1977, Folder 50, Box 2, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 4; Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," 1903-1913 section, 7-8.

purchased in 1913. Eugene Butler stayed in Texas throughout his career, even as he climbed higher in the company's management. After his father's death in 1939, he became a member of the executive committee and then vice-president of the board of directors four years later. When Clarence Poe retired in 1953, he officially handed the reigns to Butler, whose family now had both primary ownership and management of *Progressive Farmer* and its editions. Eugene's son Britt, continuing the family tradition, also joined the company after he graduated with a civil engineering degree from Texas A&M.<sup>27</sup> Eugene Butler remained president of the company until 1968, but even "as late as 1984, as he approached 90, he still put in a full week at the office, still counseled with Texas farmers about their land, crops, and livestock, and still wrote occasional editorials for *Progressive Farmer*."<sup>28</sup> He maintained a connection to the company until his death, six days before his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday.<sup>29</sup>

Over the course of its history, *Progressive Farmer* advocated for better farming techniques, more federal funding, and improved living conditions for families. Its advertising staff promoted its regional approach, even coining the phrase "The next half century belongs to the South" in the 1940s. According to advertising executive Oscar Dugger, the company had few impressive market factors to promote to advertisers, but

---

<sup>27</sup> Wright, 7-8; Logue and McCalla, 24; Eugene Butler Collection Finding Aid, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

<sup>28</sup> Wright, 72.

<sup>29</sup> Eugene Butler Collection Finding Aid, Manuscripts Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi; Eugene Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," 1903-1913 section, 6.

they could sell to emotions by “bear[ing] down on the crusading factor of the magazine... glorify[ing] the philosophy of Dr. Poe and Dr. Butler.”<sup>30</sup>

By 1930, *Progressive Farmer* had as many as one million subscribers, following the national magazine trend of pushing circulation figures as high as they would go. In fact, the magazine had the highest number of paid subscribers of any publication in the South when its circulation hit 1.8 million in 1941. As a comparison, *Cosmopolitan* and *Collier's* had already reached a million subscribers by 1918, and the *Saturday Evening Post* was on its second million. These soaring circulation numbers were possible because of “low prices, efficient distribution, relevant editorial material, and attractive illustrations,” but pleasing advertisers became more important as they supplemented more and more of the actual publication cost. Ultimately, the dependency on enormous circulation numbers for favorable advertising rates proved unsustainable. In addition to other regional farming newsletters, *Progressive Farmer* competed against larger media companies, which often had holdings in the farming sector.<sup>31</sup>

After the poverty-stricken years of the Great Depression and the social upheaval of World War II, the Progressive Farmer Company had a specific problem with its audience. The number of farm families, *Progressive Farmer's* bread-and-butter, was declining. More and more southerners were leaving the land for manufacturing jobs available in towns and cities across the country. Small-scale farming was becoming economically unfeasible, as was *Progressive Farmer's* audience growth. Still throughout

---

<sup>30</sup> Carolyn Green Satterfield, “An Interview with Oscar Milton Dugger,” TMs, 22 June 1977, Folder 50, Box 2, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Eugene Butler, “A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968,” TD, 1941 section, Folder 30, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 1. Logue and McCalla, 25. Tebbel and Zuckerman, 79, 141.

the 1940s and into the 1950s, the publication provided fellowship for farmers weathering the tough times. It continued purchasing similar farming newsletters and expanding its readership, acting as a “vigorous and sometimes biased proponent for the South.”<sup>32</sup> This track of growth came to an end by 1958. In one year *Progressive Farmer*’s advertising revenue dropped 12.5 percent.<sup>33</sup> Company leaders saw the handwriting on the wall. They needed a means to capture the subscribers and advertisers they would lose in the coming years.

*Progressive Farmer* was only a small part of a much larger national trend. By the 1950s, the magazine industry in the United States was experiencing phenomenal change. First, an influx of advertising revenue and circulation figures occurred. The \$725 million of advertising in 1955 was almost double the figure from 1946, and magazines were “distributing more single-issue copies than there were people in the nation.”<sup>34</sup> Urbanization meant more people had access to more publications. Rising consumption of such items as cars and appliances helped foster advertising demand, and the expansion of leisure time provided Americans with more time to read magazines.<sup>35</sup>

But a crisis rapidly followed this boom. National publications found themselves competing for advertising revenue with television—and losing. With newspapers and radio, magazines had enjoyed an advantage of a visual experience through photography, artwork, and design elements, but television provided immediacy for viewers and advertisers that magazines could not offer. Ubiquitous publications such as *Collier’s*,

---

<sup>32</sup> Cunningham, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Eugene Butler, “Sixty-Fifth Annual Report of the President of Progressive Farmer Company,” February 1969, Folder 41, Box 2, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Tebbel and Zuckerman, 244.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 244-245.

*Look*, *Life*, and *Saturday Evening Post* began failing, often because established magazines were unprepared to negotiate the changes in the marketplace. In one month, December 1956, both *Collier's* and *Woman's Home Companion* folded, an ominous sign to magazine publishers. Advertisers were increasingly picky about wanting a specific and loyal audience. Americans during this time period were also becoming more individualistic after the focus on service and families during World War II and the postwar years. The late 1950s and early 1960s was a period of increasing wealth, suburbanization, and leisure activities, and readers sought publications that recognized the changes. Also, the very paper on which magazines were printed became more expensive, and postal rates were rising. As a result of all these factors, smaller, targeted audiences became more important as mass-circulation models of publication faltered.<sup>36</sup>

One of the most successful areas of specialization was in regional magazines because they had ready access to a readership and to a market for advertisers. The concept began with Southern Pacific Railroad's *Sunset* in 1898, which promoted travel in the western states. Another early example was *Yankee* magazine, which launched in 1935 in New Hampshire and focused its efforts on the lifestyles of the Northeast. Regional publications saw significant growth in the 1960s; more than sixty such magazines sprang up during that decade alone. They generally mimicked consumer magazines in style but often had the backing of Chambers of Commerce or city and state

---

<sup>36</sup> Eugene Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TD, 1956 section, 1-2; David Abrahamson, *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Postwar Periodical* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press Inc., 1996), 3, 49; Tebbel and Zuckerman, 244-247; Steven Watts, *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008), 3-4; Carolyn Kitch, *Pages From the Past: History and Memory in American Magazines* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 9; John Quenelle, "The Story of Southern Living: A Man Plus an Idea," MSs, 24 June 1987, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 63.

governments. Other examples of successful regional publications are *New York*, *Atlanta*, and *Texas Monthly*.<sup>37</sup>

Magazines for southerners were not a new phenomenon. *The Sunny South* carried fiction and non-fiction pieces from 1875 until 1907. *Uncle Remus's Magazine*, launched in 1907, published poetry and illustrated stories, as well as editorials. In 1905 both *Trotswood's Monthly* and *Taylor's Magazine* started publishing, and they lasted long enough to merge before ceasing publication in 1910. *Southern Magazine*, affiliated with the Daughters of the Confederacy, ran from 1934 to 1937 in Wytheville, Virginia. But by the early 1960s, no national magazines were published below the Mason-Dixon line, and if they did mention the region, often it was in the context of the traumatic events of the civil rights movement. White southerners were in the mood to read about something other than race.<sup>38</sup>

A component to the prosperity of regional publications was the pervasiveness of travel in the United States. Americans had suffered fifteen years of economic hardship and war and were eager to experience the booming postwar economy. Travel was also easier, as more families had cars and could strike off on their own across America's new and improved highways.<sup>39</sup> Beginning with *Holiday* magazine in 1946, periodicals that primarily focused on travel poured onto the scene.<sup>40</sup>

Company leaders at Progressive Farmer were aware of these changes, and they sought to create a magazine that would help them compete in the changing marketplace.

---

<sup>37</sup> Tebbel and Zuckerman, 258-259; See also: "About Yankee Publishing," <http://www.yankeemagazine.com/about/index.php>.

<sup>38</sup> Quenelle, 62-64.

<sup>39</sup> Richard K. Popp, "Magazines, Marketing, and the Construction of Travel in the Postwar United States" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 2008), 3, 280.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 149.

They intended to address both advertising and audience shifts, as well as to diversify their readership beyond farm publications. They were also living in Birmingham, Alabama, perhaps the epicenter of contentious civil rights movement stand-offs. This influence was another factor in the kind of magazine Progressive Farmer Company launched.

### A Precursor to the 1960s

The 1960s wreaked havoc on a variety of societal norms that white southerners embraced. The decade had a profound impact on sexuality, race relations, and the role of young people. Baby-boomers went off to college. Integration filtered into the dimmest recesses of American life, and women became increasingly liberated to explore careers outside the home. The square kids from the sensible “Leave It to Beaver” homes were changing the rules. But, if the 1960s in the United States was a time of rapid social transformation, the seeds of that change were planted in the 1950s.<sup>41</sup>

The postwar years brought prosperity to many Americans; the number of families joining the middle class in the 1950s was increasing at the rate of more than a million a year. These families could afford to buy their own homes, often in the suburbs, and then furnish them with plenty of modern appliances. They could purchase cars, and then travel on vacations in their leisure time. As sign of things to come, the first Holiday Inn opened in 1952, and Ray Kroc began franchising McDonald’s fast-food restaurants in

---

<sup>41</sup> David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 473.



1955. Both chains appealed to the mobile, suburban families with a little extra money in their pockets.<sup>42</sup>

The swell of children born to post-World-War-II America was beginning to come of age in the 1950s. By 1956, 13 million teenagers had a yearly income of \$7 million, a 26 percent rise in just three years.<sup>43</sup> They had disposable income, which they often spent on music. Elvis was just the handsome face to a bigger trend of white teenagers listening to integrated music. White musicians, like Elvis, co-opted black beats, but for the first time, African American musicians were also beginning to have nationwide appeal. “Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Sam Cooke, Ike Turner, and Fats Domino were now integrated into the white hit-charts.”<sup>44</sup> This exposure was one way African Americans were beginning to fight their way into mainstream society.

Television revolutionized 1950s America. By the end of 1952, there were 19 million television sets, only the beginning of a technological transformation. It allowed millions of average citizens to see their politicians in action, to watch Elvis gyrate, and to witness sporting events from thousands of miles away. Though radio had united listeners from one side of the nation to the other, television combined both sound and images, allowing viewers to actually witness events with their own eyes. One of the most profound results was that even the middle-class white mother cocooned in the whitest of white communities had to turn off her television set to ignore the racial upheaval of the 1960s.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Halberstam, 163, 170, 176, 587.

<sup>43</sup> Halberstam, 473.

<sup>44</sup> Halberstam, 692.

<sup>45</sup> Halberstam, 195.

In the years after World War II, African Americans became increasingly well-organized in a fight for social, political, and economic equality. Two events during the 1950s were critical to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The first was the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954, which eliminated any legal justification for so-called separate-but-equal schooling. The ripple effect continued decades into the future and was the beginning of the last massive white stand against integration. Many southern states ignored the decision and attempted to continue to deny African American students proper educational funding and access to adequate schools. Other southern communities flat-out denied the authority of the Court by reinforcing strict segregation codes in all aspects of daily life, from the patronizing of businesses to holding political office and voting to attending public schools. David Halberstam in his tome *The Fifties* called the *Brown* decision "the single most important in the decade, the moment that separated the old order from the new and helped create the tumultuous era just arriving." He also emphasized the impact of the court decision on journalists, who now had a moral responsibility to document racial discrimination before the nation's very eyes on the television screen.<sup>46</sup>

The second event critical to the civil rights movement was the Montgomery bus boycott. "Four days after the Supreme Court had ruled on *Brown*, a black leader named Jo Ann Robinson wrote a letter to Montgomery's mayor telling him of the growing resentment blacks felt about their treatment on the buses, reminding him that more than three quarters of the system's riders were black and mentioning the possibility of a

---

<sup>46</sup> Halberstam, 423-424.

boycott.”<sup>47</sup> African American leaders in the community decided it was a hardworking seamstress who was the perfect candidate for the challenge of targeting the legality of segregation on public transportation. After Rosa Parks’ arrest in December 1955, “the obvious response was a boycott” that lasted nearly a year and involved great individual sacrifices and meticulous organization. Carpools allowed African Americans who could not walk to their destination to take a ride in something other than a city bus; since African American residents largely kept the buses running, the strike was not only a visible challenge to the system of racial oppression but also a pain in the city’s budget. Out of the Montgomery boycott came a pattern for attacking the status quo economically and confidence that African American communities could be quite successful in their challenges, but, perhaps most significantly, Martin Luther King Jr. earned his stripes in Montgomery. The civil rights movement gained a face and a leader who would prove monumental to the cause in the years ahead.<sup>48</sup>

### Race in the American South

During the midpoint of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, socioeconomic changes were sweeping across the American South. Agriculture, which had been in decline, had become a dead-end for small-time farmers, who could no longer make a living by working their land. Urbanization, particularly after World War II, meant that cities were growing, while the population of small towns began to shrink. Local and state governments acknowledged

---

<sup>47</sup> Halberstam, 545.

<sup>48</sup> Halberstam, 562.

the promise of industry jobs and actively recruited outside investment. Manufacturers increasingly saw the savings in moving companies south, where the cost of operation and living was cheaper and labor unions were nearly non-existent. Many veterans from World War II and the Korean War were able to attend colleges and universities—or at least send their children to college. This investment in education provided an entire generation of young people with expanded career opportunities. These economic changes, in turn, allowed more people access to a middle-class lifestyle than ever before.<sup>49</sup>

One group of Americans remained on the outside looking in. African Americans had suffered more than two hundred years of slavery and a brutal civil war, only to find themselves still fighting racial oppression during the 1960s. Their activism during the civil rights movement was the most public and contentious part of a struggle undertaken by generations of African Americans, from abolition to the Civil War to the rise of Jim Crow segregation during the 1880s and 1890s. Their goals were comprehensive, from gaining the right to vote to being able to testify in court and buy houses in whatever neighborhood they chose. In short, they wanted the same rights of citizenship that all other Americans held.

Segregation was a system of both laws and customs that restricted African Americans from full citizenship. White Americans had always had the economic, legal, and social upper-hand, and segregation helped to maintain that control. Though it existed in towns, cities, and counties across the country, this system was particularly rigid in areas where the majority of African Americans lived. The American South had high

---

<sup>49</sup> Quenelle, 56-58.

African American populations, a holdover from the large-scale agriculture of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that required the cheap labor of slaves in order to make a small percentage of whites extraordinarily wealthy. Segregation also became more stringent during the Reconstruction years, as whites sought to regain the control they had lost during the Civil War. The whiteness of one's skin became a crucial factor in full citizenship in the United States. As blackness became the skin color of social and economic exclusion, whiteness became the non-color, the neutral standard that permitted full participation in the United States. Where whites assumed a race neutral position, those of color in the country were keenly aware of the differences in acceptance.<sup>50</sup>

Race relations in the American South were particularly traumatic. There white southerners reacted en masse to the socioeconomic changes around them. African Americans had been part of the social order of most of the region since its earliest days; yet, many whites sought to construct a culture and an identity separate from that past. "White southerners created their modern sense of themselves as different, externally, from the rest of Americans and different, internally, from African Americans, at the level of culture."<sup>51</sup> Using cultural artifacts, such as literature and music, to unify them, white southerners collectively looked past Reconstruction and the Civil War to a time they imagined to be free of racial tension: the antebellum South. They turned the Civil War into a noble fight over culture, in which the industrial Yankees intended to overrun their superior agrarian way of life with roots to ancient Greece. In this way, southerners could

---

<sup>50</sup> Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 21.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 10.

blame the Yankees for poverty after the Civil War, for the decline in their way of life, and for brewing racial tension.

In contrast to the 1950s and 1960s, the antebellum South of their creation was a time of beauty and peace, where everyone knew his or her place and accepted it.<sup>52</sup> White southerners who had little else in common could unite with this ideal in mind, largely with the help of cultural artifacts, such as the song “Dixie,” the Confederate flag, and the book *Gone With the Wind*. From Texas to Georgia to North Carolina, white southerners created a separate culture based not on shared day-to-day experiences but on an ideal; they belonged to a fraternity of likeminded people who valued their way of life as superior to and separate from American culture. The power of such a bond should not be underestimated— individuals have been willing to give up their lives over allegiance to a community of people, most of whom they will never even know.<sup>53</sup> In uniting around a past that ignored African Americans, white southerners excluded them time and again, not just in the physical spaces of restaurants and business but also in the ephemeral world of identity, in seemingly harmless places like *Southern Living* magazine.

Even some white southerners who claimed to sympathize with African Americans, calling for fair treatment of them, upheld the idealistic notion that separate but equal facilities were possible and beneficial for African Americans. African Americans were entitled to their own doctors and lawyers, business districts, and schools, but they were better off as islands, kept to themselves. Eugene Butler with Progressive Farmer Company even danced circles around reality with this argument:

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 52-53.

<sup>53</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (New York: Verso, 1983, 2006), 7.

When the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954 ruled that children could not be registered in the public schools on a basis of color, PROGRESSIVE FARMER joined 90% of the white people in the South in being opposed to its ruling....It seemed entirely irrational to say that schools for blacks and whites equal in facilities and quality of instruction, the only difference being the color of its students, were discriminatory. This, in essence, made black schools unequal only because their students were black. This, it seemed to us, to be an insult to black citizens.

In other words, what was prejudiced was *calling* the separate but equal doctrine unequal, not the actuality of it. This belief assumed that a separation between races allowed, or even ensured, equality. It is unclear if Butler actually believed African American children receiving fewer years of instruction in crowded classrooms in ramshackle buildings with nearly non-existent state funding was comparable to the educational experiences of white children. Regardless of how strongly he believed this theory, the fact that he argued it passionately in a *Progressive Farmer* editorial suggests that he was, at a minimum, willing to publicly advocate it.<sup>54</sup>

African Americans chipped away at segregation through civic and church organizations, through legal challenges, and, by the 1950s, through social demonstrations. While the old order crumbled, many white southerners were oblivious, by both choice and ignorance. When demonstrations arrived in their communities, some of them were completely blindsided, having convinced themselves that African Americans were either incapable or unworthy of full citizenship. A few white southerners saw the inevitable, that a people will only be oppressed for so long, and they applauded the coming change. Others saw the change and decided they would do

---

<sup>54</sup> Eugene Butler, "The Progressive Farmer Company's Educational Crusade," TD, Folder 9, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 11.

whatever it took to make sure African Americans never had a chance at equal rights. Many more white southerners were somewhere in between the two extremes.<sup>55</sup>

During this upheaval, state leaders, such as Ross Barnett of Mississippi and Orval Faubus of Arkansas, bellowed racist remarks for their own political gain. They claimed states' rights gave their constituency the freedom to decide the integration of state institutions, like public schools, without interference from the federal government. This sort of governmental chaos existed from the highest levels of state governments down to the smallest local councils. In many places, the very judges, sheriffs, and politicians who could have mitigated the confusion only riled up already tenuous situations. Media outlets in the region were also complicit; they rarely covered African Americans, and often ignored or obscured the injustices against them.

Many white southerners believed the rhetoric that the federal government was wrongly interfering in state and local matters, perhaps because they heard little else or because they wanted to believe that the loss of their uncontested place at the top of the social hierarchy was someone else's fault. Change is disorienting and difficult to accept, particularly when it means the end to a way of life. Most white southerners probably would have continued with their social, economic, and legal superiority had they not been forced to change. In a fractured community like Birmingham, Alabama, in the 1960s, this change was a particularly bitter pill to swallow.

---

<sup>55</sup> Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York: Knopf, 2006) 6-9, 57.



## “Bombingham”

In 1871 northern investors, specifically United States Steel, established the community of Birmingham located in the southern foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The town quickly blossomed into a city, but with rapid growth came “a lingering black smog so thick that streetlights often burned during the daylight hours.”<sup>56</sup> Such a description hardly resembles a southern ideal, and “except for the heat of its summers and the accents of its people, there was little in Birmingham that was reminiscent of the South of Margaret Mitchell,” the author of the Civil War historical fiction *Gone with the Wind*.<sup>57</sup>

Atlanta, Georgia, only 150 miles east from Birmingham, was its economic rival until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. While their populations were comparable in 1950 with Birmingham at 326,037 and Atlanta at 331,314, Birmingham’s economic growth, largely based on mining, stalled in the 1950s, while Atlanta’s more diversified economy prospered. By 1960 Atlanta’s population outnumbered Birmingham’s by 150,000.<sup>58</sup> Industry expansion in Birmingham “declined from \$52 million in 1960 to only \$11 million in 1962.”<sup>59</sup>

Atlanta was also the city “too busy to hate,” while Birmingham struggled with race relations. Its economic downturn compounded class tensions in a city already

---

<sup>56</sup> William D. Barnard, “Introduction,” in *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956-1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights*, ed. David Garrow (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1989), xi-xii; Jonathan S. Bass, *Blessed are the Peacemakers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 89.

<sup>57</sup> Barnard, xii.

<sup>58</sup> Charles E. Connerly, *The Most Segregated City in America: City Planning and Civil Rights in Birmingham, 1920- 1980* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 169.

<sup>59</sup> Bobby M. Wilson, *Race and Place in Birmingham* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 111.

deeply divided along class and race lines.<sup>60</sup> The executives who “managed the iron and steel industries, the insurance companies, the utilities, and the banks,” lived just over the mountains from Birmingham in Mountain Brook, “the eighth wealthiest city in the nation in 1960 with a median family income of \$14,689.”<sup>61</sup> In sharp contrast, African Americans in Birmingham’s Southside neighborhood only averaged \$1,500 a year.<sup>62</sup> Racial segregation forced most African Americans into menial labor, while only three percent of whites held such jobs. The median salary for African American families was \$3,000, half that of whites, and African Americans finished a median 7.7 years of school as opposed to whites’ completion of 12.5 years.<sup>63</sup> The disparity had improved little by 1970 when 96 percent of the city’s poor blacks and 92 percent of non-poor blacks still lived in low-income areas of the city, while only 51 percent of the city’s white poor and 26 percent of its white non-poor lived in those neighborhoods.<sup>64</sup>

The incongruity was striking. While downtown Birmingham struggled economically, Birmingham’s suburbs were “[i]nsulated in the thickly wooded and landscaped subdivisions,” where residents:

sought the comfortable and safe suburban ideal soon to be set forth by *Southern Living*, the middle-class magazine of the New South edited in Birmingham. Just as the visually rich pages of the glossy monthly would invite its readers to escape into an ordered and secure world, political independence suggested that Birmingham’s suburban middle class could escape the problems of urban life.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 10.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>63</sup> Lee Bains, “Birmingham, 1963: Confrontation over Civil Rights,” in *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956-1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights*, ed. David Garrow, (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1989), 161.

<sup>64</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, “Low-Income Neighborhoods in Large Cities: 1970, Birmingham, Alabama,” 1970 Census of Population available from <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/31679801n59-72ch09.pdf>.

<sup>65</sup> Eskew, 183.

Keeping their distance from Birmingham, these white communities refused annexation.<sup>66</sup>

Rigid Jim Crow segregation was an impenetrable social barrier between races. Many whites in Birmingham were so accustomed to “the injustices of Jim Crow customs, laws, and etiquette” that they hardly noticed it. The more extreme element resorted to bombing African American homes and businesses to protect the racial order, to keep African Americans in their appropriate jobs and neighborhoods, literally forcing the separation of races.<sup>67</sup>

Until local sit-in protests in 1960, Birmingham’s troubles largely existed under the national radar. Birmingham’s African American community, like many in the South, was split over how to handle segregation, with some members pushing for direct action measures and others desiring slower, less controversial change. Some professional African Americans, with perhaps more to lose economically, hesitated to provoke the white power structure. Others were frightened from outward participation by police commissioner Eugene “Bull” Connor and his violent, and often unpredictable, police force.<sup>68</sup>

At the local level, Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth was the organizing force for working-class African Americans. “Self-confident and aggressive,” he was an active figure in Birmingham’s civil rights movement, helping to build a grassroots network among the city’s poor through his organization the Alabama Christian Movement for

---

<sup>66</sup> Connerly, 4; Eskew, 179. See also, Charles Morgan Jr., *A Time to Speak* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 54.

<sup>67</sup> Bains, 88; Connerly, 100; Eskew, *But for Birmingham*, 150.

<sup>68</sup> Glenn T. Eskew, “The Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and the Birmingham Struggle for Civil Rights, 1956-1963,” in *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956-1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights*, ed. David Garrow (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1989), 77.

Human Rights (ACMHR).<sup>69</sup> In giving these African Americans a space in which to organize, he “kept alive a flicker of black protest in Birmingham throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s...” while Birmingham remained out of the national spotlight.<sup>70</sup>

When the *New York Times* sent reporter Harrison Salisbury to cover the story of Police Commissioner Bull Connor arresting sit-in demonstrators in the city, Salisbury “couldn’t believe Birmingham.” Some residents “drew their curtains when they talked to him; some talked only elliptically; others wouldn’t talk at all.” Salisbury’s story on the city ran April 12, 1960, on the *Times*’ front page with the headline “Fear and Hatred Grip Birmingham.” The story described the situation in Birmingham as Salisbury saw it:

Every channel of communication, every medium of mutual interest, every reasoned approach, every inch of middle ground has been fragmented by the emotional dynamite of racism, reinforced by the whip, the razor, the gun, the bomb, the torch, the club, the knife, the mob, the police, and many branches of the state’s apparatus....Telephones are tapped, or there is fear of tapping. Mail has been intercepted and opened.... The eavesdropper, the informer, the spy have become a fact of life.

The *Birmingham News* responded to the *Times*’ story by running it two days later on the front page with the headline “*New York Times* Slanders Our City—Can This Be Birmingham?,” giving white readers yet another excuse to overlook the problems of their city.<sup>71</sup>

During the 1960s, several newspapers operated in the city. The *Birmingham News*, owned by the Newhouse chain, was the afternoon paper, while Scripps-Howard’s *Post-Herald* was smaller and generally more inflammatory on the issue of race relations.

---

<sup>69</sup> Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 217.

<sup>70</sup> Barnard, xiv.

<sup>71</sup> Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred P. Knopf, 2006), 232-233.

Northern companies owned them both but gave them editorial freedom, and they were even printed on the same presses. Overall, they “honored the separation between news and opinion,” but the newspapers also “wanted little more than to protect business interests and promote the image of a city moving forward in harmony, even if it meant downplaying the huge racial fault line looming in the road ahead.”<sup>72</sup> Covering the African American community was left to the third newspaper, the *Birmingham World*, owned by the African American Scott family of Atlanta.

In 1962 Shuttleworth’s ACMHR joined students to design a boycott of retail stores to desegregate “lunch counters, rest rooms, and drinking fountains,” and to improve employment opportunities for African Americans. The boycott succeeded in reducing downtown business by about forty percent, directly hurting white merchants. To punish African Americans for the boycott, the City Commission removed \$45,000 from the surplus-food program, thereby wounding the poorest members of the community.<sup>73</sup>

Until 1963 national civil rights organizations had difficulty operating in Birmingham. The state legislature had banned the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) from Alabama in 1956, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee’s presence was not strong in Birmingham.<sup>74</sup> Shuttlesworth attracted attention from national members of the movement with ACMHR. At this time, Martin Luther King, Jr. was looking for a success after his embarrassment in Albany, Georgia. Shuttlesworth, in turn, reciprocated because he thought national

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 306, 148.

<sup>73</sup> Bains, 169.

<sup>74</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, 269.

groups, specifically King's Southern Christian Leadership Committee (SCLC), would bring notoriety that would force social and economic change in the community.<sup>75</sup> In 1962 Shuttlesworth advocated that the SCLC join ACMHR in additional demonstrations in Birmingham, and he and King began planning for such a campaign to begin in the spring of 1963. They called the plan Project C and scheduled it to coincide with Easter.<sup>76</sup>

Dissent in the city during Project C grabbed international attention.<sup>77</sup> Chaos reigned with downtown demonstrations, two competing city governments, and Bull Connor's use of fire hoses on protestors, including children.<sup>78</sup> It was during this time that King wrote "Letter from Birmingham Jail," which some consider to be "the most important written document of the civil rights protest era and a widely read modern literary classic."<sup>79</sup> As Martin Luther King said in a 1964 *Time* magazine article: "It was the year of Birmingham...when the civil rights issue was impressed on the nation in a way that nothing else before had been able to do."<sup>80</sup>

The purpose of the 1963 demonstrations in Birmingham was to elicit as much publicity as possible, to shock people around the world into finally understanding the fear of everyday African Americans in the city. For historian Glenn Eskew, much of the violence captured in the media looked worse than it really was, but it "symbolized the

---

<sup>75</sup> Eskew, *But for Birmingham*, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Bains, 175.

<sup>77</sup> Eskew, 150.

<sup>78</sup> Edward Shannon LaMonte, *Politics and Welfare in Birmingham, 1900-1975* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1995), 164-165 and 175. See also: Glenn T. Eskew, "The Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and the Birmingham Struggle for Civil Rights, 1956-1963," 75-76.

<sup>79</sup> Bass, 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Time*, "Person of the Year: Martin Luther King, Jr." January 3, 1964, available from <http://www.time.com/time/subscriber/personoftheyear/archive/stories/1963.html>. Also referenced in Bass, 226.

historical brutality behind race relations in the city.”<sup>81</sup> If the intent was truly to force the American government, as well as citizens throughout the country, to pay attention to the woes of African Americans in Birmingham, the tactic certainly succeeded. The camera coverage also played an important role in convincing northern whites that Jim Crow segregation was real, immediate, and terribly unjust. “Any suggestion by southern whites that their Jim Crow laws and lifestyle were moral, legal, or practical, or that the South’s Negroes were fundamentally happy, was demolished by the images.”<sup>82</sup> This realization “awakened the middle-class conscience” and made whites outside the South much more concerned about racism in the region. President John F. Kennedy said that the events of Birmingham “have so increased cries for equality that no city or state or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them.”<sup>83</sup> The media scrutiny helped turn the tide of public opinion in communities across the country.

Television portrayal of the civil rights demonstrations specifically affected Birmingham residents:

To see what they had not been able to witness with their own eyes, white and Negro Birmingham residents were forced to turn on network television news, where, in short but powerful black-and-white images packed into the fifteen-minute news programs, the myth of law enforcement civility and restraint was exploded.<sup>84</sup>

The advantage of television coverage was that for the first time, African American residents did not have to participate in the demonstrations to witness the violence.

African American reporters had been unable to cover such violence, for risk of their own

---

<sup>81</sup> Eskew, *But for Birmingham*, 273.

<sup>82</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, 321.

<sup>83</sup> Bains, 239.

<sup>84</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat*, 321.

safety, for years, and mainstream newspapers had largely ignored racial issues in Birmingham. But television news reflected the African American experience and brought the issue of race relations to the forefront. For the first time, the events were absolutely undeniable to both African Americans and whites in Birmingham.<sup>85</sup>

As the city's struggles gained more national attention, local residents on every side of the race issue felt pressure. Many white citizens had become obsessed with the criticism of the city's image, making them "defensive and willing to lash out at any negative portrait of their hometown."<sup>86</sup> The city was losing investment, revenue, and population, affecting both white and African American communities. The police force was largely thought to be out of control, beating white men, women, teenagers, and the handicapped, not to mention African Americans, who were considered "inferior beings, singular manifestations of a monolithic mass."<sup>87</sup> Commonly regarded as ground zero for racial violence, no place suffered from "racial tension as great as in Birmingham, which produced the most fierce of the country's battles for civil rights. Birmingham was America's Johannesburg."<sup>88</sup> Violence frightened not only African American residents but also any white moderates willing to speak out against segregation. Radical anti-Semitism was on the rise, threatening the Jewish population, and the fear of communism, a direct result of the Cold War, made honest public discussion of community issues

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Bass, 92.

<sup>87</sup> Eskew, *But for Birmingham*, 93.

<sup>88</sup> Wilson, 86.



nearly impossible.<sup>89</sup> Any person with views not conforming to the mainstream was at risk of economic sanction or outright violence from white southern radicals.

Adding to the confusion in Birmingham, the city was operating with two governments, the newly-elected mayor and city council, as well as the members of the previous administration who refused to leave office. This infighting tore a hole in the political infrastructure, providing little guidance for white residents on how to handle the local demonstrations. The Senior Citizens Committee, made up of eighty-nine local businessmen, many of whom directly felt the effects of lost downtown revenue, filled the gap in leadership by seeking negotiations with African American leaders. Secretly, they hashed out a deal with protestors that ended the 1963 demonstrations. Though the specific individuals involved in the negotiation went unnamed, the *Birmingham News* listed seventy-seven of the organization's members a few days after the protests ended. The names included the *News*' own publisher Clarence Hanson and the editor of the *Birmingham Post-Herald*, James E. Mills.<sup>90</sup>

After a few months of relative peace, the violence hit a crescendo in the fall of 1963. On Sunday, September 15, 1963, a dynamite blast killed four African American girls at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. "As parishioners and police pulled the bodies of innocent children from the rubble, an angry crowd of black bystanders formed around the

---

<sup>89</sup> Bass, 61.

<sup>90</sup> Bains, 212-213; LaMonte, 185; *Birmingham News*, "Senior Citizens' Names Announced," 16 May 1963, microfiche, 2; *Birmingham Post-Herald*, "Senior Citizens Group Urges Support of Action," 16 May 1963, microfiche, 2.

scene.” Violence consumed the city and “rioting broke out.”<sup>91</sup> Once again, race divided the city.

Birmingham, notorious for decades of racial violence and discrimination, has long been bound to its civil rights image; yet, historian David Garrow asserted in 1989 that one area of weakness in civil rights historiography was the thorough investigation of Birmingham’s role in the movement. “Greensboro, Selma and St. Augustine, as well as Little Rock, Tuskegee, and Memphis, all have been the subject of at least one significant book-length study, but the local aspects of Birmingham’s civil rights experience have not yet received extensive published attention.”<sup>92</sup> He sought scholarship that would focus specifically on how the movement operated at the local level.

Since that time, historians have combed through many aspects of the city’s troubles, from its weak leadership to the division within its African American community to its faltering economic situation. These scholars have examined the civil rights movement from within the city and as a part of the larger national strategy, and they have discussed the roles of local politicians, religious leaders, and the federal government. In studying Birmingham’s history and its place in the civil rights movement, they have provided a variety of lenses through which to understand racial oppression, violence, and the fight for equality in the United States.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Eskew, *But for Birmingham*, 321.

<sup>92</sup> Garrow, “Introduction,” x.

<sup>93</sup> See: Jonathan S. Bass, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers*; Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 2008); Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998); Charles E. Connerly, *The Most Segregated City in America*; Thomas H. Cox, “From Centerpiece to Center Stage: Kelly Ingram Park, Segregation, and Civil Rights in Birmingham, Alabama,” *Southern Historian* 18 (1997): 5-28; Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham*; Diane McWhorter,

It was during this painful period of Birmingham, Alabama's history that *Southern Living* magazine was born. At a time when the city earned the nickname Bombingham, when its racial oppression grabbed headlines around the world, and when the inept local government proved unable and unwilling to enforce safety for African Americans, *Southern Living* portrayed the exact opposite: a peaceful, apolitical portrait of life for white southerners. It targeted an audience who preferred to ignore the chaos around them, and it sought to answer naysayers outside the region with a version of southern identity that contradicted all the bad publicity. Such a mission is certainly much more complex than a simple business decision. In opting to be apolitical in this specific time and place, the magazine was also choosing to tell a whitewashed story of the South, one that glorified the Lost Cause, largely ignored African Americans, and reminded southerners of all the positive ways in which they were exceptional.

---

*Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama: The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001); Bobby M. Wilson, *Race and Place in Birmingham*.

## CHAPTER TWO

A new South was emerging during the 1950s. Small-time farming was failing to pay the bills; the never-ending grind of planting, harvesting, and tending livestock was less attractive than the industry jobs coming to towns and cities across the region. Large agricultural firms were edging their way into the South, and as the economy shifted, the men at Progressive Farmer Company took notice. They viewed their mission as one of service to farming families, and they had no intention of deserting them. At the same time, they recognized that their livelihoods rested solely with the fortunes of agriculture in the region; it would be wise to diversify. They knew very well why southerners were leaving the country for the city because most of them were the first generation of their own families to depart the farm. They had an emotional attachment to the ideal of farming, but they had a financial responsibility to look outside of it.

Racial tension was also bubbling to the surface. After the *Brown* decision in 1954, Jim Crow segregation was under attack from African Americans no longer willing or able to accept injustice. They organized coordinated attacks to the system and slowly chipped away at the walls that had barred them from white society. It was painfully slow, this piecing together of some security for themselves, and it required many African Americans to put their very lives on the line. As they challenged a system of oppression that had existed for hundreds of years, they also undermined the tenuous security of whites, who were quite intent on maintaining the status quo. This tension was largely invisible in the pages of *Southern Living* itself, but it was visible to the men of Progressive Farmer, who were keenly aware of the race “situation” in the South.

Internal discussion existed at *Progressive Farmer* throughout the late 1950s about a new magazine launch for suburban, white southerners, but it was the early 1960s that settled the matter. Birmingham came apart at the seams, from the beating of Freedom Riders in 1961 to a push for new city leadership in 1962 to the Project C demonstrations in 1963, culminating in the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. The economic underpinning of the city crumbled, as fewer businesses located in the city and downtown boycotts threatened local businesses. More and more whites left Birmingham for the suburbs and then refused to allow these communities to incorporate into the city limits. Vacated neighborhoods suffered as whites could not, or would not, sell or rent their homes to African Americans, and bombings terrified African Americans who dared to cross the lines. Fred Shuttlesworth had been helping to organize African Americans in Birmingham and was largely responsible for the downtown boycotts, but in 1963 Martin Luther King and the outside world focused squarely on the city. What they saw was not pretty. In fact, local business leaders like Sid Smyer were embarrassed. How could they attract much-needed investment in Birmingham with the city having such a hateful reputation? He helped to organize the Senior Citizens' Committee and pushed for a new mayor-council system to rid the city of the infamous Bull Connor, but the Old Guard would not budge. In the spring of 1963, the city had two city governments during the middle of the Project C demonstrations. The world was shocked at the mayhem in Birmingham, and it was into this very environment of social, economic, and political turmoil that *Southern Living* was born.

*Southern Living* magazine was no accident. The process of launching *Southern Living* magazine was a lengthy one, stretching nearly a decade. Much debate and careful

planning went into the decision, and it was not one that the men at Progressive Farmer Company took lightly. They were cautious about how they would diversify their company; they were only willing to invest in projects that they were sure would prosper. According to Advertising Manager Oscar Dugger, the launch process “slow and conservative,” because the company was creating a new magazine during a “time when Life Magazine was weakening, Saturday Evening Post had folded, and the new Holiday Magazine required lots and lots of money to get into the black.” Progressive Farmer’s Board of Directors was unwilling to borrow for the expansion, so the company had to find a way to contribute its own funds toward diversification.<sup>94</sup> The leading men at Progressive Farmer pondered, queried, and discussed every aspect of the expansion, and, before the magazine’s launch, they were as sure as they could be that it would be a hit with its target audience.

### The Men Behind the Launch

Emory Cunningham played a crucial role in *Southern Living*’s launch. Fresh out of Auburn University, he was hoping for a job in agricultural journalism when he arrived at Progressive Farmer Company in 1948, but instead he joined the advertising department. He became a rising star, rapidly climbing Progressive Farmer’s corporate ladder. Cunningham attributed his success to his understanding of southern farmers and his ability to explain their wants and needs to national advertisers who had little

---

<sup>94</sup> Carolyn Green Satterfield, “An Interview with Oscar Milton Dugger,” page 3, 22 June 1977, Folder 50, Box 2, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

knowledge of the region and its people. Paul Huey, Cunningham's superior at the time, noted his intelligence, charisma, good looks, and impeccable agricultural background. While Huey was in poor health from 1955 to 1959, Cunningham fulfilled many of the duties of advertising director before he officially received the title after Huey's death in 1959. By that time, the company's president Eugene Butler had his eye on Cunningham, who was on his short list of young prospects for upper management.<sup>95</sup>

Cunningham had the idea for *Southern Living* years before anyone at Progressive Farmer took note. Reportedly, as early as 1949, Emory Cunningham discussed the possibility of a southern magazine published by southerners with Raymond Wiley, the Dallas advertising sales representative for *Progressive Farmer*; if true, this would mean Cunningham forecast the launch more than fifteen years before it actually happened. Informally, Cunningham promoted a southern lifestyle magazine within the company for years.<sup>96</sup>

Clarence Poe retired as president of Progressive Farmer Company in 1953, giving the title over to Eugene Butler, who immediately set out to find ways to diversify the organization.<sup>97</sup> Butler had come of age at the company his father, Tait, had helped found, and he had climbed through its ranks. He moved to Dallas early in his career to run the Texas edition of *Progressive Farmer*, and he stayed there the rest of his life, commuting

---

<sup>95</sup> John Quenelle, "The Story of Southern Living: A Man Plus an Idea" MSs, 24 June 1987, Southern Progress Archives, Birmingham, Alabama, 32-38, 44-45, and 54-55; Eugene Butler to Fowler Dugger, Alexander Nunn, and Paul Huey, TLS, 19 April 1957, Folder 11.5, Box 3, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 2.

<sup>96</sup> Quenelle, 65-66.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 53; Eugene Butler, "The Progressive Farmer Company's Expansion Program," TD, Folder 9, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 6.

to Birmingham regularly to oversee operations and communicating by telephone and interoffice memorandums with employees there daily.

Eugene Butler was knowledgeable about the social turmoil around him during the 1950s and 1960s. For nearly sixty years, from 1924 to 1982, Eugene Butler wrote editorials for *Progressive Farmer* magazine. In them he discussed a number of hot-button issues of the day, including segregation, busing schoolchildren as part of integration, and civil rights demonstrations. He was knowledgeable about politics and current events, and he was deeply concerned about lifting the region out of poverty. He favored both economic investment in the South and protecting an agricultural way of life, two ends of a spectrum.

Butler filed away dozens of newspaper clippings of editorials and congressional testimony concerning integration, education, and politics. Most of them chided nonviolent protest, criticized the Supreme Court as being too liberal, and applauded a state's right to determine its own matters, particularly education. Butler passionately protected public education, especially for poor white children, and he said that using schools as pawns "to effect social change, without regard to its effect on education, has been disastrous." He argued that busing, in particular, undermined neighborhood schools and wasted precious resources. What he did not admit, perhaps even to himself, was that the resistance to social change had been even more disastrous to public education in the region.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Eugene Butler, "The Progressive Farmer Company's Educational Crusade," TD, Folder 9, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 11-12; Folders 5 and 6, Box 10, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College



One editorial in particular that Butler saved was written by George Schuyler, a conservative African American journalist. The editorial about Martin Luther King, Jr. began: “The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. tragically emphasizes again the fact that ‘militant non-violence’ always ends violently.”<sup>99</sup> It was as if King’s death was his own fault. Even though he promoted non-violence, the editorial suggested, King knew it would spark violence in the end; he should have known better than to challenge white supremacy in that way. Such an editorial is indicative of the mindset of middle-of-road white southerners during that time who considered their own position of intolerance and indifference as perfectly reasonable, while the actions of demonstrators were wholly nonsensical. They were only too happy to have an African American journalist reinforce their position.

Butler also received the *Southern Journal* published in the 1970s by The L. Q. C. Lamar Society, a rather liberal consortium of southern journalists, politicians, and thinkers committed to aiding the region’s move from the arguments over race into a sunnier future. Its members included Hodding Carter III, William Winter, John Lewis, Wilma Dykeman Stokely, and H. Brandt Ayers. Butler kept three issues of the *Southern Journal* from 1976, a three-part series on the impact of busing on both public and private education. It is not clear whether he supported the organization or simply kept the issues because of his interest in education.<sup>100</sup>

---

Station, Texas. See also: Folders 33 and 34 in Box 9 and Folders 1 through 4 and 6 in Box 10, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

<sup>99</sup> George S. Schuyler, “He Reaped the Whirlwind: A Cool Appraisal of Martin Luther King,” *Human Events*, 20 April 1968, Folder 34, Box 9, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

<sup>100</sup> *Southern Journal*, Spring 1976, Vol. 4, No. 4 and Vol. 5, Nos. 1-3, Folder 5, Box 10, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

Butler collected 105 of more than 1,000 of his editorials at *Progressive Farmer* into a bound book. He intended the sampling to be representative of his body of work: “They cover a wide range of subjects from land, legumes, and lynching; colleges, cotton, and courts; taxes, tenancy, and tractors.” He acknowledged that some were “rather strongly worded,” but their intention was to attack “ideas and policies,” never individuals. Concerning his own political viewpoint, he wrote:

During this long period my economic and political views have changed from those of a Woodrow Wilson Democrat to the conservatism of a Ronald Reagan Republican. For example, in the early years as a liberal Democrat, I thought the states were using the “states rights” argument to avoid state’s responsibilities. More recently I have concluded that the federal government has gone much too far in taking over matters that should have been left to the states.

Interestingly, Butler admitted that his political viewpoint had shifted, most likely after the 1960s and integration when southern whites who had been on the liberal edge of segregationist thinking slid over to a more conservative perspective that called for protecting a state’s power (to avoid federal mandates). Education was an area that especially troubled Butler. He believed that forcing integration threatened public education for all southern children and would force white children, who could afford it, into private schools.<sup>101</sup>

According to his editorials, Butler believed that African Americans were entitled to the same basic rights as other citizens—the ability to vote, a fair judicial system, a safe place to live, a good education, and the opportunity to better oneself. The violence of the day appalled him; he desired peace across the region. But, racism required no second thought in Butler’s world. An otherwise honorable, kind, and gentle man could also

---

<sup>101</sup> Eugene Butler, *Editorial Opinion*, n.d. but after 1982, Folder 6, Box 10, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

believe that separate but equal was possible—and even fair. Reading Butler’s words, it is as if living, working, and socializing with black people, not just around them, was no consideration. In his editorials, “the Negro Problem” was the unfortunate burden of the South, which had the majority of the country’s African Americans; it was an impossible situation, to resolve the needs and wants of African Americans while toting the status quo.<sup>102</sup>

Butler could not understand why African Americans would demonstrate; it looked like rabble rousing and chaos to him. Reform should come from within the system. In one editorial, he asked: “Just how many civil wrongs are to be committed in the name of ‘civil rights’ before this nation comes to its senses?”<sup>103</sup> He was particularly hard on journalists: “Sharing the blame for the great national influence of civil rights fanatics are the mass communication media. No group has done more to encourage and publicize these disturbers of the public peace than the newspapers, the magazines, and TV stations.”<sup>104</sup> He valued the right of African Americans to demonstrate, peacefully and lawfully, and he thought the establishment should not be so slow to grant them the right to vote; however, he questioned the sincerity of most protestors: “For, after all, 9 out of 10 demonstrators, especially their leaders, are more interested in getting publicity by

---

<sup>102</sup> Eugene Butler, “Open the Door White Folks,” originally published July 1947, *Editorial Opinion* Folder 6, Box 10, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. See also: Eugene Butler, “Justice Must Be Colorblind,” originally published in January 1966 *Editorial Opinion*, Folder 6, Box 10, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

<sup>103</sup> Eugene Butler, “Every Man, His Own Judge,” originally published in July 1964 *Editorial Opinion*, Folder 6, Box 10, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

<sup>104</sup> Eugene Butler, “Lawless Chickens Come Home to Riotous Roost,” originally published in October 1965 *Editorial Opinion* Folder 6, Box 10, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

causing trouble than in establishing the right to vote.” While all citizens should be able to vote, to Butler the violence associated with gaining it was unjustifiable. The ends for him did not justify the means. While Butler may have been a moderate in some of his beliefs, at least by the standards of his time and place, he was thinking like a white man with all the rights and privileges that came with his skin color. He could call for change *within* the system, because that system worked for him. The system he hoped would ensure basic rights and privileges for African Americans was the very system that permitted crimes against them and then withheld prosecution for the perpetrators.<sup>105</sup>

### Diversification Plans

Between 1950 and 1960, the number of farm families in *Progressive Farmer's* sixteen-state territory declined by nearly forty percent. Even with the slump in its audience, the magazine continued to increase its circulation numbers, from 950,000 in 1944 to 1.4 million in 1960. Company leaders began to fear the circulation figures were inflated and untenable, that the magazine was “suffering from ‘mass circulation fever.’” They needed to cut circulation and solidify their company’s future. By 1955 they seriously discussed options for some sort of expansion as they witnessed the meltdown of magazine institutions such as *Collier's* and *Women's Home Companion*, both of which had been in existence for about seven decades. They realized that if farming continued to

---

<sup>105</sup> Eugene Butler, “The Case for Mississippi,” originally published April 1965 *Editorial Opinion*, Folder 6, Box 10, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

decline and they had no other revenue stream, Progressive Farmer Company was doomed.<sup>106</sup>

In 1957, the company established a Long Range Planning Committee to explore its options; its members were major players in the company, including Eugene and Britt Butler, Clarence and William Poe, and John Pearson, some of the original investors and their families.<sup>107</sup> The group's mission was to examine the company's growth potential to predict any potential pitfalls. They investigated everything from changes in southern agriculture to company stock distribution to equipment they needed to purchase. In 1958 Progressive Farmer began peddling accident insurance to its subscribers; the next year it acquired Birmingham Printing Company. Then in 1960, company executives formed the Diversification Committee to explore additional expansion opportunities. Members of the group were Fowler Dugger (the chairman), Alexander Nunn, Oscar Dugger, Emory Cunningham, and O.B. Copeland.<sup>108</sup>

By that time, many within Progressive Farmer were discussing the need not only to expand the company but to have a regional lifestyle magazine directed toward southerners. Butler considered agricultural publications about dairy, hogs, wildlife, and

---

<sup>106</sup> Eugene Butler, "Sixty-Fifth Annual Report of the President of Progressive Farmer Company," February 1969, Folder 41, Box 2, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 2-3 (Confidential information was removed from this document, signed OBC, probably O.B. Copeland, and dated 10 July 1975); Eugene Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TD, 1956 section, Folder 30, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 3.

<sup>107</sup> The members were: Clarence Poe, Eugene Butler, John Pearson, Fowler Dugger, Jim Kilgore, Paul Huey, Alexander Nunn, William Poe, and Britt Butler.

<sup>108</sup> Quenelle, 52; Butler, "Sixty-Fifth Annual Report of the President of Progressive Farmer Company," 3; "Committees: Progressive Farmer Company, 1961-1962," TD, Folder 34, Box 2, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TD, 1957 section, Folder 31, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 6; Eugene Butler to Clarence Poe, TLS, 29 August 1957, Folder 9, Box 2, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

tobacco. Potential projects also included hunting and fishing manuals, a southern-style cookbook, and purchasing a magazine called *Southern Outdoor Life*. Company leaders seriously discussed launching a dairy magazine in late 1961, but their enthusiasm cooled once they realized how limited their audience would be. Butler believed their best bet was an outdoors magazine of some sort, and Emory Cunningham seconded his opinion but stressed the importance of defining their editorial and circulation concept before they made any final decisions.<sup>109</sup>

Though the company discussed a number of options for how to grow the company, Butler specifically wanted a plan to move readers from *Progressive Farmer* to a new home magazine, possibly called *Progressive Home Magazine*.<sup>110</sup> *Progressive Farmer* had an extremely loyal audience who talked candidly with the magazine's staff through letters. Staff writers answered back in a friendly tone that encouraged the relationship. They actually felt a kinship with their audience because in large part they shared hobbies, lifestyles, and histories with the people who read the magazine. The

---

<sup>109</sup> Eugene Butler to Fowler Dugger, Alexander Nunn, and Oscar Dugger, TLS, 9 February 1961, Folder 23, Box 1, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi; Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TD, 1961 section, 7-8; Emory Cunningham to Friends, TLS, 29 November 1961, Folder 23, Box 1, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi; Eugene Butler to Emory Cunningham, TLS, 28 April 1962, Folder 23, Box 1, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi; Emory Cunningham to Eugene Butler, TLS, 27 April 1962, Folder 23, Box 1, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

<sup>110</sup> Eugene Butler to Fowler Dugger, Clarence Poe, Alexander Nunn, Oscar Dugger, Emory Cunningham, J.L. Rogers, Britt Butler, and Jim Kilgore, TL, 31 March 1961, Folder 11.202, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

hope was that in starting a new magazine they could recreate this loyalty and mutual respect with a different audience.<sup>111</sup>

In March 1960, *Progressive Farmer* salesman, Ted Bjork, wrote to his colleague Emory Cunningham about how the time was of the essence in launching a home magazine:

The West wasn't always the rich market it is now. I think the South is growing the same way, and we can materially assist it to do so. Our editorial could logically help stimulate a new "way of living" for our South. This type of new life could and should be for farmers as well as all others. But the circulation could spread even more strongly to the urban life of smaller communities and even to suburbs. Don't you feel that someone will do it? After all, it's the trend. Every study I have seen shows the circulation weakness of all consumer magazines in the South. This will not long be ignored.<sup>112</sup>

Bjork's prediction was extraordinarily accurate.

In late 1962 and early 1963, company leaders deliberated about a magazine for just their non-farm rural audience, but they worried its advertising would compete with *Progressive Farmer*. In the spring of 1963, they entirely changed their direction.<sup>113</sup> At a company board meeting in December 1962, Emory Cunningham did not discuss a home magazine for the non-farm rural audience; instead, he focused his attention on a magazine that would appeal to urban and suburban families. The Board was extremely interested in the proposal and requested that Cunningham continue his research.<sup>114</sup>

African Americans had already begun to protest in Birmingham in the fall of 1962. Local organizers joined students in boycotting retail stores to desegregate their

---

<sup>111</sup> Quenelle, 67.

<sup>112</sup> Quenelle, 65-66; Eugene Butler to Fowler Dugger, Clarence Poe, Alexander Nunn, Oscar Dugger, Emory Cunningham, J.L. Rogers, Britt Butler, and Jim Kilgore, TL, 31 March 1961, Folder 11.202, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>113</sup> Butler, "The Progressive Farmer's Expansion Program," 18.

<sup>114</sup> Quenelle, 68.

“lunch counters, rest rooms, and drinking fountains” and to improve employment opportunities for African Americans. The boycott wounded downtown business owners, reducing their sales by about forty percent. A disastrous local election loomed on the horizon, and national civil rights organizers had Birmingham in their sights. As white businessmen, Progressive Farmer Company’s leadership and board members were not immune to the trouble headed their way.<sup>115</sup>

### Convincing the Board

In March 1963, a series of correspondence between Emory Cunningham and Eugene Butler explored a circulation plan for removing subscribers from *Progressive Farmer* magazine and transferring them to the potential *Southern Living* project, but the conversation remained in the realm of circulation figures and which southern metropolises they should target. On April 2, 1963, Oscar Dugger, Advertising Director for *Progressive Farmer*, wrote to Eugene Butler that he believed their best diversification bet was a new home magazine. He said he had mentioned the *Southern Living* idea to “a number of prominent business friends” in Birmingham, all of whom were overwhelmingly supportive. They enjoyed *Progressive Farmer* for the virtuous philosophy it demonstrated in both its editorial and advertising content; he could envision them switching to a magazine that, while more suited to their lifestyles, was published by

---

<sup>115</sup> Lee Bains, Jr. “Birmingham, 1963: Confrontation over Civil Rights,” in *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956-1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights*, ed. David Garrow, 151-199 (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, 1989), 169.



a familiar company. In launching this new home magazine, the company would reach the “thousands of non-farm Progressive Farmer subscribers and a vast number of urban and suburban families of the South who would welcome a wholesome family magazine into their homes now that so many urban magazines are concentrating on sex, sensationalism and anti-Southern propaganda.”<sup>116</sup>

The subtext is that *Southern Living*, like its parent company, would shun the alcohol advertising to which some religious southerners were opposed, and it would avoid the seamy, controversial topics of the day, such as birth control pills and race riots. Respectable, white southerners would not have to be bothered with negativity, particularly all the bad news coming from Birmingham itself at that very moment. On April 2, the day Dugger wrote his letter, Birmingham residents were casting their ballots in the run-off mayoral election between Albert Boutwell and notorious commissioner Bull Connor, which marked the beginning of internal chaos as two city governments fought for legitimacy.

Emory Cunningham also wrote to Butler, sending him a memo the very next day. Dugger was Cunningham’s superior, and they shared opinions on the company’s future. Cunningham told Butler that he favored a greater tool for diversification than buying another publication or adding an edition to *Progressive Farmer*; he hoped the company would aim higher and launch its own home magazine: “My enthusiasm for a Plains Edition [of *Progressive Farmer*] or separate publication is dulled somewhat by belief that

---

<sup>116</sup> Eugene Butler to Emory Cunningham, TLS, 7 March 1963, Folder 11.153, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Emory Cunningham to Eugene Butler, TLS, 8 March 1963, Folder 11.153, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Oscar Dugger to Eugene Butler, TLS, 2 April 1963, Folder 11.276, Box 6, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Butler, “The Progressive Farmer’s Expansion Program,” 17-18.

we need something bigger than either of these to rally behind; something big enough to give the Company room to grow in a big way over a period of years.” He believed, as he had for years, that the *Southern Living* idea was full of potential. As an advertising man, Cunningham was aware of the lack of national advertising in the region, as well as audience wants and needs.<sup>117</sup>

Again, it is the timing of his letter to Butler that is so striking. From late 1962 until March 1963, a relative quiet exists among the thousands of Progressive Farmer memorandums; in March, a conversation blossomed between Emory Cunningham and Eugene Butler about a circulation plan for a potential launch. But, in April the idea that the company had danced around for years finally gained traction—and a new significance. April 3, 1963, the day Cunningham wrote Butler about the necessity for *Southern Living*, was the first day of Project C, the protests that overtook the city for the better part of six weeks. It was the beginning of a period of unrest in Birmingham that drew international condemnation and has continued to define the city, and though Dugger, Butler, and Cunningham veiled their references to it, they were well aware of the situation around them.

On May 16, just six days after the Birmingham protests ended, Fowler Dugger sent a memorandum to Emory Cunningham reviewing several points they needed to clarify before an upcoming Progressive Farmer Company board meeting. They planned to discuss how many subscribers to target, their profit and loss projections, and a rough

---

<sup>117</sup> Butler, “The Progressive Farmer’s Expansion Program,” 17-18.

outline of *Southern Living*'s subject matter.<sup>118</sup> On May 22, Board members converged for their semi-annual meeting. For the first time, the Board heard the results of Cunningham's research on the prospect of launching *Southern Living*. Cunningham began by proposing a question to them: "Is our long range goal to grow much bigger than we are, with the risk and increased efforts and responsibilities such growth demands, or would we rather take less risk, be more sure of profit every year, and accept less potential for long range growth in profit, service and opportunity for our employees?" Cunningham then outlined the changes he believed the company needed to make, regardless of which path they took. He suggested refining *Progressive Farmer*'s audience, moving the magazine's home section to the back of the publication just before classified advertising beginning with the August issue, and, in October, changing the home department from "Progressive Home" to "Southern Living."<sup>119</sup>

Cunningham then continued by explaining to his audience why taking any risk at all was necessary when the company was solvent and its primary publication was successful. He told them that *Progressive Farmer* had hit its peak in terms of advertising and circulation and that future growth would have to be found elsewhere. The decline in farming, the rise in advertising competition with other publications and television, and *Progressive Farmer*'s domination over other farm periodicals meant that their growth would soon stagnate. Also, advertisers would continue to look for more specified audiences, and the southern farm families of *Progressive Farmer* could not help them

---

<sup>118</sup> Fowler Dugger to Emory Cunningham, TLS, Folder 11.169, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>119</sup> Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the Progressive Farmer Company, 22 May 1963, Folder 11.133, Box 4, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 7-8.

take advantage of that trend. *Southern Living* would give them “more head room to grow” by allowing them to attract additional consumer advertising. Put simply, *Southern Living* could capture the advertisers that *Progressive Farmer* could not.<sup>120</sup>

Cunningham outlined for the Board how they should set a launch into motion. First, they needed to separate 100,000 non-farm families from the *Progressive Farmer* subscription list and move those readers to *Southern Living*. For at least a year, *Southern Living* would carry much of the same advertising and editorial content as the home section of *Progressive Farmer*, and it would retain the name *Progressive Farmer* on its masthead until it could stand on its own. Cunningham advised that the first twelve-to-eighteen months of *Southern Living* would be crucial to its success, so the company should be prepared to hire some of the best and brightest personnel to work on the project. After the first year, *Southern Living* should have about 200,000 subscribers, and *Progressive Farmer* would be down to 1.2 million. The company’s chance of success would increase greatly once the two publications reached the 500,000/1 million mark. Cunningham then made the point that this adjustment would allow them to bet on the future of the South as a whole, rather than just the rural sector of the region: “Our destiny would be linked with the future of the total South, as well as the farm South, and Progressive Farmer Company would be flexible enough to take advantage of all the rapid changes we are sure to see in the years ahead, and these changes may even come faster than we imagine.”<sup>121</sup> This “rapid change” to which Cunningham alluded was certainly economic, but he was also likely referring to the very changes happening down the road

---

<sup>120</sup> Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the Progressive Farmer Company, 8-9; Quenelle, 70.

<sup>121</sup> Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the Progressive Farmer Company, 9-11; Quenelle, 71-72.

from their corporate office—the Project C demonstrations, the social unrest, and the bad publicity for Birmingham.

To the Board, Cunningham openly expressed his worry about the execution of *Southern Living*. Their success would depend on how organized the project was, how well they researched their advertising and consumer market, and how supportive management was. He advocated that one person have the sole authority and responsibility of overseeing the launch; reading between the lines, since *Southern Living* was largely his idea, his plan, and his research, surely he hoped that person would be him. But, he acknowledged that talk around the company suggested his authority with the *Southern Living* project was drawing to a close: “From recent discussions, I know there is a good chance someone else may be appointed to carry on what I have started.”<sup>122</sup> Cunningham’s tone was one of concern; he was right to worry because this decision stalled *Southern Living* and jeopardized its future.

Cunningham concluded his presentation by summarizing the eight objectives and advantages of his plan:

1. Maintain Progressive Farmer’s traditional editorial qualities of integrity, high ideals, service, inspiration and friendliness.
2. Further increase Progressive Farmer’s service to farm people.
3. Reach more non-farm families who are in the age of acquisition and planning for the future.
4. Through treatment, subject matter and timing of articles, make Southern Living distinctly southern, filling the void in service rendered by national advertising media.
5. Offer advertisers a smaller, more refined farm audience, but a larger and better southern audience for consumer products.
6. Provide larger outlet for books, insurance and miscellaneous services we may profitably sell to advertisers.

---

<sup>122</sup> Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the Progressive Farmer Company, 11-12.

7. Capitalize on good standing of The Progressive Farmer Company with non-farm people who grew up on farms and in small towns.
8. Put Progressive Farmer Company in position to grow with trends in population and marketing.<sup>123</sup>

Cunningham outlined the exact plan the company followed: targeting home-owning, suburban, and youthful southern families, unburdening *Progressive Farmer* of circulation that it did not need, and providing Progressive Farmer Company with an additional revenue source.

Executive Editor of *Progressive Farmer* Alexander Nunn then spoke to the Board. He praised Emory Cunningham's service to the company and his leadership in performing this research for the Diversification Committee. Nunn continued by presenting the editorial team's plan for *Southern Living*. First, he said that they needed to conduct a study with the magazine's potential audience, either by personal interviews with small groups or direct mail interviews with larger ones. They also intended to target suburban families who were not current subscribers of *Progressive Farmer*.<sup>124</sup>

Nunn outlined for the Board the timeline for the changes that he and Cunningham proposed. *Progressive Farmer*'s home department would become "Southern Living" in October 1963. The editorial staff would create a pilot issue of *Southern Living* magazine in late winter of 1963 or early spring of 1964. In July or August of 1964, if possible, they would publicly announce the new magazine, and the Circulation department would begin selling subscriptions. Then, they would distribute the first issue of *Southern Living* in

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.,13-14.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.,14-15.

February 1965. The editorial staff hoped to have two or three issues of the magazine already prepared by that time.<sup>125</sup>

Next, Nunn identified the new magazine's theme:

1. It will serve non-farm Southern families with particular emphasis on young families.
2. It will be devoted to better Southern living and will be made so Southern and so useful that it will not attempt to compete with national magazines in the home or family field.
3. It will serve as a voice for the South and will be a crusading magazine for the South, somewhat more conservatively pitched than The Progressive Farmer is thought to be.
4. It will be a prestige magazine, somewhat more sophisticated than The Progressive Farmer.
5. The South has a reputation for good food, gracious living, and good manners. This new magazine will be devoted to the best of these and other phases of Southern living.<sup>126</sup>

Nunn, as would become evident, had difficulty understanding the subtlety of *Southern Living*. He was accustomed to *Progressive Farmer's* crusading voice, and he truly viewed the new magazine as a sister publication with comparable motives. He did recognize that *Southern Living* had to be more refined than *Progressive Farmer* if it were to enter the home magazine field that included heavyweights like *Better Homes and Gardens*. He was also supportive of *Southern Living* as a medium to remind southerners about how wonderful it was to live in the region, but he remained stuck in a mindset of *Southern Living* as an ambassador to an unappreciative "North" that failed to acknowledge the superiority of southern culture.

Nunn listed the areas he believed the magazine might cover: travel, education, horticulture and floraculture, homes, clothing and fashions, food, social issues, famous

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.,15.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.,16.

southerners, health, community projects, fishing/hunting/camping, sports, music and art, reader participation, religious life, southern history, humor and cartoons, fiction, Negro life, southern books, and a shopping guide.<sup>127</sup> In other words, the editorial staff had brainstormed everything they believed the magazine should be and listed them all. They were far from devising a streamlined and more realistic outline of what the magazine would be. This wavering continued throughout *Southern Living*'s earliest years. One interesting aspect to this extensive list is the inclusion of "Negro life." The founders of the magazine very rarely acknowledged African American readers at all in their discussions of *Southern Living*. Though Nunn did provide them a section, he segregated them from the content at large by creating a specific area of the magazine for them.

Nunn continued by exploring the new editorial positions the company would need to create in order to launch *Southern Living*:

1. One coordinating editor, probably a man who would head the editorial staff for Southern Living.
2. One woman editor with training in home equipment and furnishing.
3. One woman editor with training in family life, child care, etc.
4. One artist.
5. One to two persons to assist in editorial production work.
6. One or more secretarial staff members.
7. Probably considerably more freelance material to be used than is now purchased for Progressive Farmer use.
8. It is anticipated that one or more staff members may be brought in as much as six months in advance of first publication date.<sup>128</sup>

From Nunn's hiring assessment, several things are clear. First, he intended to hire a skeleton staff to write, produce, and publish the new magazine. He called for the company to employ less than ten full-time people for the project, and he left much of the

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.,16-17.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.,18.



actual creation of editorial content up to freelancers. This strategy would prove detrimental to the launch in the coming years. Second, Nunn envisioned a clear division in the labor force; he specified that women should oversee the content having to do with the home and families, while a man should lead the entire *Southern Living* project. Such a mindset was not unusual in that time and place, but it does present a window into the male-dominated internal structure of the company.<sup>129</sup>

On the morning of May 24, 1963, after hearing additional presentations on circulation and advertising, the Board approved further research on the Southern Living project.<sup>130</sup> They charged Advertising Director Oscar Dugger with the responsibility of forming a task force to predict when and how they could start the new magazine and how much it would cost. Dugger created the Southern Living Task Force Committee with Circulation Manager J. L. Rogers, Assistant Treasurer Vernon Owens, and Executive Editor Alexander Nunn's assistant O.B. Copeland. A sub-committee that specifically focused on researching the market for *Southern Living* included O.B. Copeland, Emory Cunningham, and Orville Demaree. All of these men ultimately reported to President Eugene Butler and the Board of Directors.<sup>131</sup> Even while the company moved forward on *Southern Living*, it investigated other options. It tested two magazines, *Southern Fishing* and *Southern Hunting and Fishing*, but ultimately Progressive Farmer Company decided they were too limited in their subject matter, which was already well-covered in other publications.<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Quenelle, 73-74.

<sup>132</sup> Quenelle, 75.

## The Time Is Now

Four days after the board meeting, Clarence Poe, a founder of the company and its former president who lived in North Carolina, telegrammed Alexander Nunn, *Progressive Farmer's* Executive Editor. He was distressed about Alabama in the midst of civil rights protests, and he hoped Nunn could intervene with the governor to salvage the state's reputation before any further damage:

My great interest in the progress and future of Alabama is evidenced by the fact that we have had our main office there for more than fifty years. This interest in the state's future leads me to say this: With evident conscientiousness and courage Governor Wallace has now explored the last area of possible national subordination to the state in educational and military matters. At the same time I know he now wishes to avoid blood-shed [sic] and especially unnecessary bloodshed which might injure the state's progress for a hundred years to come. I wonder therefore if you and others might not be able to get him to say something like this: "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have done my utmost for success. But now the dictates of future progress demand that we no longer waste our energies and talents in a fruitless endeavor which might only increase hatred and bitterness. I am theresore [sic] willing to join in helping Alabama forward in such a new effort for peace by all our people just as I conscientiously sought to lead them in the effort I have just mademz [sic]"<sup>133</sup>

The next day Poe followed his telegram with a letter to Nunn. He explained that a nationally-prominent friend of his had called him to ask if he "knew anyone who might have some influence with Governor Wallace." Nunn was one of two people Poe believed might have an ear with Alabama's leader. Poe told Nunn that he assumed his message to Wallace would do little "good but there may be one chance in a thousand that it might have some mellowing influence. At any rate we should not pass up any opportunity to do

---

<sup>133</sup> Clarence Poe telegram to Alexander Nunn, TD, 28 May 1963, Folder 24, Box 2, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

something that may save the South from a worse situation than the one it is already in.”<sup>134</sup>

Poe sounds frantic in this correspondence, desperate to stop the waves of bad news coming out of Alabama.

There is no record of Nunn’s response to Poe, but two weeks later Nunn did honor his request. On the very morning that George Wallace attempted to delay the integration of the University of Alabama by standing in a doorway to physically block two African American students, Nunn telegraphed George Wallace:

As you make final plans for this morning’s confrontation may I say emphatically you are far more important to Alabama, to law and order, and to constitutional government as governor than a martyr in federal custody. Don’t give anyone satisfaction of gloating over federal troops in Tuscaloosa or George Wallace jailed. You have fought a good fight, you have kept the faith. You can say after forcefully stating your position and Alabama’s that you have never promoted hatred and bitterness, that with a federal court order before you, you mean to act to maintain peace and law and order and to give no one the least opportunity to try to justify outside federal force. Supreme Court decisions have been overturned in past and will in future. We are interested, not in so-called civil rights legislation but in expanded economic growth for all Alabamians, for better people and responsible citizenship. Challenge all of whatever position or race to join with you in that goal.

Alexander Nunn, *The Progressive Farmer*<sup>135</sup>

Nunn altered Poe’s tone somewhat in this telegram, though he did echo some of the same language. Nunn is more defensive toward the federal government’s stance and resolute in the morality and legality of the governor’s position. He clearly has little sympathy for demonstrators and strongly supports Alabama’s resistance to federal mandates concerning racial equality. This telegram suggests two crucial points: Nunn had some

---

<sup>134</sup> Clarence Poe to Alexander Nunn, TLS, 29 May 1963, Folder 24, Box 2, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

<sup>135</sup> Alexander Nunn telegram to George Wallace at the University of Alabama, TD, 11 June 1963, Folder 24, Box 2, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

relationship with the notorious governor, and he was very much aware of the politics of the day. Progressive Farmer Company might have presented itself as removed from regional troubles with its launch of *Southern Living* magazine, but the truth was just the opposite.

*Southern Living*'s timing was impeccable. Though Emory Cunningham had tossed around the idea in the 1950s, though many within the company had long favored a southern lifestyle magazine, and though the company had waffled on launching a home magazine for a couple of years, Progressive Farmer Company chartered new ground with the project in May 1963. It might have been chance that a board meeting was scheduled for that month, but it was not happenstance that in the spring of 1963 Progressive Farmer Company finally found a magazine project on which it was willing to take a risk and that the magazine glorified the white southern lifestyle.

The first two memorandums that survive in three archives about the urgency of launching *Southern Living* were written on April 2 and April 3 of 1963, two of the most significant days of the Birmingham demonstrations. Prior to April 1963, the conversation about diversification had largely centered on rural magazines; yet, within a couple of weeks of Martin Luther King, Jr. writing his letter from jail, of water cannons confronting African American youth, and of white businessmen scurrying behind the scenes to end the chaos, *Southern Living* finally saw the light of day. Suddenly, what had been a *good* idea became a *great* idea. *Southern Living* was a band-aid on all the negative publicity. For these white men, most of whom lived in Birmingham in 1963, *Southern Living* was a welcome breath of fresh air.

Perhaps, Progressive Farmer Company President Eugene Butler said it best:

I felt that expansion at the right time usually opened the door to opportunity -- but if taken at the wrong time could lead to disaster. Fortunately, we couldn't have picked a more opportune time to start a magazine devoted to Southern interests. Southern people were sick and tired of the continuous and usually ill-founded criticisms of our region. They welcomed a publication devoted to helping Southern families take full advantage of assets that were found more abundantly in the South than in another region of the nation.<sup>136</sup>

Butler was clearly interested in uplifting white southerners and giving them a positive portrayal of their identity about which they could be proud, but his tone betrays him.

There was also an enthusiasm for answering all the criticism about the region and a defensiveness toward a country that did not appreciate (white) southern culture. *Southern Living* magazine had the potential to do all that—and more.

---

<sup>136</sup> Eugene Butler's summary of editorial meetings, TD, n.d. but probably in mid-1970s, Folder 9, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

### CHAPTER THREE

The Progressive Farmer Company Board of Directors consented to the Southern Living project in the spring of 1963, but its approval simply permitted research on the potential magazine to continue. Company leaders still had to determine who would work on the project, how they would facilitate the launch, and, perhaps most challenging, what the magazine would say. Progressive Farmer Company needed *Southern Living* magazine—its potential for attracting new advertising, for keeping *Progressive Farmer* readers no longer connected to agriculture, and as an additional revenue stream—but even though the company had plenty of experience with publishing a southern farming magazine, it was in uncharted territory with a lifestyle publication. The enthusiasm that had buoyed the project in the spring of 1963 waned as the reality of actually launching a magazine set in.

From June 1963 until the spring of 1964, opinions about how best to implement the new magazine divided the decision-makers. Three areas of disaccord existed. One, company leaders split over whether they should create a new magazine at all; most employees agreed a market for it existed but they were less unified on how risky the venture would be to the company's economic stability. Two, they disagreed over how closely *Southern Living* should be connected to *Progressive Farmer* and whether it should champion southerners as its parent magazine did. The last area of disagreement was in the rhetorical vision of the magazine. Even those who agreed on the other two points diverged on the editorial content, photography, and design elements of the new

magazine; each person had a different perspective on what defined southern identity and what would appeal to a broad audience.

Advertising Manager Oscar Dugger strongly backed *Southern Living*, while his brother, Fowler, was less sure, though he was convinced of the need for expansion, perhaps in a publication with some of *Southern Living*'s characteristics. Clarence Poe, the last major link to the original founders of *Progressive Farmer*, recognized the genius of the title *Southern Living* and the concept behind it, but the magazine marketplace was tough, meaning that its execution needed to be flawless. Alexander Nunn was entirely pessimistic about *Southern Living*, largely because of the threat it posed to *Progressive Farmer*'s central role in the company. Emory Cunningham, the man behind the idea, was obviously in favor of the project, though he questioned Progressive Farmer Company's implementation of it, while the company's president Eugene Butler attempted to balance all these opinions. He wanted *Southern Living* to come to fruition, but he continually reminded his staff that he had made no final decision on how to publish the magazine. For nearly a year, the president of the company hedged his bets, encouraging the project on one hand but reserving judgment on the other.<sup>137</sup>

A schism formed within the company, and it basically revolved around one central problem: *Progressive Farmer* was about farming, while *Southern Living* was not. *Progressive Farmer* represented the old way of doing things, the Old South, and

---

<sup>137</sup> Carolyn Green Satterfield, "An Interview with Fowler Dugger," 18 July 1977, Folder 50, Box 2, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 1-3; Satterfield, "An Interview with Oscar Milton Dugger," 22 June 1977, Folder 50, Box 2, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 1; Clarence Poe to Friends, TLS, 5 September 1963, Folder 27, Box 11, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi; John Quenelle, "The Story of Southern Living: A Man Plus an Idea" MSs, 24 June 1987, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 75-77.

agriculture. *Southern Living* would be talking to a different audience, suburban families who had already left the farm in their rear-view mirror. They might have a cherished place in their hearts for a South they felt no longer existed, but they certainly had no interest in reading about the boll weevil. Those at the company who believed their ultimate loyalty lay in farming, namely Alexander Nunn and his underling O.B. Copeland, had difficulty seeing *Southern Living* as anything other than an extension of the parent magazine, while those who believed in the vision of the new magazine felt stymied, limited, and frustrated by the lack of progress. These differences also had their roots in the larger socioeconomic changes sweeping the South. Some white southerners acquiesced, at least on the surface, while others dug their heels in at the sight of change.

### Nunn's Loyalty to Farming

Though many at Progressive Farmer Company applauded diversifying and the idea of *Southern Living*, one employee remained less than enthused. Alexander Nunn, executive editor of *Progressive Farmer*, was one of the most ardent advocates against *Southern Living*'s launch. He specifically struggled with *Progressive Farmer*'s "fading star," accusing some staff members of jumping ship and climbing aboard *Southern Living* because they saw *Progressive Farmer*'s future as less bright. He believed starting a new magazine would weaken his own magazine and limit its ability to fight for farmers.

In a letter written from his farm in Loachapoka, Alabama, Nunn discussed his frustration with Eugene Butler: "I do not at all accept the philosophy that PF is going to



be less important in the years ahead. Agriculture is going to grow more important and if we keep abreast of the times, or just ahead, then undoubtedly we will fully benefit.” He did not acknowledge that “keeping abreast of the times” might very well mean investing in a new publication for a new audience. In the letter, Nunn also questioned whether the staff had moved too quickly toward embracing *Southern Living* and whether they were really prepared to handle two separate publications.<sup>138</sup>

Nunn had a deep relationship with *Progressive Farmer* magazine. Not only was he its editor, but he trusted its commitment as an advocate for farmers. He possessed his own farm, he delighted in agricultural issues, and he resisted the overall changes occurring in the regional economy. Nunn most likely was less enthusiastic about *Southern Living* because it was competition not only for *Progressive Farmer* within the company but also because it represented the societal and economic change he opposed.

Nunn also wrestled with the major issue of his day—race relations. In one editorial in *Progressive Farmer*, he, like Eugene Butler, took the stance that as good Christians, southerners should embrace peace, permit “qualified” African Americans to vote, and avoid extremism, in any form. He disapproved of demonstrations either for or against integration, and he believed rather than judging based solely on skin color, people should consider the character, morality, intelligence, abilities, culture, and social standards of a person. Nunn told readers that every person ought to have the opportunity to develop to the best of his ability, and he encouraged white landowners to clean up housing for African American renters that was often barely livable. Finally, Nunn

---

<sup>138</sup> Alexander Nunn to Eugene Butler, TLS, n.d. but with stapled document from 11 January 1964, Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

worried that extremists would end public school, which would be detrimental to poor children who could ill afford private school. He chastised African Americans for flooding white schools and white citizens for overreacting when one African American child integrated a white school; either extreme would push public schooling to the brink. He ended his editorial in a conciliatory tone: “Surely the things that unite us here in the South are of far greater importance than the things that divide us. Surely it’s time we were putting first things first. Surely it’s time to be looking for the things on which we agree and which are essential to all.”<sup>139</sup>

What Nunn, and many other white southerners, failed to acknowledge was that even in calling for peace and fair treatment, they retained the position of power. White southerners determined which African Americans were qualified to vote, which ones lived a moral life, and which ones had the character and intelligence worthy of being treated as equals. He disparaged the involvement of the federal government, particularly the Supreme Court and Congress, in forcing equality, but he underestimated the measures some southerners would employ to bar African Americans from full citizenship. In taking a moderate stance, he protected those white southerners not willing to give African Americans any freedoms; he assumed the best in southern society would dictate the outcome, rather than those Ku Klux Klanners intent on bombing African Americans back into submission. For Nunn, and many white southerners, the best course of action was inaction, turning a blind eye to the region’s troubles. The argument was that rabble-rousing begat rabble-rousing and that moderate, white southerners were better off not

---

<sup>139</sup> Alexander Nunn, “An Appeal to Men and Women of Good Will,” originally printed in *Progressive Farmer* magazine, 24 May 1960, Folder 34 Box 9, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

entering the fray at all, but in that divisive time, saying nothing was condoning reactionary elements willing to kill and maim to maintain social codes. Nunn's position represented the scores of white southerners lost in the middle, somewhere between their Christian conscience and their regional loyalty.

Interestingly, attached to Nunn's editorial was a typed response to it:

You say you have lost all patience with extremists on both sides. WELL.....do tell! Don't you think for one minute that decent Southern white people aren't fed up with you 'moderates' who haven't got the guts to actually say what you REALLY mean.

And to add insult to injury you invoke the 'Christianity' theme. Since when has it become our 'Christian duty' to mingle and mix with the Negro race? You show me where my Bible tells me to do this and I'll shut up. Meanwhile, SHAME ON YOU.

A THOROUGHLY DISGUSTED READER.

Such a response is an example of the depth of the racism in the South and the anger that even Nunn encountered when advocating peaceful solutions to the region's problems. Being a moderate segregationist was not enough for these angry white southerners, one reason men like Nunn acquiesced to the pressure of racism. If Nunn rode the fence, he could reassure himself that he had called for the fair treatment of African Americans, while doing very little to incite the fanatics.<sup>140</sup>

When Nunn finally did lend his support to *Southern Living*, he viewed it as an opportunity to speak about the same farming issues to a new audience, city folk who might otherwise fail to appreciate the necessity of agriculture. This strategy of preaching farming to an audience unconnected to agriculture would have flopped; it made no sense

---

<sup>140</sup> Anonymous reader to Alexander Nunn, TD, Folder 34, Box 9, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

to create a niche magazine without considering its audience's wants and needs. Nunn had another major hang-up: he had powerful segregationist connections in Alabama's Governor George Wallace. Nunn invited Wallace's wife, Lurleen, to appear on the very first *Southern Living* cover, a total diversion from Emory Cunningham's vision of an apolitical publication.<sup>141</sup> Though cooler heads intervened and Lurleen Wallace did not grace the magazine's cover, the offer was indicative of Nunn's confusion concerning *Southern Living*. He viewed his choice of such a noteworthy southern woman as the perfect fit for the front of a southern women's magazine. Nunn totally misunderstood the aim of the magazine as a lifestyle publication, and frequently he was befuddled about how to convey southern identity without doing the editorial equivalent of waving an enormous Confederate flag. Over his tenure, Nunn had proved himself a devotee to the Progressive Farmer Company and its mission, but he simply could not understand this change into new terrain.

A key division formed between Nunn and Emory Cunningham. Nunn represented the Old Guard. He was of Clarence Poe's mindset, that a magazine should crusade for a purpose, while Cunningham "believed *Southern Living*'s crusading for a better South should be done more subtly, through leading by example, by showing what was good for the South in order to promote and encourage those qualities."<sup>142</sup> Cunningham did not dispute *Southern Living* as a crusader of sorts, but he understood that editorials and opinionated articles would throw the magazine into the fray, the last place it needed to be. If *Southern Living* were going to rise above the dissension tearing at the region, it had to

---

<sup>141</sup> Quenelle, 108-109.

<sup>142</sup> Quenelle, 77-78.

avoid negativity of any sort. Nunn simply could not envision a magazine that did not demonstrate an obvious purpose and intent. This friction would continue well into the early years of *Southern Living*.

Cunningham hesitated to confront Nunn, who was a friend. He explained the situation to John Quenelle, a Progressive Farmer employee who composed an unpublished manuscript about *Southern Living*'s launch:

I had a great feeling of affection and respect for him and I didn't want to hurt him.... I thought the world of him. He was just dead wrong and when a fellow's wrong on a subject of that kind...you can't win an argument. ... He was just a scrupulous, honest man who came from an era and cultural background.... The times had just moved on beyond him, and we would have been a complete failure. It would have been like the Civil War, fighting for a lost cause. The last thing I wanted to do was spend my life defending something that just wouldn't work. So it was a very emotional thing with me.<sup>143</sup>

Cunningham represented a new breed of white southerner. He did not dispute the hallowed position of whites in southern society, but he believed in couching those beliefs into a less offensive banner—southern pride. It was better to extol the virtues of the region and leave gray area for readers to see whatever they wanted. The magazine would keep itself out of the headlines, it would have the largest possible appeal, and it would still accomplish its mission of singing the South's praises at the top of its lungs. But, Cunningham had an allegiance to Nunn, and to men like him, who were fighting for a way of life long past, and he realized that if he pushed them too hard, Eugene Butler and the board members were likely to support Nunn, who had served the company faithfully for many years. Cunningham bided his time to argue his point to upper-management.

---

<sup>143</sup> Quenelle, 109-110.

## The Archaic Structure of Progressive Farmer

During this struggle, the personnel structure at the company was nothing short of archaic. All of the Progressive Farmer employees were, first-and-foremost, putting out a monthly farm magazine. The Board of Directors had created a Task Force, but it was comprised of individuals with a variety of opinions about *Southern Living*. Some of the people actually researching the project were not members of the Task Force, which was particularly clumsy, given the stated purpose of the Task Force was to perform research. The man with the most enthusiasm for *Southern Living* did not have free reign to run with the idea. *Southern Living* was largely Emory Cunningham's concept, but he was not first in command on the project because Progressive Farmer Company feared losing his skill on the advertising side of the business.<sup>144</sup>

On September 23, 1963, just eight days after the Birmingham church bombing, Eugene Butler issued a memorandum to the leaders of Progressive Farmer Company outlining the company hierarchy. He explained that the purpose of the Southern Living Task Force was to research and then to determine the best course for the magazine launch, but he worried that they could implement few changes while "Southern Living" was still a department within *Progressive Farmer* magazine. The editorial and art staffs at *Progressive Farmer* needed control over its content, with advice from the Task Force, in order to revamp the "Southern Living" department into a full-length magazine. Such an arrangement was bound to cause friction and complicate the transition because the

---

<sup>144</sup> Fowler Dugger to Eugene Butler, TLS, circa 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; "Southern Living Research Committee Report," TD, 7 November 1963, Folder 11.273a, Box 6, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 1.

Task Force did not necessarily have the same motivations for the new project as the *Progressive Farmer* staff did. They were involved in the decision from a business side, whereas the farming magazine staff had the editorial expertise but also a loyalty to *Progressive Farmer*. Even given the challenges, Butler felt that this system was their only option, so he advised company leadership to facilitate cooperation among the staff.<sup>145</sup>

Eugene Butler and his own son even corresponded during the fall of 1963. Britt pushed for a quicker transition, and Eugene responded that the committee process took time because the entire group made the decisions. In reality, by not fully committing to the new magazine, Eugene Butler was making the decision to slow the launch process, which staff passionate about *Southern Living* saw as a hindrance.<sup>146</sup>

In October 1963, Butler sent an internal memorandum to the Task Force, including Fowler Dugger, Alexander Nunn, Oscar Dugger, Emory Cunningham, and his own son, Britt Butler. He began by saying:

I get the feeling from talking with a number of our key employees that several of them believe we are moving too slowly on Southern Living. They probably don't fully realize that The Progressive Farmer decides important matters of policy on a basis of group opinion, and that this procedure, while time consuming, has much to recommend it.

Butler was more than likely referring to pressure from his son Britt, Emory Cunningham, and some of the younger members of the company who were chafing at the sluggish progress of the launch. In the memorandum, Butler did express his desire for *Southern Living*, but while others in the company were itching to have the final product on the

---

<sup>145</sup> Eugene Butler to Oscar Dugger, Alexander Nunn, Fowler Dugger, Emory Cunningham, and Britt Butler, TL, 23 September 1963, Folder 11.215, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>146</sup> Quenelle, 82-85.

table, he was cautious. Butler requested members send him whatever information they had concerning the launch, particularly market information and cost figures. With this information, he said he would “be willing to make up my mind about Southern Living.” Though the Board had given their approval and many within the company supported the launch, as the company’s president, ultimately Butler had the last word on the matter.<sup>147</sup> However, Cunningham continued to push to know who would execute the magazine’s idea because he was concerned that some of *Progressive Farmer*’s staff would run his fresh idea into the ground.<sup>148</sup>

That fall the relationship between Alexander Nunn and Progressive Farmer Company became strained, as the organization continued toward a new magazine without his blessing. He conceded to Butler that his opinion was only one perspective and that he would “go along” with plans to proceed with the magazine, but he cautioned reticence. He warned that he was not the only one having cold feet about *Southern Living*. Nunn also told Butler that he was concerned about the hierarchy of the staff working on the project because “a good company or a good corporation follows administrative channels” and they were moving away from, rather than toward, that goal.

Though the structure of the Task Force within Progressive Farmer Company had clear limitations and it was muddying the research on the launch, Nunn actually wanted more rigidity and structure. Nunn was old school; to him a loyal employee worked faithfully at the same company for the duration. The employees to be trusted were the

---

<sup>147</sup> Eugene Butler to Friends, TLS, 18 October 1963, Early Planning folder, “Southern Living: The Birthing” binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>148</sup> Emory Cunningham to Eugene Butler, TLS, 24 October 1963, Early Planning folder, “Southern Living: The Birthing” binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.



ones who had proved their fidelity through years of hard work. They had specific jurisdictions, and the lines of authority were straight and narrow. This formal structure did not allow for the flexible, give-and-take discussions about a new magazine. Nunn was fast becoming a relic, a man stuck in the past.<sup>149</sup>

Eugene Butler recognized that having *Southern Living* exist within the home department of *Progressive Farmer* presented a unique challenge to the lines of authority and communication in the company. Individuals tasked with thinking outside the bounds of a farm publication answered to longstanding company employees whose loyalty lay with *Progressive Farmer* and, in many cases, farming as a cherished lifestyle. In a letter to key employees, he acknowledged that the difficulties could drag the *Southern Living* launch down, but he hoped they would hang on through the chaos and keep the lines of communication open to him.<sup>150</sup>

### What Is *Southern*?

A major problem existed during these months of indecision. Perhaps if *Southern Living*'s organizers had reached real consensus, their path forward would have been clear, but much of the hemming and hawing had to do with confusion over how to define *southern*. Each man had his own understanding of southern identity and his own opinion

---

<sup>149</sup> Alexander Nunn to Eugene Butler, TL, 25 September 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

<sup>150</sup> Eugene Butler to Friends, TLS, 23 September 1963, Folder 28, Box 11, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

about what southerners wanted in a magazine. They agreed they had to do something, they agreed in principle to the idea of *Southern Living*, a magazine to appeal to suburban white southerners, but determining what the magazine would actually be was far more challenging.

During the summer of 1963, leaders within Progressive Farmer Company corresponded about the new project, discussing prospective advertising, editorial content, and company hierarchy.<sup>151</sup> Then, in July Oscar Dugger sent a handwritten note to company president Eugene Butler, and he attached a worksheet of editorial content for *Southern Living* magazine that the *Progressive Farmer* staff had created. Dugger was irritated because the staff continued to have a farming mindset with what was supposed to be a slick, lifestyle magazine. On the worksheet, Dugger circled the topic “Family affairs: How Can We Help the Aging” as evidence that the *Progressive Farmer* staff still misunderstood the *Southern Living* idea. To Butler he wrote: “Unless handled from young family angle with old people living with them – this would be very bad for S.L. You will note little if any change from usual Home Dept. features in this tentative plan. This tells me we need new editorial talent discussed in my letter to you today.” He asked for Butler to keep his critiques in confidence until they could discuss them in person.<sup>152</sup>

Dugger also worried about the illustrations and photography in *Southern Living*. *Progressive Farmer* had never prided itself on the beauty of its pages; it assumed farming

---

<sup>151</sup> Oscar Dugger to Alexander Nunn and O.B. Copeland, TLS, 28 May 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Eugene Butler to Oscar Dugger, TLS, 29 May 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Oscar Dugger to Eugene Butler, TLS, 3 June 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

<sup>152</sup> Oscar Dugger to Eugene Butler, handwritten note, n.d. but probably July 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

families wanted a simple, no-frills magazine that emphasized content rather than handsome design elements. If *Southern Living* intended to break into the lifestyle magazine market, Dugger believed it had to be both attractive and readable, because its competition used high-quality, color photography and illustrations pleasing to the eye. *Southern Living* would only be an inferior, fuddy-duddy step-child if the *Progressive Farmer* staff failed to take its appearance seriously. He clarified this point with Alexander Nunn, who was overseeing the editorial content of *Southern Living*. Dugger suggested that they hire an art director capable of the challenge, but his concerns largely fell on deaf ears with Nunn, who was so committed to *Progressive Farmer* that he had trouble seeing outside of its editorial mission.

In mid-July Dugger began overseeing weekly “Southern Living conferences,” meetings where staff members brainstormed these concerns, but, even after weeks of meetings, Nunn expressed confusion about which advertising category *Southern Living* would classify as. Dugger forwarded the message to Eugene Butler with an exasperated handwritten note: “This inquiry is just another indication of how hard it is for our people to get the concept of Southern Living – For months now we’ve been talking about it as a Home type magazine, appealing to the entire family.” For all the talking about the *Southern Living* concept, some staff, Nunn in particular, still did not get it.<sup>153</sup>

In fact, Nunn second-guessed several of the key concepts that Emory Cunningham and Oscar Dugger continued to emphasize. One, he wondered what age

---

<sup>153</sup> Oscar Dugger to Alexander Nunn, TLS, 16 July 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Oscar Dugger to Friends, TLS, 18 July 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Alexander Nunn to Oscar Dugger (with a handwritten message from Oscar Dugger to Eugene Butler), TLS, 7 August 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

range they intended to target. They kept saying they were aiming for young people, but did that include teenagers? He had apparently overlooked the reiterations, present in a number of memorandums, of appealing to young families. Two, they had said the new magazine should inspire people to action, to build a deck or to bake a cake. He doubted the soundness of that philosophy. Should every article really attempt to encourage direct action? He wrote: "It seems to me we are asking for headaches from the very beginning if we assume that our total approach to *Southern Living* is going to be to get readers to do something, to make plans or build something, or to go to some place." Nunn offered his own opinion: "Much of what I believe should go into *Southern Living* to make it successful is going to be a matter of attitudes, of finesse, and of subtle, often subconscious, treatments."<sup>154</sup> What exactly Nunn meant is unclear, though the words he chose are certainly fascinating. They suggest that he believed in advocating a position, most likely a pro-South message, but in a more subtle way than *Progressive Farmer* did. This statement is completely at odds with his previous concerns that *Southern Living* would not be as forthright in its positions as its predecessor. The sum total of Nunn's complaints throughout months of memorandums take on a pessimistic tone, as if no plans were sufficient because any magazine launch was competition for *Progressive Farmer*.

In August 1963, Eugene Butler sent a personal letter to Oscar Dugger and carbon-copied Fowler Dugger and Alexander Nunn. He wanted to know how well the structure of personnel working on *Southern Living* was functioning.<sup>155</sup> Oscar Dugger responded

---

<sup>154</sup> Alexander Nunn to Oscar Dugger, TLS, 26 August 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 1-2.

<sup>155</sup> Eugene Butler to Oscar Dugger, TLS, 5 August 1963, Folder 11.165, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

by expressing concern that regardless of how talented *Progressive Farmer* employees were, they were too close to farming to successfully launch a lifestyle magazine. He worried about getting the editorial content right: “The big key to the success of *Southern Living* is that it have the right editorial concept and content. If it does, I have no doubt we can sell it to the right people and that advertisers will support it.” He also stressed the need to have a leader in mind for the new magazine before they launched it. He wondered how the publication would fare if the specifics of its leadership were not ironed out first. Dugger wanted to hire someone from outside the company who had the kind of lifestyle magazine experience all of the farm writers at *Progressive Farmer* lacked.<sup>156</sup>

In addition to having no lifestyle magazine experience, *Progressive Farmer*’s staff members were in a fog as to *Southern Living*’s content. Part of the challenge with a magazine that binds its readers together based on identity is in clarifying that identity, which is such an amorphous concept that streamlining a cohesive product based on it can be elusive. One person sees the South as a place known for its humor, while another person wants to focus on the region’s best travel destinations. In addition to that challenge, how does one define a lifestyle magazine? Should it include hunting and fishing, southern tall-tales, and book reviews? It could focus on southern sporting events and unusual hobbies. Or would it be a better magazine with articles geared toward homemakers? Should it include history, or should it exclude history?

Ideas in just one staff-member brainstorming session included all these ideas and dozens more. Some opinions were woefully stuck in the past, particularly when the

---

<sup>156</sup> Oscar Dugger to Eugene Butler, TLS, 8 August 1963, Folder 11.167, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

discussion was about women. One suggestion was “feature each month a famous daughter of a famous Southerner,” as though an article about a woman had to be tied to a man. Another idea was to offer a “series of articles on how young homemakers can keep from getting bored with home.” Most women surely had enough to do to keep them busy. Other suggestions were rather forward-looking; for example, one person reminded the staff that “30% of the wives will be holding a job, as well as being a housewife.” Someone else, with a snarky undertone, said: “Let’s see if we can keep our folks from saying housewife instead of homemaker.” In nearly all the discussions about content, women were housewives and mothers.

A few ideas alluded to an undercurrent rarely mentioned. One proposal was the cryptic “plow some ‘middle ground.’” One can only speculate exactly what the phrase meant. Perhaps it hinted at not only avoiding unpleasant topics but actually fostering a place of reconciliation within the magazine. Another person was more direct, suggesting an article to explain “what to do when a colored person comes to your church.” Clearly, the dilemma was a concern, but what is intriguing is that religion was not discussed as part of the magazine. This suggestion had more to do with how to handle racial confrontations and the reality of integration than it had to do with religion.

A few suggestions were offbeat, such as: “Let’s edit with the thought in mind that many of the people we are writing for aren’t native Southerners.” This idea begs the question who they intended to read the magazine, if not southerners; perhaps it was to be a public relations publication meant for those outside the region or an instruction manual

for new residents of the South. Either way, the suggestion was completely at odds with the stated mission for the magazine.<sup>157</sup>

The *Progressive Farmer* staff was simply trying to cover too much ground. A document “Basic Principles On Which We Are Planning” explored the vision for the magazine. Its authors aspired for a magazine with “distinctive flavor.” Though it should not be a repeat of *Progressive Farmer*, it needed to mimic its “warmth,” “friendliness,” and “family appeal.” With a new lifestyle magazine, Progressive Farmer Company had a “special opportunity to promote better rural-urban understanding and cooperation.” The pull to extol the virtues of farming was incredibly hard to resist; however, the document did clarify that *Southern Living* should exhibit “a definite and continuing effort to contribute to the building of a better South” but in a light-hearted manner. It would separate itself from national publications by aiming “to deal with Southern subjects from the standpoint of Southern people,” which in 1963 meant avoiding political and social controversy. The document also listed content in “five or six broad fields,” which were really more like eight: food, the home, gardening and landscaping, clothing and fashion, travel, hunting and fishing, cultural subjects, and human interest features. At the bottom of the page, “Must not weaken PF” was handwritten and underscored.<sup>158</sup>

Charlie Scruggs, who became *Progressive Farmer*’s editor and eventually a company vice-president, honed in on the inherent problem in defining southern identity. They were splitting hairs over the editorial content, and finding a consensus would be

---

<sup>157</sup> “Brainstorming Session: Southern Living,” May Editorial Conference, TD, undated, Folder 11.274, Box 6, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 1-5.

<sup>158</sup> “Basic Principles On Which We Are Planning,” TD, undated but probably November 1963, Folder 28, Box 11, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

nearly impossible. He advised that they visualize the people reading the magazine: “If we pick the right Subject Idea and use a happy, vigorous family to illustrate the subject, enough Southern atmosphere will almost surely fall into place that we don’t need to concern ourselves with this problem.” The key was to focus on exactly who they wanted reading their magazine. Sure, a rigid outline of this family might lead to a stereotype, but, more than likely, not forming a guide for themselves would lead to a chaotic magazine, one that was “namby pamby” about its identity.

Scruggs also highlighted the *living* part of the magazine’s title. He argued a lifestyle magazine’s photography should demonstrate action: “I believe it is a cardinal error to call this Southern Living and then not show people ‘living!’” He wanted for the magazine to be dynamic, thrilling, and overwhelmingly successful; he particularly hoped the first issue would “bust folks right between the eyes.” More than anything, he wanted to succeed or fail spectacularly, but mediocrity was not an option. The colorful Scruggs ended his memo about the magazine by writing: “As you all know, I’m thick skinned. So, shoot it full of holes if you like. It won’t be the first time I’ve been shot down.”<sup>159</sup>

Emory Cunningham was confident in how *Southern Living* should become this raging success story. He had never intended for the magazine to discuss the unpleasant aspects to southern life. Rather than editorialize about problems in the region, *Southern Living* “subtly says or implies that it’s okay to be a Southerner...that it is a good way of life, and it is a good thing to be.” It led by example, showing that southern identity was superior. He told Quenelle: “We didn’t need [southern identity] discussed and we didn’t

---

<sup>159</sup> Charlie Scruggs to Oris Cantrell, TLS, 11 October 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.



need it argued about, we didn't need somebody to take a position; what we needed was somebody who would come along and find the best of Southern living, the best of Southern people, the good things they have done, and showcase that without comment. That's what people have responded to."<sup>160</sup> Quenelle argued that what was wrong with Cunningham's viewpoint was that Progressive Farmer Company had been advocating for the region for so long that expecting opinions to take a back seat to *Southern Living's* chatty style was a formidable task for the *Progressive Farmer* staff.

Though Eugene Butler had come of age in Progressive Farmer Company and might have been tempted to side with Alexander Nunn, he ultimately supported Cunningham's ideas about how *Southern Living* should differ from its parent magazine. He said:

I think the purpose of *Southern Living* is to portray the best features of Southern life. It's really not a crusading magazine.... But we did feel like there was certainly a place for a magazine of that type and apparently it came along right at the right time and provided something the Southern people really wanted.... It filled a niche that was there and needed to be filled.<sup>161</sup>

Butler recognized that white southerners were searching for a place where they could avoid the negativity about their way of life, a place where they could feel good about being southern, and *Southern Living* filled that void.

*Southern Living*, as its founders proposed it, could not have been a magazine that included African Americans. In its distinct time and place, it sought to reinforce the goodness of southerners, the soundness of their beliefs, and the superiority of their way of life. It reached out to discontented, white southerners. If it accomplished those aims, it

---

<sup>160</sup> Quenelle, 106.

<sup>161</sup> Quenelle, 107-108.

could not also be a place of reconciliation where all southerners united to embrace their cultural commonalities. Southern identity was so segregated along racial lines during the 1960s that including African Americans in the magazine would have signaled racial equality to the millions of white southerners wholeheartedly refusing to accept people of color into their homes, workplaces, restaurants, churches, motels, and schools.

Whitewashing *Southern Living* also issued a clear message to eager readers: this magazine was a friend to white southerners, it was one of them, and it would not expect them to extend themselves outside of their comfort zones. Truly avoiding the issue of race was impossible—even avoiding the issue of race was a statement in itself.

It is significant that Progressive Farmer Company never identified the race of the people it was targeting; it never called the magazine *White Southern Living*. Southerners were white; they were the non-race, the true citizens of the region. Grace Elizabeth Hale argues in *Making Whiteness* that the “denial of white as a racial identity, the denial that whiteness has a history, allows the quiet, the blankness, to stand as the norm.”<sup>162</sup> White southern culture was The Culture, and white southerners had an uncontested place in the American psyche. It was unnecessary to mention their color, because their race was the status quo.

*Southern Living* magazine’s purpose as a cheerleader for the aesthetics of the region and as a challenge to the South’s negative publicity underscore Hale’s argument about race: “Southern whites constructed their racial identities on two interlocking planes: within a regional dynamic of ex-Confederates versus ex-slaves and within a

---

<sup>162</sup> Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), xi.

national dynamic of the South, understood as white, against the rest of the nation.”<sup>163</sup>

Under the surface of all the confusion about what made *Southern Living* southern, the constant was that the magazine’s readership would share a common history separate from the rest of the country. *Southern Living* fit a characteristic of southern culture at a time when white southerners were especially motivated to cultivate an identity whitewashed of race, controversy, or negativity. They used cultural products, like Confederate flags, to establish their separate and special regional identity. Meanwhile, much of the national dialogue chastising southerners reinforced the exclusion of African Americans, as if they were not just as southern as whites. The rest of the country, it seemed, accepted the premise that southerners were intrinsically white. *Southern Living* magazine, in this context, was not only another method of reinforcing the inherent whiteness of southern culture but it also established the separateness of southerners, based on racial identity, from the rest of the country.

### Researching the Audience

At the end of 1963, Progressive Farmer Company tested its audience for the first time, a way of holding its finger in the air to see which way the wind was blowing. It mailed a letter to selected *Progressive Farmer* readers that said:

Dear Progressive Farmer Subscriber:

A good many of our subscribers have told us they do not have any connection with farming. They also say they are interested most of all in the new Southern

---

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

Living Section of The Progressive Farmer (formerly called The Progressive Home).

The reception from both men and women readers to this new Southern Living Section has been very enthusiastic. Now we are making definite plans for a separate Southern Living Magazine to be published monthly in addition to The Progressive Farmer.

Southern Living Magazine will contain most of the articles that appear in the Southern Living Section of The Progressive Farmer, plus a lot more on Home Equipment and Furnishings, Building, Remodeling and Repairs, Landscaping and Gardening, Sports and Recreation, Travel, Health, Family Relations, Fiction, etc.

If you are farming or farming-connected we want you to continue to get Progressive Farmer – bigger and better than ever. But, if no one in your family has a farm connection, we feel confident you will prefer our new Southern Living Magazine.

You can become a Charter Subscriber of our new magazine simply by telling us to send it to you in place of The Progressive Farmer, starting with the very first issue. There will be no extra cost to you to make this change. You will get as many copies of Southern Living Magazine as you would receive of The Progressive Farmer.

While the first issue is some months away, we need to know now how many of our Progressive Farmer subscribers will want to change over to Southern Living Magazine.

Please sign and return the enclosed postage paid card at your earliest convenience.

Your prompt cooperation will be deeply appreciated and help us speed up our plans for the new magazine.

Yours Sincerely,  
THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER

Eugene Butler  
President and Editor-in-Chief<sup>164</sup>

---

<sup>164</sup> Eugene Butler to Progressive Farmer Subscriber, TL, Folder 11.153, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

This letter advertised *Southern Living* to the audience sector no longer involved in agriculture, and it urged interested readers that their rapid response would push the company's plans forward, assuring them that they could receive *Southern Living* for the same price as they had paid for *Progressive Farmer*. Basically, for those readers willing to substitute the new magazine for the old one, it would be a win-win; they could stop receiving a magazine that no longer pertained to them, while having the opportunity to invest in a new, more relevant publication. However, the company could only offer its assurances that this class of *Progressive Farmer* readers would benefit from the switch. The description of *Southern Living*'s content was so jumbled and vague that it provided little information and required a leap of faith from charter subscribers.

From the response to the letter, the company determined that about thirty percent of *Progressive Farmer* subscribers, or around 400,000, were interested in *Southern Living* magazine. Company employees who studied the circulation figures concluded that quality, not quantity, was essential to their strategy. Rather than aim for high circulation numbers, they should focus their efforts in areas of the region where they could reach families with above-average income levels. They compared this plan with *The New Yorker* and *Sunset*, which both had much smaller, targeted audiences than general interest publications. *The New Yorker* had just under a half a million circulation, while *Sunset* had about 700,000. Both figures made *Southern Living*'s prospects good with potentially 400,000 *Progressive Farmer* readers onboard at its inception.<sup>165</sup>

---

<sup>165</sup> "Progressive Farmer and Southern Living Circulation," TD, 1963 written in pencil, Folder 11.153, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

The research subcommittee of the Southern Living Task Force also oversaw a study of high-income families living in the region's suburbs and had discussions with a variety of individuals in advertising and circulation to determine the appropriate market and the viability of a southern lifestyle publication. They issued recommendations for in-depth research on suburban families in cities other than Birmingham, for face-to-face meetings with potential subscribers, and for additional investigation of advertising and circulation plans, but they wanted this research done cheaply, without too much time or money devoted to it. They also emphasized the importance of hiring quality staff members to execute the launch:

We should be cautious about placing too much emphasis on “things” such as production facilities, as important as they are, and too little emphasis on people to do the job, incentive and inspiration for them to do it, and an organizational setup where sound decisions can be made fast enough, including giving these people a clear-cut knowledge of what is expected of them.

The company had to value its personnel because they were the asset that would make or break *Southern Living*. At the end of its report, the committee issued a clear endorsement for launching the new magazine, but that endorsement was still not a mandate. Eugene Butler had not declared his formal approval of the magazine, and company executives remained divided over the best course of action.<sup>166</sup>

Meanwhile, Emory Cunningham was becoming increasingly troubled over Progressive Farmer's mismanagement of the research concerning *Southern Living*. O.B. Copeland, Nunn's deputy, executed an extremely unscientific focus group with seven married “homemakers” between the ages of 25 and 40 from the Birmingham area during

---

<sup>166</sup> Southern Living Task Force, Research Subcommittee Report, TD, 7 November 1963, Folder 11.273a, Box 6, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

the fall of 1963. The women all had children, were “active in community work such as PTA and garden clubs,” and were members of local churches. They answered twenty-nine questions about their readership habits and their lifestyles.<sup>167</sup> The information gleaned was vague and not particularly helpful, a point Emory Cunningham made in a blistering letter to O.B. Copeland dated January 7, 1964.

Cunningham outlined how the research for *Southern Living* should have proceeded. He said that he would have polled advertisers first to see if they would be leery of being involved with a brand-new magazine, and he believed discovering what they wanted in terms of editorial content would aid in designing a publication that optimized advertising demand. Cunningham also felt that Progressive Farmer Company should have executed a subscription rate test to determine what people would be willing to pay for the magazine and that audience research should have been a component not just of the planning process but should have continued well into the magazine’s first years to determine if they were on the right track. Then, he complained that the types of questions proposed for the reader survey were weak or leading and would not get the information the company needed. Though Cunningham was *Southern Living*’s biggest advocate, he wholeheartedly disagreed with the execution of the research on the launch. It was a battle he would fight more than once.<sup>168</sup>

---

<sup>167</sup> O.B. Copeland to Emory Cunningham and Orville Demaree, TLS, 15 August 1963, Folder 11.217, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; “Panel Discussion To Provide Background Information For Southern Living,” n.d., Research folder, “Southern Living: The Birthing” binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>168</sup> Emory Cunningham to O.B. Copeland, TLS, 7 January 1964, Research folder, “Southern Living: The Birthing” binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

## Putting on the Brakes

*Southern Living* floundered in 1963. No one agreed on exactly how the magazine should look or sound. The concept of heralding southern life was as varied as the southerners working on the project. Members of Progressive Farmer, such as Emory Cunningham and Britt Butler, hated to squander such a great opportunity in the dissension over details, while Alexander Nunn disliked the concept of a farming company reaching outside its comfort zone. Eugene Butler struggled to balance all the ideas, all the confusion, and all the dissension with his characteristic equitable and level-headed approach. He realized at the end of 1963 that the best decision he could make was to stall the entire project while the company reevaluated its concept.

In the winter months of 1963, the company put the brakes on *Southern Living*, moving the start date from the spring of 1965 to February 1966. For months Alexander Nunn and a few others within Progressive Farmer Company had been dragging their feet about the launch, believing more research on the magazine's concept was needed before they made any commitment. Ultimately, Butler made the decision to delay because "all research activity, cost studies, editorial, advertising, circulation and production planning should be completed on a new magazine at least a year ahead of the closing date for its first issue" and that deadline had already passed.<sup>169</sup>

---

<sup>169</sup> Eugene Butler to Alexander Nunn, TLS, 23 September 1963, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; "(Suggested Letter)," n.d., Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.



Oscar Dugger, Chairman of the Task Force, suggested Butler immediately notify company members of the change. He also chided Butler, who lived in Texas, for his absenteeism on such a major project:

I still strongly believe that President Butler will need to arrange to spend a great deal of time in Birmingham these next several months for the frequent consultations that will be necessary to implement our planning so as to arrive at these important inter-related decisions on schedule. With all departments involved in Southern Living plans, and department heads so busy, I strongly urge that our President assume active command of these plans during the ensuing vital months until a decision is reached.

Dugger considered the planning of *Southern Living* perhaps the most precipitous time in Progressive Farmer Company's history, and the company needed Butler's direction.

Dugger offered to be Butler's "deputy" in Birmingham when his superior had to remain in Texas.<sup>170</sup> On January 22, 1964, Butler named Oscar Dugger his in-office emissary who would be present in all discussion and correspondence concerning *Southern Living*. He also did away with the Task Force, leaving Alexander Nunn and O.B. Copeland in charge of editorial research and Emory Cunningham and Orville Demaree to complete the advertising side. This decision pitted two opposing camps against each other in the execution of the launch.<sup>171</sup>

In a letter dated January 24, Eugene Butler addressed all the issues at Progressive Farmer Company that had delayed the magazine's debut. They were undecided about whether the Alabama Highway Commission would annex their downtown Birmingham location for a highway project, which might force the company to search for a new

---

<sup>170</sup> "Revised Statement of Southern Living Planning By Chairman of Task Force," n.d. but probably early 1964, TD, Folder 11.168, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Oscar Dugger, "Statement On Southern Living Planning," TDS, 30 December 1963, Folder 11.461, Box 10, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 2.

<sup>171</sup> Eugene Butler to Oscar Dugger, Emory Cunningham, Alexander Nunn, Otis Copeland, and Orville Demaree, TLS, 22 January 1964, 11.167, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

location. The company was understaffed, with many people working full-time on both *Progressive Farmer* and researching the Southern Living project. Butler emphasized that the delay had nothing to do with *Southern Living*'s importance to Progressive Farmer Company but was merely the result of these circumstances: "In recent months, we have actually gained rather than lost enthusiasm for Southern Living and the growth opportunities it offers." Butler cautioned that the company had not issued a definitive verdict on the launch of Southern Living but that their ramping up of planning efforts signaled "the prospect of Southern Living becoming a reality." He also reassured those in the company who might be uncomfortable with moving the spotlight off of *Progressive Farmer*. Though the company would slowly reduce its circulation, the farming publication would remain "the key to [the] Company's overall success." He ended the letter by recommitting himself to the planning of *Southern Living*; he would travel from Dallas to Birmingham every other week for that singular purpose.<sup>172</sup>

On May 27, 1964, Oscar Dugger, at Eugene Butler's request, sent a memorandum to the Board of Directors updating them on *Southern Living*'s progress. He told them that research had demonstrated that they should begin the magazine with a circulation of 200,000 and build it up to 500,000 as quickly as they could—hopefully within two years: "The larger our starting circulation can be and the faster we can build it up to 500,000 among the right sort of people, the more salable it would be to advertisers and the cheaper our unit cost to print, bind and mail." He reiterated to them that the magazine should appeal to families—both men and women—and he hoped that soon Progressive

---

<sup>172</sup> Eugene Butler to Friends, TL, 24 January 1964, Folder 11.215, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

Farmer Company could hire editorial staff to work solely on *Southern Living*. In terms of advertising, they proposed offering *Progressive Farmer* advertisers a combination rate for appearing in both publications to give them an incentive to bet on the new magazine. Finally, he reported that the Progressive Farmer Company sales staff was eager to promote *Southern Living* and the revamped *Progressive Farmer*, once they were given the go-ahead.<sup>173</sup>

Launching a magazine for southerners proved a more difficult mission than it had sounded in the spring of 1963. Basing an entire business venture on an identity was particularly formidable when no one could agree on how to translate it into print. Progressive Farmer Company tried to exude confidence when it came to *Southern Living*; from the outside, company leaders appeared to have a no-brainer, a genius solution to their audience problem. In reality, *Southern Living* survived for months in the minds of individuals who, for the most part, agreed to the principle of launching a lifestyle magazine for southerners but little else. This internal friction held *Southern Living* magazine captive.

---

<sup>173</sup> Oscar Dugger to All Directors, TLS, 27 May 1964, Folder 11.152, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

## CHAPTER FOUR

From the spring of 1964 until February 1966, Progressive Farmer Company proceeded with its planning of *Southern Living*, but the process was anything but smooth. Many of the problems that had stymied the company in 1963 continued, and new issues presented themselves. As the launch date drew closer, company members consolidated the chatter about *Southern Living* into plans of action for advertising, circulation, and editorial content. They shunned most outside advice and turned inward, relying on their own experiences of southern identity to shape the magazine for southerners like themselves who were white, middle- to upper-middle class, and educated. Even as they structured *Southern Living* as the region's sunny and effervescent representative, a darker tone lingered under the surface of their brainstorming. The conversations often danced around their frustration, embarrassment, and hurt pride about how the rest of the country viewed their communities. They sought validation that their culture was worthy, perhaps even superior, and that those who judged them were simply blind to the richness of southern identity. Of course, this southern identity was always exclusively white.

Emory Cunningham was the only one of the major figures shaping *Southern Living* to understand the delicacy of its balancing act. The magazine simply could not be a reincarnate of *Progressive Farmer*, or it would fail. The closest it could come to farming were how-to articles about cultivating roses and pastoral photographs of plantations. *Southern Living's* audience would have had no interest in the justifications for the farming lifestyle that Alexander Nunn might have slipped into the magazine, if given the opportunity. What *Southern Living* could defend was the honor of the people

living there. The magazine should answer all the critics who had no appreciation for a way of life millions treasured, but subtly, through its content and its imagery. By demonstrating the virtues of the southern lifestyle while avoiding divisive topics, the magazine would find a grateful and enthusiastic readership.

Producing a magazine that did not have a strong stance was exceedingly difficult for Progressive Farmer Company because for eighty years advocacy had been the company's mission. For generations, *Progressive Farmer* magazine had viewed itself as the farmer's friend. Suddenly, the same company with *progressive* in its title was supposed to create a useful and engaging yet entirely apolitical publication. How could it both have a strong voice and remain silent on some of the most challenging issues that had ever faced the South? This conundrum was at the heart of *Southern Living*'s early identity crisis.

Leadership continued to be a challenge; Alexander Nunn cantankerously held his ground, while Emory Cunningham pushed toward his vision for *Southern Living*. Meanwhile, Eugene Butler handled a number of vacancies in the top echelons of the company. He had envisioned handing the presidency over to Fowler Dugger, who would hold that position for a five-year term and then pass the title to Alexander Nunn. In 1964, Butler realized that Dugger's health would preclude him from interest in the presidency, and Nunn had already expressed a desire to retire at age sixty-five, just when Butler had hoped he would lead the company. Butler began to see the future of the company was in the hands of "capable younger men now holding top positions with the Company," particularly Emory Cunningham. If Cunningham's reputation for success had not been

enough to recommend him, this shift in power lent more clout to his opinions in the coming years.<sup>174</sup>

In 1964 and 1965, the chain of command at Progressive Farmer Company became even more chaotic, and employees at both magazines were confused about who answered to whom. *Southern Living*'s staff reported not to Norman Youngsteadt, its so-called editor, but to the department editors at *Progressive Farmer*. On June 17, 1965, Alexander Nunn sent a memorandum to staff members, expressing irritation that the two editorial staffs were not cooperating as fluidly as the *Progressive Farmer* team always had. Company management was in the habit of giving employees leeway to execute their responsibilities with autonomy, but Nunn felt that he had to spell out the lines of authority for staff members: "I hope that everybody now understands that the position of Editor of *Southern Living* is comparable to and on an equivalent basis with 'Edition Editor' of *Progressive Farmer*.... I had felt that this was clearly understood by all of us, but apparently this is not quite so." In other words, Nunn, not Youngsteadt, was ultimately in charge of the development of editorial content for the new venture. This realignment robbed Youngsteadt of any real authority. The very next month Nunn forced Youngsteadt into the Managing Editor position for both magazines, and he hired O.B. Copeland, his assistant, as the editor of *Southern Living*. Nunn said the change could not

---

<sup>174</sup> Eugene Butler to Clarence Poe, Jim Kilgore, Cordra York, and Charles Poe, TLS, 6 July 1964, Folder 11.5, Box 3, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

“be blamed on Youngsteadt” entirely, but he “couldn’t get the job done.” Youngsteadt lasted a few more months before quitting; his replacement Jim Dyer only lasted a year.<sup>175</sup>

During the summer of 1964, the Progressive Farmer Company hit another major roadblock. It received a letter from John Owen Broomall that notified it of *his* new magazine *Southern Living*; though he had not actually published the magazine and did not have the title copyrighted, he claimed common law rights to it. The magazine itself was little threat, since Broomall only intended for it to serve the Atlanta area, but Progressive Farmer had settled on the title *Southern Living* for their own magazine and had promoted it within advertising circles. Eugene Butler had already committed \$500,000 to the project, with another \$500,000 available if the launch required it. The company was too far down the road to turn back.

Progressive Farmer’s attorney suspected the threat was a bluff, particularly since Broomall could not furnish financial documents two weeks before his proposed launch date of June 16, 1964. Rather than fight with him, Progressive Farmer Company paid him \$500 in August 1964 for the rights to the name *Southern Living*. It was not the only competition the company faced. In January 1966, as they launched their new magazine,

---

<sup>175</sup> Alexander Nunn to Dr. Copeland, Mr. Goodwin, Miss Cantrell, Mr. Youngsteadt, Mr. Eugene Butler and Mr. Fowler Dugger, TDS, 17 June 1965, Folder 11.146, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; John Quenelle, “The Story of Southern Living: A Man Plus an Idea” MSs, 24 June 1987, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 116-117; Alexander Nunn to J.D. Kilgore, Charles Poe, Cordra York, and Ben Kilgore III, TL, 22 July 1965, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Eugene Butler, “A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968,” TD, 1965 section, Folder 31, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 3; “Southern Progress Corporation, *Southern Living* Magazine, Editorial, Advertising and Circulation Leaders, 1966-1983,” TD, n.d., Early Planning folder, “Southern Living: The Birthing” binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Oscar Dugger to Friends, TLS, 22 July 1965, Folder 11.146, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

an advertiser wrote to notify them that *Sunset* magazine in California was researching a southeastern edition. That idea apparently never came to fruition.<sup>176</sup>

### Targeting Its Audience

In early 1965, Progressive Farmer Company outlined its circulation strategy for *Southern Living*. Eugene Butler's rationale was to target the following twelve "strictly Southern" states: Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida.<sup>177</sup> The Deep South states Georgia, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Alabama were at the heart of the plan. Butler said the company would limit *Southern Living*'s "territory to the Confederate States with the exception of adding Kentucky" to create "a more homogenous territory" where "the 'Southern' in our name will not be a disadvantage – and an area that can be most easily served editorially." The word *southern* was a lightning rod in some areas of the country,

---

<sup>176</sup> John Owen Broomall to Hugh P. Carter, TLS, 15 July 1964, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; "Dun & Bradstreet Report," TD, 22 June 1964, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Hugh P. Carter to Vernon Owens, TLS, 20 July 1964, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Vernon Owens to William Bew White, Jr., TLS, 23 July 1964, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Contract between John Owen Broomall and Progressive Farmer Company, TD, handwritten date 20 August 1964, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Don Cunningham to Emory Cunningham, TLS, 10 January 1966, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Eugene Butler to Fowler Dugger, TLS, 10 August 1964, Folder 11.5, Box 3, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>177</sup> The company generally proposed targeting from about 8 to 17 percent of each state's *Progressive Farmer* circulation, with the exception of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas where the percentages were closer to 25 percent. They attempted to siphon off only two percent of *Progressive Farmer*'s circulation in Florida. Texas, North Carolina, and Alabama, had the most *Southern Living* recipients with 30,000 each. The state with the fewest was Florida, with only 1,000.



but *Progressive Farmer* intended to send its new magazines into the communities where it would have just the opposite reaction: a warm reception. The word *homogenous*, which internal documents use more than once, hints at an undercurrent. These states were never homogenous with only white, middle class residents, nor with people who were homogenous in their feelings toward the issues of the day. These states were far from homogenous in their geography or their economies, but they were bound by two commonalities: a history of slavery and large numbers of white residents ready and willing to enjoy a magazine that turned their attentions away from the bad news around them.<sup>178</sup>

The anticipated audience profile for *Southern Living* was everything *Progressive Farmer* was not. In terms of audience income, *Southern Living* was very nearly the opposite of its parent magazine. Sixteen percent of its prospective readers earned less than \$5,000 a year, compared to forty percent of *Progressive Farmer*'s audience. A third of its audience made more than \$10,000, compared to *Progressive Farmer*'s sixteen percent. *Southern Living*'s median income, at \$8,500, was thirty percent higher than *Progressive Farmer*'s \$5,900.

*Southern Living*'s audience was also projected to be younger, with only twenty-eight percent of its readership older than thirty-five, compared to *Progressive Farmer*'s forty-one percent. More of *Southern Living*'s prospective readers had purchased cars or furniture or remodeled their homes in the last year than *Progressive Farmer* readers. But,

---

<sup>178</sup> "First Issue Circulation of Southern Living and Progressive Farmer (Adjusted)," 11 March 1965, Financial folder, "Southern Living: The Birthing" binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Eugene Butler's talk at an advertising sales meeting, TD, 5 April 1965, Folder 8, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 7-8. See also: "Magazine For South Discussed By Experts," *Birmingham Post-Herald*, 16 July 1965, Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

by far, the biggest discrepancy was in education. Half of *Progressive Farmer*'s audience had a grade school education or less, while half of *Southern Living*'s projected readership had at least a high school education. More than a third of them were college-educated, while only thirteen percent of *Progressive Farmer* readers had been to college.<sup>179</sup>

In addition to its "distinctly southern" content, Butler envisioned *Southern Living* as unique among all of its competition. It would be broader in scope than *Better Homes & Gardens* by including more feature articles and travel material. It would carry even more categories of content than *Sunset*, which focused its editorial on western living. Butler also hoped *Southern Living* would have a warmer tone than any comparable publications, fostering an intimacy with its readership similar to *Progressive Farmer*'s relationship with its audience. He wanted *Southern Living* to include more people in its articles and photography than some of these other lifestyle magazines did.<sup>180</sup> Butler believed by following this market, they had more to lose in not publishing the magazine at all than in the launch itself.<sup>181</sup>

The strategy proved effective. In December 1965, Progressive Farmer Company engaged in a direct-mail program to reach additional prospective readers for *Southern Living*. It mailed one million brochures, with the goal being a 4.5 percent return of 45,000 new subscribers. Instead, the effort resulted in 92,000 subscribers, a response greater than anything the circulation consultant said he had ever seen.<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>179</sup> "Audience Profile," n.d. but most likely prepared in 1965, Folder 11.202, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>180</sup> Eugene Butler's talk at an advertising sales meeting, 10.

<sup>181</sup> Eugene Butler's talk at an advertising sales meeting, 9-10.

<sup>182</sup> Quenelle, 95.

## Streamlining the Editorial Concept

During the summer of 1965, Eugene Butler asked all of the major players in Progressive Farmer Company to come up with editorial objectives for *Southern Living*. O.B. Copeland, the new magazine's editor, advised: "Write mostly about the good things in the South; if discuss [sic] bad things, include ways to improve them."<sup>183</sup> Oscar Dugger, the advertising executive, shared his ideas with Butler in a letter. First, he believed the magazine should target both men and women in growing urban areas. Second, it should "create and maintain a total editorial environment that presents southern life with a warm, intimate, dynamic style" giving "full and dramatic recognition to the sharp differences between southern living and that of other regions of the country." To define southernness, Dugger and other members of Progressive Farmer often relied on the dichotomy of the South being whatever the rest of the country was not. Next, Dugger said that the new magazine would:

give the South, for the first time in its long history, a family magazine published in and for the South with an exclusively southern editorial concept. It must therefore speak SOUTH – SOUTH – SOUTH from cover to cover. In short, it must be – in every issue – as uniquely southern as crepe myrtle, Mardi Gras, fig preserves, and black-eyed peas!

This last phrase found its way into much of the promotional material for the magazine in the coming months. Foods, plants, and regional events were safe topics that reminded white southerners of their homes and communities without invoking controversy.

According to Dugger, the standard for editorial content was that the region's "history, its institutions, cities, resorts, personalities, landmarks, art, literature, music, architecture,

---

<sup>183</sup> "Objectives, Philosophy for Southern Living," O.B. Copeland, 28 July 1965, Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

cooking, flowers, trees, etc.,...be so Southern in treatment that it would be inappropriate in a magazine edited for any other region.” When readers flipped through the magazine’s pages, they should be awash in things that reminded them of the South.<sup>184</sup>

Great confusion still existed about what qualified as *southern*; a list of cover possibilities for the first four magazine issues ranged from the stereotypical, a photo of azaleas, to the enterprising, a depiction of the region’s economy, to the natural, an image of a person fishing in a stream, to the bizarre, a picture of a circus on Florida State’s campus. What exactly was joining such disparate topics into a singular product Progressive Farmer Company could market to readers? Progressive Farmer staff members were sure (white) southerners were the target audience, but beyond that little cohesiveness existed.<sup>185</sup> Seven months before *Southern Living*’s launch, Alexander Nunn told The *Birmingham Post-Herald* newspaper that the new magazine would “feature mostly farm articles and [would] contain articles on Southern food, Southern habits and various aspects of Southern life in general” but would “be aimed primarily at the city and suburban dwellers...”<sup>186</sup> That the man ultimately responsible for *Southern Living*’s editorial content was still including the word *farm* in his description of articles should have been alarming to Emory Cunningham, Eugene Butler, and Oscar Dugger.

---

<sup>184</sup> Oscar Dugger, “Southern Living: What Kind of a Magazine? What Are Its Objectives?,” TD, 22 July 1965, Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archives, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>185</sup> O.B. Copeland to Co-Workers, TLS, 31 August 1965, Folder 11.199, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>186</sup> “Magazine For South Discussed By Experts,” *Birmingham Post-Herald*, 16 July 1965, Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama. After this article, Herbert Mayes asked to keep his relationship with *Southern Living* unofficial because he was concerned it would conflict with his lifetime contract as editorial adviser to *McCall’s* magazine. See: Oscar Dugger to Friends, TLS, 20 July 1965, Folder 11.146, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

Ephemeral ideas about *Southern Living* had lingered for years, but in the months approaching its publication deadline, Progressive Farmer consolidated all the discussion into one document, an attempt at parsing the internal conversation and forcing a unified vision. In August 1965, Emory Cunningham circulated a prospectus outlining the concept for the new magazine. All of the major players in the launch had access to the prospectus and submitted feedback, suggestions, and corrections in the last weeks of August.<sup>187</sup> How closely Butler and Cunningham worked together to create the prospectus is unclear; however, in a letter to Butler, Oscar Dugger gave him credit for doing “an excellent job” on the document. The magazine’s new editor O.B. Copeland, who was thrilled finally to have a focused identity around which to organize the magazine’s content, also wrote to Butler to tell him that the prospectus was “excellent!”<sup>188</sup>

From the opening line of the prospectus, Progressive Farmer established the magazine’s close relationship with its readers: “In Southern Living, we present a magazine with a unique and intimate identification with the area it serves.” Its sole purpose was to speak to those southerners whom the rest of the country either misunderstood or overlooked, and it was different because it was authentic. The document then reiterated the sentiment often expressed in exactly the same wording throughout internal memos, marketing material, and presentations concerning the launch: “Southern Living will be truly Southern – edited by Southerners, for Southerners, and

---

<sup>187</sup> The men involved were: Eugene Butler, O.B. Copeland, Alexander Nunn, Fowler Dugger, Oscar Dugger, Vernon Owens, Britt Butler, and J.L. Rogers.

<sup>188</sup> Emory Cunningham to Advertising Offices, TLS, 2 September 1965, Prospectus folder, “Southern Living: The Birthing” binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Eugene Butler to Friends, TLS, 23 August 1965, Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Oscar Dugger to Eugene Butler, TLS, 16 August 1965, page 2, Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; O.B. Copeland to Eugene Butler, TLS, 17 August 1965, Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

about Southerners.” Progressive Farmer Company not only understood its readership—it *was* its readership. Rather than faulting southerners for being misfits in the national consciousness, it glorified their distinctiveness: “It will be edited for the South’s unique differences – its differences in geography and climate – in the way it works and lives – its differences in a hundred other special ways.” These differences were more than just stubborn defiance against federal civil rights laws or violent protections of strict Jim Crow segregation codes. Whatever people were reading or seeing about the South in the national media was only part of the story. The lifestyle that *Southern Living* presented was how white southerners preferred to see themselves in the mirror—as genteel hosts living in handsome homes, framed by manicured gardens, with spreads of delicacies on their antique dining room tables. The magazine gladly reflected that identity back to readers (for a nominal subscription cost).<sup>189</sup>

To find a safe commonality, or one that did not include politics, race, religion, or any other controversial topic, the magazine relied on plants, home design, food, and travel to unite its readers. *Southern Living* was supposed to be the last word on how the region lived—what the region’s people really believed and what the region hoped to become. In reality, it was often grasping at straws to form an identity separate from the bad news of the day.

In the next paragraph of the prospectus, *Southern Living* cemented its readership ideal:

---

<sup>189</sup> “Prospectus,” TD, n.d. but likely completed in August 1965, Prospectus folder, “Southern Living: The Birthing” binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama. See also: Eugene Butler, “Opening Remarks” at Southern Living Conference, TD, 16 and 17 October 1963, Folder 11.217, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

Southern Living will give full and dramatic recognition to the sharp differences between Southern Living and that of other regions. It will seek the readership of those Southerners who do live better because they are taking advantage of assets that are found more abundantly in the South than in any other section of the nation. They live better because they use and enjoy the South's open country, its mild climate, long gardening season, and relatively uncrowded highways. Happily, they are the Southern people whose pattern of living is different because they are the Southerners who are better educated and more prosperous. They are the Southerners who take weekend trips, use sports equipment, garden as a hobby, and live on larger size lots. They were the first in their communities to air-condition their homes and to build a swimming pool. Southern Living will seek a spot close to the heart and home interests of these Southerners – the best segment of the South's growing population.

These were people who had the means to buy things and go places; they were the sort of readership that advertisers adore. *Southern Living* was also not just a women's magazine; its founders had always intended for it to be a *family* magazine. By reaching out to both men and women in higher income brackets, Progressive Farmer Company was able to attract the widest range of advertising and to make a strong argument for why companies should care about its audience.

By explaining whom *Southern Living* intended as its audience, the magazine also outlined whom it intended to ignore: immigrants, poor whites, and, most especially, African Americans. These Southerners were unable to take "advantage of assets" out of their reach. Southern norms in 1965 left African Americans struggling to receive society's most basic services, much less anything extra. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 had made discriminating against African Americans at motels and restaurants illegal, but some southern communities were slow to accept the changes. How could African Americans travel when they were unable to stay at motels and eat in restaurants? Not every community had black-sanctioned amenities for travelers unable to frequent the same businesses as whites. African Americans were obviously not the "Southerners who

are better educated and more prosperous.” Decades of racism had seen to that. Who had the extra income to spend on air-conditioning and swimming pools—well-to-do white southerners, who were the “best segment” of the region.<sup>190</sup>

Even in the prospectus, *Southern Living*’s editorial content was incredibly varied. It stated that the “new magazine will feature the South’s outstanding personalities, its economic and cultural developments, its history, its institutions, cities, resorts, landmarks, art, literature, music, architecture, flowers, and trees.” Its founders intended every article to inspire readers to do something—travel to a new destination, pursue a new hobby, or cook a new recipe. The staff attempted to have something for every reader, but in the rush to be exciting and fresh for a wide audience, the magazine also tackled it all, spreading itself too thinly.<sup>191</sup>

The prospectus outlined the six areas Progressive Farmer Company’s management would use to judge each article in *Southern Living*:

1. Does this issue build a fair, intelligent image of the South and Southern Living?
2. Will it increase the pride of Southern people in their region and will it help build a Better South?
3. Does it radiate the spirit of the South, saying strongly and positively this is a Southern magazine devoted to the best interests of Southern people?
4. Is it so interesting and important to readers that it will be read avidly and talked about, with subscribers looking forward eagerly for the next issue?
5. Will it help build the distinctive flavor we want to achieve in Southern Living?
6. Is it well written, timely, accurate, inspirational and entertaining? Is it about significant developments, things that save time and money, broaden interests, and inspire pride?<sup>192</sup>

---

<sup>190</sup> “Prospectus,” 2.

<sup>191</sup> “Prospectus,” 2-3.

<sup>192</sup> “Prospectus,” 4.



Most of these measuring sticks had to do with creating the appropriate southern image and reaction in the hearts and minds of readers. If the magazine failed to foster a sense of pride, then it had missed its mark.

A one-page document titled “What Southern Living Is All About” concisely echoed the prospectus. *Southern Living* was a magazine for modern urban and suburban families. It was about the people of the region, and its core from month to month would be articles on travel and recreation, homes and landscaping, and food and entertaining. But, a few statements in the document are incongruent, demonstrating just how varied the opinions at Progressive Farmer Company were when the discussion turned to the politics of the magazine. For example, one statement was: “Southern Living is a family service magazine with no axe to grind, but always with a point of view. It will neither editorialize nor preach, but rather will illustrate the Modern South with the South’s modern families.”<sup>193</sup> The statement suggested *Southern Living* would not openly argue through an editorial page, but it would demonstrate its principles through pictures and text. Another statement discussed feature articles:

Built on a core of service articles will be a leading edge -- a feature article each month dealing with a person, a city or state, or an institution that illustrates the Modern South’s response to its opportunity for progress. This article should be just controversial enough to stir the reading audience to constructive action.

The magazine could not be both apolitical and controversial. By striving for any controversy at all, *Southern Living* would be breaking its code to rise above the negative topics of the day. Finally, the document suggested that *Southern Living* was a unique

---

<sup>193</sup> “What Southern Living Is All About,” (presumably authored by Roger McGuire because “By RM” was written on the document), TD, n.d. but likely fall of 1965, Prospectus folder, “Southern Living: The Birthing” binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

publication just for southerners that would also bring national attention to the region.

Though the Progressive Farmer staff might have told each other, and perhaps themselves, that they had no axe to grind, they longed to advertise their South to the world—the one of hospitality, mouth-watering cuisine, white-columned mansions, and endless vacation destinations.

On August 10, 1965, Emory Cunningham sent a memorandum to Eugene Butler concerning the *Southern Living* prospectus. Though the two men discussed the magazine frequently, Cunningham wanted to clarify some of his opinions. First, he believed the magazine should be strictly southern, cover-to-cover, in order to establish its niche. Every article and every photograph had to have some regional connection. Second, he explained why he was less concerned about having excellent photography quality and rich colors throughout the magazine; there was too much competition for a slick magazine with *Look*, *Life*, and *McCall's* available. What pretty magazines could not offer, though, was exceptional editorial coverage of the South. Cunningham said that “Southern Living’s purpose is to move away from the general to the specific, from the massive everyone to the meaningful someone.” Cunningham ended his missive to Butler by issuing a striking statement, one that he made its own paragraph: “One further point. Southern Living should be unique because of two things it ignores – the north and the bad features of the south.”<sup>194</sup> If the magazine was to be a respite for white, southern families, it had to ignore these topics, and what made it unique in the marketplace was not only what it did discuss but all the issues it refused to mention.

---

<sup>194</sup> Emory Cunningham to Eugene Butler, TLS, 10 August 1965, Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 1-2.

## Outside Advice

The men behind *Southern Living* did seek outside advice concerning the new magazine, but these individuals often misunderstood *Southern Living*'s purpose. Its founders never intended it to be a women's magazine; yet, much of the advice envisioned it as a southern *Better Homes & Gardens*, rather than as a lifestyle publication. When advisors did issue constructive criticism, it was often harsh, challenging the potential a farming publishing company could possibly have with a lifestyle magazine. Emory Cunningham said that as a result, the Progressive Farmer staff began to turn inward, creating the magazine as they saw fit: "We soon learned there is no easy way to create an editorial format. Outside research firms were eager but not able to help. Panel discussions led by our editors were best."<sup>195</sup> The company eliminated outside advice to a minimum.

Progressive Farmer primarily limited formal guidance to consultants Herbert Mayes and Wilson Hicks. Mayes was one of the most famous magazine publishers in the country who had served as editor of *Good Housekeeping* before he led *McCall's*. He was president of McCall's corporation in 1962.<sup>196</sup> Hicks was famous as *Life* magazine's first photo editor who aided in the creation of photojournalism.<sup>197</sup> It is significant that the two men outside the company employed to give counsel on *Southern Living* were major

---

<sup>195</sup> Text of Emory Cunningham speech, TD, 25 January 1966, Folder 28, Box 11, Eugene Butler Papers, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi, 3.

<sup>196</sup> Wolfgang Saxon, "Herbert Mayes, 87, Former Top Editor of Magazines, Dies," *New York Times*, 1 November 1987, available from <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/01/obituaries/herbert-mayes-87-a-former-top-editor-of-magazines-dies.html>.

<sup>197</sup> "Nine Famous Star Employees," *Kansas City Star*, 4 February 2010, available from <http://www.kansascity.com/2010/02/04/1727493/famous-employees.html>.

figures in the national magazine scene, evidence of Progressive Farmer Company's desire to compensate for its lack of experience beyond *Progressive Farmer* magazine.

In November 1964, J. R. Abernathy of Grizzard Advertising in Atlanta had a series of conversations with Alexander Nunn. Abernathy praised Progressive Farmer's slow, deliberate approach at launching *Southern Living*, given the high mortality rate of magazines and the decline of such stalwarts as *Saturday Evening Post*. He told Nunn that the most promising trend in terms of *Southern Living* was the mobility of Americans "in their incomes, habitats and characteristics." These readers with money to spend on furniture and vacations were a boon with advertisers. But, with all the changes in the marketplace, Abernathy advised Progressive Farmer Company to have a unique product before it launched and to be financially-sound enough to lose whatever it invested if the venture failed. Abernathy envisioned *Southern Living* as a melding of the agricultural past with the industrial future: "A new way of life is emerging in the South which is unique to that region. This is *Southern Living*, a delicate balance of the heritage and graciousness of the old South with the rapid pace of the new. It is this way of life that the new magazine will serve."<sup>198</sup> Though Abernathy was intrigued about continuing an advertising relationship with Progressive Farmer Company, it is unclear if the company ever pursued it.

Alexander Nunn did propose, at a board meeting, that the company hire Herbert Mayes because of his excellent record with *McCall's* magazine as an editorial adviser. Mayes had a lifetime contract with *McCall's*, so as part of an "unofficial" arrangement

---

<sup>198</sup> J. R. Abernathy to Alexander Nunn, TLS, 30 November 1964, Folder 11.202, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

Mayes would be present in the Birmingham office three days a month and available for consultation by telephone. Members at the board meeting split over whether hiring Mayes would be helpful, fearing he would trend *Southern Living* too closely to a women's magazine format, which they resisted vociferously. Eugene Butler requested Alexander Nunn, O.B. Copeland, and Emory Cunningham leave the meeting and call Mayes. If he would agree to operate within the bounds of *Southern Living* as a family magazine, perhaps the Board could agree on hiring him. The three men returned to the meeting from their long-distance phone call to report that Mayes had agreed to their stipulations, and the Board hired him on a month-to-month basis.<sup>199</sup>

When O.B. Copeland brought *Southern Living* proofs to New York for Mayes to examine, Mayes found plenty to disparage. The cover was ugly. Its type was hard to read. The magazine was skimpy. It needed to include more people, more southerners. He thought maybe content on health concerns would beef it up. The magazine itself resembled *Progressive Farmer*, which was no compliment. The Art Department needed more responsibility for creating a beautiful product. The titles and blurbs were poorly written; one individual should have the job of writing them all. Overall, Mayes was "disturbed" by the quality of writing. When told the color choices in the magazine could not be undone two months before the magazine went to press, Mayes concluded that too should change; even at the last minute, *Southern Living* should be open to necessary

---

<sup>199</sup> Oscar Dugger to Friends, TLS, 20 July 1965, Folder 11.146, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Britt Butler, Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the Progressive Farmer Company, TDS, 15-17 November 1966, Folder 11.143, Box 4, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 8-9 and 12.

alterations. Mayes concluded Progressive Farmer Company had many, many improvements to make.<sup>200</sup>

Wilson Hicks was much more political than Mayes in his remarks, but he had nearly the same critiques. He wondered: “Southern Living is the progeny of The Progressive Farmer, and it couldn’t have a better sire, but don’t you agree that there is a continuing danger that SL might be melded too much in PF’s image?” Hicks wanted *Southern Living* to be fresh and exciting each month for its readers, and following too closely in *Progressive Farmer*’s footsteps would make it stale. He thought improving the photography was a must. He also worried about the editorial content; Paul Plawin and Gary McCalla had potential that “some good, hard writing jobs” might uncover, but Brad Byers was a subject on which Hicks would elaborate in a future letter.<sup>201</sup>

In the summer of 1965, Sid Noble, an advertising executive in New York City, wrote Emory Cunningham, warning him of the importance of creating a sleek magazine capable of competing in the big leagues. *Southern Living*’s competition would be the likes of *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Sunset*, *House Beautiful*, *House and Garden*, and *American Home*. Noble counseled that even the best farm magazine would be unable to provide the color and style that readers of such publications would expect from a lifestyle magazine, so he advised that Progressive Farmer Company hire an excellent art director and an editor with experience at a top-quality magazine. Cunningham disagreed. He had already decided that the editorial content of *Southern Living* was more essential than its

---

<sup>200</sup> O.B. Copeland to Eugene Butler and Alexander Nunn, TLS, 23 November 1965, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

<sup>201</sup> Wilson Hicks to O.B. Copeland, TLS, 10 August 1965, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. See also: Emory Cunningham to Wilson Hicks, TLS, 25 October 1965, Early Planning folder, “Southern Living: The Birthing” binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

appearance. It was more important to create a magazine that sounded southern than it was to have it look pretty.

Again, fifteen months later, Noble wrote to Progressive Farmer Company, this time appealing to Roger McGuire, the company's circulation manager. He said that although the magazine had made progress, he did not believe *Southern Living* had "attained the standards of quality in appearance and editorial content that are needed to bring to it the success that it deserves and should have." His tone was one of irritation that his previous advice had been ignored. McGuire then forwarded these two letters to Eugene Butler, who responded to Noble's letter by asking him a series of questions about the magazine's content, article length, and appearance. Butler was generally open to the criticism, but he did dispute Noble's statement that an advertiser had said the company was "trying to produce SOUTHERN LIVING with a farm magazine staff and farm magazine methods." Butler argued, defensively, that the company had hired a separate staff to work on the magazine. He did not mention that most of those staff members were former *Progressive Farmer* writers and editors.<sup>202</sup>

Advertising agencies frequently recommended the company move its headquarters out of the tarnished Birmingham. Once the company realized it would have to relocate because its buildings were in the path of the new interstate highway, some executives seriously investigated the idea.<sup>203</sup> Apparently, Alexander Nunn was in favor of leaving Birmingham, and Charles Poe, the former chairman of the company who lived

---

<sup>202</sup> Albert Sidney Noble to Emory Cunningham, TLS, 9 June 1965, Folder 11.303, Box 7, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; A.S. Noble to Roger McGuire, TLS, 14 September 1966, Folder 11.303, Box 7, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Eugene Butler to A.S. Noble, TL, 24 September 1966, Folder 11.303, Box 7, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>203</sup> Quenelle, 61.

in Raleigh, North Carolina, believed Atlanta would be a much better location than Birmingham. He said that Atlanta, as the “hub of the South,” was “bustling” and “progressive.” While Poe acknowledged the cost of moving the company and all its employees several hours to the east, Atlanta had better transportation, had a better national reputation, and was a better draw for future employees, making the move worth the cost. He wrote: “I realize the present unfavorable publicity Alabama is receiving is a temporary thing – last year it was Mississippi, next year it may be Georgia or North Carolina. But with all due respect to Birmingham...Atlanta has a much brighter future than Birmingham....” Not only would prospective hires prefer Atlanta but Poe thought that current employees would probably rather pick up and move. The cost to the company would be significant in the short term but easily something they could recover with a slight amount of additional advertising each year.<sup>204</sup>

From 1963 to 1965, Alexander Nunn and other Progressive Farmer leaders searched for personnel, particularly an editor-in-chief. Nunn, still in the farming magazine mindset, suggested a man from the “farm equipment trade publication industry.” Though the men at Progressive Farmer worked their connections and wrote letters to journalism deans across the region asking for input, many of them reported the same problem: Birmingham’s reputation had been so tarnished during the demonstrations of 1963 that few bright candidates were interested in moving to the city. Dean Norval Neil Luxon of the University of North Carolina responded: “Whether one likes to admit it or not, the fact that these jobs are in Birmingham is no help in recruiting, as I am sure you

---

<sup>204</sup> Charles Poe to Alex Nunn, TLS, 30 March 1965, Folder 37, Box 2, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 1-2.



have already discovered. I do not mention this critically, but merely as a statement of fact, because it was mentioned in the replies from several men and women to whom I wrote and talked.”<sup>205</sup> Emory Cunningham resisted leaving Birmingham. He believed that “our biggest mistake has been in underestimating the South’s potential and our own potential as a business firm.” If they fled the city in its darkest days, would they be any different from so many other Americans who had given up on the region?<sup>206</sup>

Though many individuals contacted Progressive Farmer Company with suggestions and instructions for how to make its new magazine a smash, Eugene Butler, Emory Cunningham, and Alexander Nunn were not particularly interested in outside help. Most recommendations misunderstood the concept or southern identity. Sometimes the advice was simply not what Progressive Farmer Company employees wanted to hear, that their farm connection was a threat to their new venture. Progressive Farmer officially hired just two consultants, Herbert Mayes and Wilson Hicks, and employed only some of their prescriptions in *Southern Living*’s early years. For the most part, the magazine’s founders relied on their own intuition and publishing-savvy to shape the new magazine.

### Publicizing the Launch

A January 1966 press release announced *Southern Living*’s publication. It listed the amount of the first press run as 290,000, with circulation in twelve states primarily in

---

<sup>205</sup> Quenelle, 113-114.

<sup>206</sup> Quenelle, 61.

urban and suburban markets. It described the magazine's editorial format as "geared to the interests of Southern families with emphasis on foods, travel, gardening and landscaping, home care, Southern places and personalities, and the South's social, cultural and recreational life." The press release quoted Eugene Butler as saying: "Southern Living is edited for the South's unique differences – its differences in geography and climate – in the way it works and lives – its differences in a hundred other ways. Month after month our new magazine will portray good Southern living ideas and qualities."<sup>207</sup>

That same month *BIRMINGHAM Magazine*, a publication sponsored by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, ran a feature article about *Southern Living*. It delved into the socioeconomic changes in the region and how *Southern Living* could capitalize on them. It quoted Butler: "We feel that the South needs and wants a magazine like SOUTHERN LIVING. In providing that answer we frankly anticipate an acceptance of SOUTHERN LIVING ranging from warm friendliness to enthusiastic affection. Call it regional pride or whatever you wish, we confidently expect to find this kind of audience." Accompanying the article were a series of color photographs from the magazine: a white family on horseback, a yellow rose, a white couple playing golf, and a living room decorated in red and white. Two of those photos demonstrated hobbies traditionally for affluent families—horseback riding and golf.<sup>208</sup>

---

<sup>207</sup> Southern Living Press Release, part of a section of loose documents at the back of the binder, "Southern Living: The Birthing" binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; See also: Press release to Associate Media Directors and Planners, 25 June 1965, part of a section of loose documents at the back of the binder, "Southern Living: The Birthing" binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>208</sup> "A New Magazine Presents a New Image," *BIRMINGHAM Magazine*, January 1966, Folder 11.301, Box 7, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 10.

Progressive Farmer Company issued another press release the week *Southern Living* launched. It explained that the magazine would encompass the “South, its cities, the countryside and the people who make the South.” According to Butler, its *raison d’être* was “to help Southern families make better use of their growing incomes, their leisure, their mental and physical assets, and the resources of the South--to the end that they may live more enjoyable and purposeful lives.” The press release emphasized the company’s authority on southern identity in language frequently present in internal discussions: “This is a magazine for the Southern family, about the South, by the Southerner.”<sup>209</sup> The magazine claimed authenticity because its founders knew southern identity as only southerners could.

Progressive Farmer Company disseminated at least four charter subscription brochures intended to drum up subscriptions in the months prior to *Southern Living*’s launch. One brochure opened to a large, black-and-white spread that showed an article on Houston in a sample magazine on the left side and contained text introducing the magazine on the right side. It said: “Perhaps more than any other adjective, Southern suggests a way of life that is all too rare in the world today. It’s characterized by hospitality, grace, serenity, beauty, and fine cuisine. Because we think these and others are characteristics worth perpetuating, starting in February, there will be the magazine, SOUTHERN LIVING.” In advertising the magazine, Progressive Farmer sought to redefine the southern lifestyle. No longer would the world see southerners as racist or

---

<sup>209</sup> “News Release: New Southern Magazine,” TD, n.d. likely January 1966, Folder 11.217, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

backward; instead, all of the region's pleasant connotations were available within the pages of *Southern Living*.

To the question "Why Southern Living?" the brochure answered:

It would seem that the last thing America needs these days is another magazine. And for Americans at large, this is probably true. But for American Southerners, it is anything but so.

We think you, like us, have been wishing for a magazine that is completely and exclusively Southern, in interest, content, style, and tone. A magazine published for and by Southerners who are proud of their heritage...and certain of their ability to make meaningful contributions to their region and their country.

If you believe the traditions of the South should be enlarged and enriched through a publication of its own, you are invited to read on about how you can participate.<sup>210</sup>

The text from another brochure heartened readers that *this* was *their* magazine:

New Englanders have their 'Yankee' and 'Down East' Magazines. New Yorkers have their 'New Yorker.' And now--for the first time--we have a magazine we too can pridefully call our own:

SOUTHERN LIVING is as deep down Dixie as a Virginia creeper, a Mississippi steamboat, a Georgia peach, a Carolina warbler, a Texan rose, a Louisiana purchase, a Kentucky colonel, an Alabama star, an Arkansas traveler, a Florida orange, a Tennessee -- Williams!

It's a magazine strictly for us who love the South, who wish we knew more about her people and places, and who want to see her continue to develop, mature, grow, as the best of all possible places in this best of all possible worlds in which to live, to work, and to raise our children.<sup>211</sup>

The brochure showered southerners with glowing language about how exceptional their identity was, and it sought to excite them into becoming charter subscribers.

---

<sup>210</sup> Charter subscription brochure with cover "For just \$1 be a Charter Subscriber," Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>211</sup> Unnamed charter subscription brochure text, 21 October 1965, Circulation folder, "Southern Living: The Birthing" binder, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 2.

The brochure text also created a relationship with the reader by fostering an us-against-them mentality. For example, it said, almost conspiratorially:

If you're anything like me and the Southerners I know, you're well aware that there is no magazine of the South. An absence irritated by national magazines that too often dismiss the South as having little more than drawls, hominy grits and Tara.

My feeling, and hopefully yours, is that no region has greater need for, or better resources to produce, a magazine that is truly its own. Written, edited, and published by Southerners for Southerners.

The problems of the South, like its benefits, are unique. And it is only reasonable that they be dealt with on a continuing basis by the people who know them best -- Southerners.<sup>212</sup>

The brochure lashed out at unflattering and inaccurate stereotypes of white southern identity, but rather than dispel them entirely, *Southern Living* issued its own spin on them. It handled them with the confidence that it—as the magazine by southerners for southerners—had the unique ability to define southern culture without perpetuating unfavorable stereotypes. This brochure text also conceded unpleasant aspects to the southern lifestyle and promised readers a safe place for *real* southerners to handle them. *Southern Living* moved away from this philosophy in the coming years; it included less and less of the region's problems, from next to nothing to none at all.

Another charter subscription brochure resembled the future magazine with bright, color photographs of southern landscapes on glossy paper. The scenes included a white-columned plantation home surrounded by fuchsia azaleas in full bloom and an overlook of the forested Smoky Mountains from a perch of pink rhododendrons. Another page featured a life-size picture of the new magazine with the following blurb: “In just a few

---

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

weeks' time, azaleas like those on the cover of Southern Living commence a pageant whose brilliance and beauty is matched nowhere else in the world....For other articles that celebrate the natural wonders, people, history and heritage of our Southland, lift this page:" The next spread shared details about proposed articles and sections for the new magazine.<sup>213</sup>

A third brochure read "THE MANY FACES OF YOUR SOUTH" on the outside. Once opened, it showed black-and-white pictures of people from around the region with the text: "THE SOUTHERNER WHO IS PROUD OF SOUTHERN PEOPLE AND SOUTHERN INSTITUTIONS...will find a wise and informed companion in SOUTHERN LIVING...the only family magazine exclusively edited for the South." It continued by appealing to southerners who appreciated "fine food," were "interested in tasteful décor," were "concerned with home management," and enjoyed having fun. The brochure again committed a sin the magazine never again would commit after its first year of publication. It mentioned "national problems" and said concerned southerners would "appreciate wise counsel and astute reporting in SOUTHERN LIVING." The brochure ended by saying:

SOUTHERN LIVING opens up this world in which you live and reveals the exciting, dynamic, many-faceted tempo of today's South. It speaks with force and intimacy...lives in close companionship with its readers because it is a magazine prepared by Southern editors for Southern people. A natural outgrowth, by popular demand, of THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER, SOUTHERN LIVING will serve the town as ably as THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER has for 80 years served the farm.<sup>214</sup>

---

<sup>213</sup> Charter subscription brochure with cover "First magazine ever published," Folder 11.154, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>214</sup> Pre-publication charter subscription brochure with cover "THE MANY FACES OF YOUR SOUTH," Folder 11.463, Box 10, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

The magazine claimed authenticity because its founders were its readership, and it cared because its founders' issues were the same as the ones of its audience. The brochure also reminded potential readers that Progressive Farmer Company was one of them, a truly southern company they could trust.

After the first issue of *Southern Living* went to press in January 1966, Butler commended the editorial, advertising, and circulation staff, saying: "I hope the subscribers and advertisers are as well pleased as I am. If so, Southern Living can't help being a success."<sup>215</sup> Alexander Nunn also congratulated the editorial staff, telling them:

Ever so often in the history of man and civilizations an idea, an ideal, and the time meet. We are doubly fortunate. Southern Living is doubly blessed. The South is ready for it. Circulation response, double what we had planned for, already indicates the extent of its acceptance. The South has had no regional magazine of its own – no spokesman for its brilliant industrial progress, for those responsible for its accelerated programs of education, its bountiful endowment of vacation facilities, no widespread medium to tell of its homes, landscaping, history, and culture. There has been no voice to speak effectively and eloquently for it. Southern Living, if we live up to our abilities and our opportunities, can do all of these things.

After being wrong about *Southern Living* in so many ways, Nunn ended his glowing memo with a conjecture that proved accurate: "I predict that Southern Living will prosper with the inevitable prosperity and advancement of the South. Five years from now, ten years from now, our responsibilities and our opportunities will far exceed any goals we strive to attain today."<sup>216</sup> *Southern Living* was phenomenally successful, even beyond what its founders in 1966 could have imagined.

---

<sup>215</sup> Eugene Butler to O.B. Copeland, TL, 5 January 1966, Folder 11.201, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>216</sup> "History of Southern Living," TD, n.d., Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

## CHAPTER FIVE

In February 1966, Progressive Farmer Company mailed the first issues of *Southern Living* magazine to thousands of *Progressive Farmer*'s subscribers.<sup>217</sup> It was an exciting time for the individuals who had wrestled with implementing their promising concept. After years of dialogue and research, the final product came to fruition. It was by no means perfect. As consultants Wilson Hicks and Herbert Mayes had warned, the magazine looked too much like what it was—a lifestyle magazine distributed by a farm publishing company. The photography and design were dated and boring, the quality of the printing was unimpressive, and the articles read like the work of freelancers. The magazine was still haphazard, with articles ranging from cloying fashion spreads to droning pieces on the economic progress of the region. Glimpses of the magazine's future of strictly home, travel, food, and gardening content shined through the confusion, but *Southern Living* was clearly not that genial, apolitical magazine yet. Though little of Alexander Nunn's farming content made it into the magazine, a few of his editorials did; it took Emory Cunningham several years to finally shape the publication as he had envisioned it.

Looking back, Cunningham remembered a magazine that “dramatized the beauty and advantages of the South and its potential for a satisfying lifestyle” from its beginning. After almost a decade of publication, Cunningham said of the magazine:

If you read our magazine you know it consciously emphasizes the more positive aspects of life in the South. We know from our own intimate acquaintance with

---

<sup>217</sup> John Logue and Gary McCalla, *Life at Southern Living* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 2000), 33.



the South, from thousands of reader letters, and from careful review of *Southern Living* results, that our editorial format is working. By giving readers accurate information that is constructive and usable, we achieve more success than if we were to focus on the unfortunate and the negative.<sup>218</sup>

Cunningham believed *Southern Living*'s recipe of content would hook readers, stifle critics, and serve as a beacon of hope to a region badly in need of some good news. He was right, at least about hooking readers, but it took several years before the magazine settled into its niche.

Publishing a new magazine is quite a feat. The staff may be sparse, the workload immense, and the deadline pressure stifling. Many bright individuals can conceive a magazine, but actually putting it into print is a higher order. *Southern Living*'s length in its first years and whether the amount of content increased or decreased was an expression of the magazine's overall health. As Progressive Farmer hired more staff strictly for *Southern Living*, the magazine's editorial content increased and its quality improved. The magazine's first issue was ninety-two pages, but throughout the year, the length decreased to a steady seventy-two pages from August to December 1966.<sup>219</sup> It also retained the subtitle "an edition of Progressive Farmer" on its cover until August 1966 when it began to separate itself from its parent magazine.<sup>220</sup>

The shortest issue reviewed was January 1967 when it was only sixty pages. Progressive Farmer had spent months in 1965 fine-tuning the early articles and

---

<sup>218</sup> Emory Cunningham, *Eighty-Nine Years of Service in the South: The Story of the Progressive Farmer Company* (New York: Newcomen Society, 1975), 14.

<sup>219</sup> For this research, I analyzed 42 issues of *Southern Living* magazine's first four years of publication, from the first issue in February 1966 to December 1969. The following issues were unavailable: November and December 1967, January 1968, December 1968, and November 1969. Each monthly issue was explored in its entirety, from the articles to the photographs to the advertisements larger than one-fourth of a page. The intention was to evaluate the content as readers might have seen it.

<sup>220</sup> See *Southern Living*, August 1966.

photographs for *Southern Living*, but once the magazine actually started publishing, the staff had to grind out editorial content month after month, resulting in shorter issues.

*Southern Living* began increasing its content in 1968, as its staff improved. The size of the magazine consistently increased from 1967 to 1969; the longest issue reviewed was April 1969 at 174 pages, nearly three times longer than issues from 1967.

Considering the magazine's advertising-to-editorial ratio is valuable for several reasons. Magazines since the 1960s have depended upon their advertisers to supplement subscription revenue.<sup>221</sup> Especially in the case of a new magazine, finding and keeping advertisers is essential to its success. Progressive Farmer Company might be able to publish a magazine for a short time based on its financial reserves, but increasing advertising content was crucial to the magazine's longevity. *Southern Living* needed a compelling product to lure its audience, which in turn convinced advertisers to jump aboard. Without them, the magazine would have lasted only as long as Eugene Butler's financial commitment to the project.

*Southern Living*'s advertising content fluctuated greatly in the early years. The first issue had thirty-four percent advertising, with the average for 1966 being around thirty percent. The lowest amount occurred in August 1966 and again in January 1967 when only one quarter of the magazine was advertising. The largest amount of advertising was sixty percent in October 1968 when the magazine ran a section on regional travel sponsored by the Southern Travel Directors Council in Atlanta.<sup>222</sup> By

---

<sup>221</sup> See: David Abrahamson, *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Postwar Periodical* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press Inc., 1996).

<sup>222</sup> The section begins on page 51 and continues to page 71. *Southern Living*, October 1968.

1969, the average of advertising pages had climbed to nearly half of the magazine's overall content, suggesting improved financial stability for the magazine.

*Southern Living* usually contained articles concerning four main topics: travel and recreation, homes and decorating, foods and entertaining, and gardening and landscaping. True to the founders' promise to include more people in the magazine than their competition did, most issues during these early years also contained feature articles on prominent southerners, as well as a department called "Singular Southerners" that spotlighted successful people from around the region. Other editorial content ran the gamut, from fashion advice and football previews to how-to articles to recipes. The magazine usually defined the South as the states from Texas east to Georgia and Florida and north to Delaware, Maryland, and Kentucky.<sup>223</sup>

Most of the magazine's content in the 1960s fit four themes: regional travel promotion and economic boosterism, the perpetuation of traditional race and gender roles, the connection of southern identity to Civil War history, and the expression of southern exceptionalism. Progressive Farmer Company felt strongly about promoting economic progress within the region, though they tempered that enthusiasm with travel features as the magazine grew into its second and third years. The magazine was largely the creation of its founders, and they, for the most part, treated the home as the realm of women, while men worked outside the home. They also barely mentioned or portrayed African Americans in the magazine at all. It was easier to leave that sore subject untouched, and they were not part of the demographic Progressive Farmer Company was targeting. The southerners creating the magazine were proud of their own personal

---

<sup>223</sup> For example, see the map in *Southern Living*, February 1969, 82.

histories, their families, and their connections to the land. This appreciation for heritage had a definite place in the magazine, though it often heralded a tenuous connection to the antebellum era and to the Civil War. Finally, *Southern Living* said, over and over again, through its articles, its photographs, and sometimes its editorial commentary that the South was exceptional—and in a good way. This underlying theme was the magazine’s entire purpose, to reassure white southerners that their way of living was superior and that they should treasure it, even when the rest of the world said otherwise.

### Travel Promotion

During the 1960s, travel was the dominant theme in *Southern Living*, both in editorial and advertising content. Its prevalence only increased during the first years of publication. By 1969, it ruled the first fourth of the magazine. The content included the “Travel South” department, feature articles on tourist destinations, and sections of advertising devoted to the region.

Travel promotion appeared in a variety of ways in the magazine. Some of the magazine covers touted tourist destinations, such as the March 1966 one featuring a view of Mississippi’s Delta Queen steamboat.<sup>224</sup> In the corresponding feature article, writer John McKinney contrasted his experience on the Amazon River with the Mississippi River: “And now I was back home, and for the first time here I was flowing down the middle of the Mississippi. Discovering our South. And learning at last that gold is where

---

<sup>224</sup> *Southern Living* March 1966, cover.

you find it. Right here in Dixie.”<sup>225</sup> In this way, *Southern Living* conjured adventures within the region waiting to be discovered and reassured readers that the region was full of promise.

*Southern Living* regularly promoted the standard tourist attractions, such as Six Flags Over Georgia amusement park, which appeared on the magazine’s June 1967 cover. According to the related feature article, Six Flags in Atlanta provided a taste of southern history in addition its rides and shows; it was a distinctly southern amusement park.<sup>226</sup> Throughout the summer of 1968, both advertisements and stories promoted HemisFair in San Antonio, Texas, which was expected to draw eight million visitors.<sup>227</sup> One article suggested routes for driving to San Antonio, while another one discussed tourist attractions in the city.<sup>228</sup>

Editorial content also focused on specific communities suitable for tourists, such as Key West. The magazine provided information on what to do there, where to stay, and why Key West was a worthwhile tourist stop. It hyped the city’s identity as more southern than most of the region, quoting resident Toby Bruce: “We Key Westers are the only people in America who live so far South that we can kid Alabamians, Georgians, and Mississippians—not to mention South Carolinians—about being Yankees.”<sup>229</sup> In this way, southern identity was closely connected to geography; the farther south one lived, the more southern the person was.

---

<sup>225</sup> *Southern Living*, March 1966, 12.

<sup>226</sup> “Six Flags Over Georgia,” *Southern Living*, June 1967, 22-23.

<sup>227</sup> “34 FACES OF SAN ANTONIO: What To See and Where,” *Southern Living*, August 1968, 22.

<sup>228</sup> “Over 300 Things and Places in the South To See and Do On Your Way to HemisFair,” *Southern Living*, June 1968, 42. “34 FACES OF SAN ANTONIO,” 22. See also: “The Fair Girls Of HemisFair,” *Southern Living*, August 1968, 38.

<sup>229</sup> Deane and David Heller, “The Character and Characters of Key West,” *Southern Living*, April 1968, 52.

Sometimes *Southern Living* promoted community events as worthy of tourism. For example, September 1968's "Travel South" department featured Scottsboro, Alabama, and its First Monday trade expositions as "a unique slice of Americana...come to life." It described the scene:

The sound of genial voices and shuffling feet mingles with the yelp of dogs, squawk of chickens, coo of pigeons, squeal of pigs, and the occasional splatter of tobacco juice on the pavement. Somewhere across the crowd a fiddle and guitar swing into a lively hoedown tune, a banjo tinkles out, and a mule brays in the distance. Overlaid figures mill about in the warm September sun, curiously looking at each other and at the fantastic array of guns, clocks, bottles, milk cans, iron kettles, plows, washbowls and pitchers, livestock, flatirons, spinning wheels, antique washstands, white mice, and unidentifiable geegaws. Men, women, and children enthusiastically haggle over prices. A shirtsleeved itinerate preacher strides back and forth before the courthouse steps, pounding his fist into his palm.<sup>230</sup>

The article created a romantic scene of a community reminiscent of a past era. It also was a revision on the national connotation of Scottsboro as the town where nine African American male youths were detained and rapidly prosecuted for the rape of two white female teenagers in a weak case that the Supreme Court twice heard. A June 1968 article focused on artists in Appalachia, a theme similar to the one in Scottsboro. It highlighted "weavers, potters, carvers, blacksmiths" who followed in the footsteps of their ancestors to create "finished works [that became] prized possessions."<sup>231</sup> Such editorial content treated these communities as relics of a simpler time. Sometimes just being antique was enough to make a place noteworthy. The magazine touted old covered bridges in Virginia and Georgia's last state-sponsored ferry, where "traffic today by nostalgic

---

<sup>230</sup> "Nobody Invented 'First Monday' in Scottsboro; It Just Happened," Travel South department, *Southern Living*, September 1968, 8.

<sup>231</sup> Michael Frome, "Arts and Crafts Of the Southern Highlands Survive Against the Pace of Modern Time," *Southern Living*, June 1968, 33.

travelers is greater than ever.”<sup>232</sup> The past in the pages of *Southern Living* was not at all forgotten; it was a cherished connection that was worthy of tourism.

The magazine highlighted other community events that displayed the distinctiveness of the southern experience, such as the “World’s Largest Watermelon Cutting,” where more than “30,000 ‘city slickers’ gather for singing, guitar playing, dinner on the grounds, and the crowning of the melon-eating champion of all Georgia.” The magazine asked: “Where in the world can you get 30,000 people in one place for a watermelon cuttin’? Where else but in Atlanta, Georgia, in July.”<sup>233</sup> Though Atlanta was already becoming a distinctly Americanized metropolis, *Southern Living* portrayed it as just another down-home community.

Advertising content that promoted southern tourism highlighted hotels, parks, cities, and states. Sometimes state tourism boards purchased sections, like one entirely devoted to Texas in the April 1969 issue.<sup>234</sup> The Southern Travel Directors Council in Atlanta sponsored an extensive advertising section in October 1968 that continued for nearly twenty pages. It included text and photos that closely resembled the magazine’s actual editorial content, as well as a two-page map of the region with numbers that corresponded with destinations.<sup>235</sup> Places advertised in the segment included Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia, the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and colonial Williamsburg, Virginia.<sup>236</sup>

---

<sup>232</sup> “Covered Bridges Yet Stand in Virginia,” *Southern Living*, February 1969, 29; “Georgia’s Last State-Run Ferry,” *Southern Living*, February 1969, 24.

<sup>233</sup> “World’s Largest Watermelon Cutting,” *Southern Living*, July 1968, 41.

<sup>234</sup> *Southern Living*, April 1969, 7. See also: *Southern Living*, March 1968, 47-61.

<sup>235</sup> “A Smokiness So Vague in the Air,” *Southern Living*, October 1968, 51, 53, 62-63.

<sup>236</sup> *Southern Living*, October 1968, 58; *Southern Living*, October 1968, 66; *Southern Living*, October 1968, 71.

*Southern Living* also participated directly by creating its own tourism event, the Southern Living Show, usually held in Atlanta. A February 1968 article described the eighth annual event, which pre-dated the magazine itself, as “2 acres of beauty and originality to show interior and exterior designs, decorative home furnishings, ornamental horticulture, gardening, landscaping, and indoor-outdoor living at its best.” In addition to drawing as many as 45,000 tourists, the magazine expected regional and national publications to cover the event, disseminating information to “approximately 40 million people.”<sup>237</sup> In 1968 the magazine devised another way for it to extol regional tourism—the Travel South Photo contest. Entries could include photos taken during a vacation in any one of eleven southern states.<sup>238</sup>

Much of *Southern Living*’s editorial and advertising content focused on regional tourism. Featured locations ranged from small, community events to amusement parks like Six Flags. This content served a greater purpose than simply travel promotion alone. It spotlighted the exceptional nature of the region, that tourists could only experience these adventures in the South. It suggested that the region was worthy of tourism and that southerners could both benefit its economy and visit places where their accents would not betray them by staying within the South’s bounds.

*Southern Living* also established who it intended as its readers with the travel content. Though more Americans had cars and leisure time in the 1960s, travel was still the luxury of the middle class, and the magazine touted traditional hobbies of the wealthy

---

<sup>237</sup> “Let’s Go To the Southern Living Show,” *Southern Living*, February 1968, 43. See also the advertisement in *Southern Living*, November 1968, 24. It described the event as a “paradise of enchantment.”

<sup>238</sup> *Southern Living*, May 1968, 54. See also: *Southern Living*, May 1969, 55.



in the region, such as skiing and golf. Poor whites in the South were clearly unable to hop in cars they did not own and drive to destinations they could not afford. It was even more unlikely that African Americans could enjoy *Southern Living*'s travel advice. Though the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned racial discrimination in public places, its acceptance varied widely. As the system of segregation disintegrated, one motel might give an African American family a room, while the one next door refused them. The same restaurant might seat an African American one day but not the next day, and small communities off-the-beaten path flew under the radar for years as though the Civil Rights Act had never happened. African Americans were still unwelcome in motels, restaurants, and tourist attractions across the region, where "informal Jim Crow" lingered. The South's businesses could no longer legally turn away African Americans, but no law forced them to drop their sullenness. Generations of racism did not disappear overnight; in many places, it simply went underground.<sup>239</sup>

### Economic Boosterism

Closely connected to its promotion of regional travel, *Southern Living* exhibited a deep regard for economic progress throughout the region, especially in its earliest years

---

<sup>239</sup> Richard K. Popp, "Magazines, Marketing, and the Construction of Travel in the Postwar United States" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 2008), 373; Bill Minor, "Decade of 1960s Brought Dramatic Changes in Lives of Mississippians," in *Eyes on Mississippi: A Fifty-Year Chronicle of Change* (Jackson, Miss.: J Prichard Morris Books, 2001), 166-167; Minor, "Some Signs Racial Barriers Crumbling, and More Changes in Prospect," in *Eyes on Mississippi: A Fifty-Year Chronicle of Change*, 225; Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred P Knopf, 2006), 359 and 375; Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 227; Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), xv-xvi.

of publication. Its editorial content from 1966 and 1967 expressed a consistent theme of inner-city rehabilitation and increased industrialization, often contrasting the region's exponential growth to perceived economic stagnation above the Mason-Dixon Line. In the very first issue, *Southern Living* compared Houston, Texas's rise to New York City, and it chattered that Houston was impervious to setbacks because citizens there "always seem to have prospered."<sup>240</sup> In this way, the South was at least as good, if not better, than the proverbial "North." Another piece focused on Huntsville, Alabama: "Space City, Spic, Span, and Spectacular: How one of the South's fastest growing small cities took a giant step forward in city beautification."<sup>241</sup> The next month, the magazine included an article on Florence, South Carolina's downtown renewal program, calling it "a renovation miracle."<sup>242</sup> The following month the magazine again praised a city's growth, this time Jacksonville, Florida's striving for one million residents by 1976. All of these articles were about economic progress and the gleaming downtowns that forecast a promising future for the South.<sup>243</sup>

In a nod to the famous Civil War fiction *Gone with the Wind* set in Atlanta, Paul Plawin quoted Scarlett O'Hara concerning the city's rising like a phoenix from the ashes: "'They burned you,' she thought, 'and they laid you flat. But they didn't lick you. They couldn't lick you. You'll grow back just as high and sassy as you used to be!'" Plawin said that Scarlett could never have foreseen how great the city would become: "The building all along the streets, and in the hearts and minds of proud Atlantans, has not

---

<sup>240</sup> *Southern Living*, February 1966, 17.

<sup>241</sup> "Space City, Spic, Span, and Spectacular," *Southern Living*, January 1967, 28.

<sup>242</sup> "'Before' And 'After' Views Of A RENOVATION MIRACLE," *Southern Living*, February 1967, 11.

<sup>243</sup> "One Million by '75," *Southern Living*, March 1967, 16.

ceased since the first new brick was laid in Sherman's wake."<sup>244</sup> He credited the city's economic success to its New South mentality but Deep South connection, as well as to its commitment to education and increasing city revenue. The story itself underscored the city's Civil War history of destruction and retold the predictable white southern mantra of "rising again."

Another article highlighted architect John Portman of Atlanta, who was redesigning downtowns throughout the country. He said that "the greatest problem facing the country today is not the war in Vietnam, nor racial friction, nor the threat of inflation, nor the revolt on the campus" but "the dissolution of our civilization through the slow dying of our great cities."<sup>245</sup> Apparently, what most plagued the United States was not any number of social issues but simply urban decline, a ridiculous notion for anyone living through such turmoil.

Interestingly, *Southern Living* even touted Jackson, Mississippi, a small city riddled with problems in the 1960s. Jackson was the political center of the most notorious of all southern states. As such, it became a battleground for extreme segregationists on one side and equal rights activists on the other.<sup>246</sup> Yet, *Southern Living's* editor, O.B. Copeland, portrayed the city in an entirely different light. He wrote the article "City With A Clean Face And Forward Look" that explained how "Jackson,

---

<sup>244</sup> *Southern Living*, April 1966, 16.

<sup>245</sup> Harold Martin, "The Central City Crusade Of John Portman," *Southern Living*, August 1969, 30.

<sup>246</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, 82-83, 278-279 and 359; Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 240; Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-1968* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 243; James W. Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), 10, 30, 90, and 120-121; Curtis Wilkie, *Dixie: A Personal Odyssey through Events That Shaped the Modern South* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 98-100; Steven D. Classen, *Watching Jim Crow: The Struggles Over Mississippi TV, 1955-1969* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 3-6 and 48-49.

Miss., became one of the nation's cleanest, most beautiful, and most progressive cities" through its "pride." Copeland attributed the city's success to its willingness to invest in infrastructure projects like a new airport and city beautification through garden clubs, park facilities, and litter prevention. The article came at a time when cities across the country were breaking apart over race and class issues, and it served dual purposes: to change the dialogue on southern cities like Jackson that had developed poor reputations and to negate the criticism of the region by highlighting its successes in relation to the nation's failures.<sup>247</sup>

*Southern Living* also featured the economic growth of specific states.<sup>248</sup> One story in particular questioned what made North Carolina's meteoric rise different from slower progress in other southern states:

North Carolina has surged ahead so boldly that many people consider her the most progressive state in the South. She ranks among the best in universities, public schools, highways, tourism, trucking, and industry. North Carolinians are proud of what they have, but are still a bit puzzled about why they have come so far so fast.<sup>249</sup>

The article largely attributed this improvement to prudent state leadership and utilizing natural resources. It went on to say:

Back in the early 1800's [sic], North Carolina was so backward and indifferent that people called it the "Rip Van Winkle State." Today, it holds such a reputation for progress that few people realize its per capita income still ranks below that of Georgia, Virginia, Texas, and Florida among the Southern states.<sup>250</sup>

---

<sup>247</sup> O.B. Copeland, "City With A Clean Face And Forward Look," *Southern Living*, March 1966, 66. See also: Roberts and Klibanoff, 401.

<sup>248</sup> See also: M'Nelle Causey, *Southern Living*, April 1967, 51.

<sup>249</sup> "The Elusive Why of North Carolina," *Southern Living*, March 1966, 14. See also: Bradley Byers, "Louisiana's Long Affair With The French," *Southern Living*, January 1967, 19.

<sup>250</sup> "The Elusive Why of North Carolina," 15.

The insinuation was that if the country thought North Carolina was economically progressive, it should take a better look at all the improvements the other southern states were making. They, too, were worthy of praise.

Other editorial content focused on the region's economic growth as a whole. One article separated the South from the rest of the country based on its industrialization: "In the past five years, almost half of the national increase in manufacturing employment and in large manufacturing plants was in the South. The region's share of money spent by manufacturers on new plants and equipment was *more than that of any other region*."<sup>251</sup> The editorial went on to encourage young southerners to remain in the region because of expanding job opportunities.<sup>252</sup> According to *Southern Living*, the South was far above its stereotype of being economically backward; in fact, it showed much more economic promise than any other area of the country.

In the July 1967 issue, *Southern Living* ran two articles in tandem. "Southeast's Industry-Building Challenge" began on the left page, and "Three Major Industry Growth Areas" started on the corresponding right page. Together they explored what hindered the region's growth (an inferiority complex) and how hard work, wise leadership, and the utilization of natural resources were key to economic progress.<sup>253</sup> The second one also showed concern for the South's economic alienation, predicting that "the Southeast is

---

<sup>251</sup> "Stay South, Young Man," *Southern Living*, May 1966, 52.

<sup>252</sup> Championing the economic progress of the region also came in the form of content about education. See: Bradley Byers, "Will Intellectual Sunshine Make the Industrial Plants Grow?," *Southern Living*, October 1966, 20B. "The Brainpower Theory," *Southern Living*, October 1966, 47. Richard M. Morehead, "Those Young University Presidents," *Southern Living*, September 1966, 33.

<sup>253</sup> Luther H. Hodges, "Southeast's Industry-Building Challenge," and Winthrop Rockefeller, "Three Major Industry Growth Areas," *Southern Living*, July 1967, 42-43. Six Sisters of the South, "Southern Living, February 1967, 25. *Southern Living*, February 1967, 26.

going to be more closely allied with the national economy, national trends, and national situations in the decades ahead....”<sup>254</sup>

Part of *Southern Living*’s mission, especially in its earliest years, was to foster southern economic growth. Alexander Nunn and his sycophant O.B. Copeland desired to promote the regional economy as they might have defended farmers in *Progressive Farmer*. They won the argument in the first two years when the magazine featured urban success stories and explored what changes made local economies stronger. During this time, *Southern Living* sounded much like a Chamber of Commerce brochure, cheerleading about how much promise the region showed as the country’s future industrial center. The magazine took a defensive stance against the stereotype of southern backwardness, not challenging such ideas directly but instead issuing a hearty vindication through its portrayal of economic progress. Before long, the boosterism waned and dissipated into the regional travel content, particularly after Alexander Nunn left the company and Emory Cunningham’s vision for the magazine prevailed.

## Regional History

*Southern Living* bolstered the importance of the region by emphasizing its history, and it frequently attached historical significance to a preservation of the South’s unique relationship to the Civil War. Unlike every other region of the country, the southern states had voted themselves out of the Union and fought against their countrymen one

---

<sup>254</sup> Rockefeller, 57.

hundred years earlier. Rather than being embarrassed about the southern betrayal of national unity and the subsequent defeat, *Southern Living* took on a proud tone. Defiance toward outside interference, independent thought, and regional loyalty were all aspects of southern identity that made them exceptional—and in a positive way. Linking southern heritage to a romanticized antebellum era and to the Lost Cause of the Civil War was a consistent theme throughout the first four years of publication.

Southern pilgrimages of antebellum homes, complete with period clothing, were a steady component of the “Travel South” department. For example, one blurb described March and April as the “pilgrimage months in Mississippi as cities and towns throughout the state turn back the clock to pre-Civil War days.”<sup>255</sup> Another mention of pilgrimages concerned Eufaula, Alabama: “It only takes a short drive...to recapture the atmosphere of the Old South. Hostesses for the tours will set the scene of antebellum days in period costumes and hoop skirts.”<sup>256</sup> A “Travel South” article “The South Opens Her Loveliest Doors” began: “The tradition of the pilgrimage is as securely rooted in the Southern way of life as is our legendary hospitality. Indeed, pilgrimages are a natural extension of this hospitality—graciousness on a grand scale.”<sup>257</sup> This editorial content presented pilgrimages as unique to southern culture and glorified the significance of antebellum heritage. It also overlooked the dark side to the antebellum years—slavery.

The magazine touted antebellum homes outside of the structure of formal pilgrimages. In the February 1967 issue, “Louisiana Plantation Homes: Present a

---

<sup>255</sup> “For Two Months, Antebellum Days in Mississippi Again,” Travel South department, *Southern Living*, March 1966, 8.

<sup>256</sup> “Eufaula’s Spring Pilgrimage And Heritage Tours (AL),” Travel South department, *Southern Living*, April 1967, 6.

<sup>257</sup> “The South Opens Her Loveliest Doors,” Travel South department, *Southern Living*, March 1969, 13.

Glimpse Into the Past” explored “three delightful and historic places to visit in this bayou state.”<sup>258</sup> An article in the April 1967 issue described the Gramble Plantation built by slaves in 1845 as “restored” with “all furnishings... from the Old South.”<sup>259</sup> Almost every magazine issue contained at least one advertisement about Stone Mountain outside of Atlanta, the site of an enormous granite carving of three Confederate generals, but in February 1967, *Southern Living* ran an article about the “plantation,” calling it “Georgia’s newest family vacation land” where a “bit of history [is] being made.”<sup>260</sup> During this time, Stone Mountain had a national reputation as a haven for the Ku Klux Klan, surely a deterrent to African Americans. The history that *Southern Living* readers might experience at Stone Mountain was a revisionist version that trumpeted myths about white southerners, while reinforcing their claim on southern identity.

Sometimes the magazine portrayed southern homes as romantic vestiges of the past. The article “Journey Back Into History at Edgefield” began:

The romance of the South will linger on forever in Edgefield, South Carolina. This charming hamlet is steeped in America’s heritage, saturated with historic mansions, seasoned with aristocracy, scented by ancestral gardens, shaded by magnolia trees, and imbued with Southern hospitality.<sup>261</sup>

Such articles allowed readers to reminisce about a better time, one in which life was peaceful and homes were magnificent—a time that only really existed in the white southern imagination.

At its most sentimental, *Southern Living* ran the article “Pilgrimage” in July 1967 that described a journey to the James River area of Virginia. The author Carey Hinds

---

<sup>258</sup> “Louisiana Plantation Homes: Present a Glimpse Into the Past,” *Southern Living*, February 1967, 22-23.

<sup>259</sup> “Florida’s Famous Houses,” *Southern Living*, April 1967, 21.

<sup>260</sup> *Southern Living*, February 1967, 10.

<sup>261</sup> “Journey Back Into History at Edgefield,” *Southern Living*, April 1968, 36.



returned to reconnect with her family homeplace, which she discovered had been sold to DuPont for a rayon plant. Though the antebellum home no longer existed, she did discover a place that “receded into the past, for there were no billboards, no houses, no cars except my own on a heavily wooded stretch of highway,” where “[t]rees grew so close to the road that they formed a canopy above it.”<sup>262</sup> There Hinds found Shirley Plantation, owned by the same family for nine generations. She recounted its “history,” an almost passé version of southern plantation mythology. Union troops during the Civil War had nearly destroyed the home, but it was saved by a daughter-in-law who “plead[ed] with the Union commander to spare the house. When she was taken to the commander to make her request, both were astonished to discover that they had been friends as children.... The Union force departed that night from an intact Shirley.”<sup>263</sup> The Shirley Plantation storyline reveals the cherishing of an idealized past and a particularly deep connection to Civil War mythology. It also follows the same narrative recounted by a number of white southerners across the region.

Other editorial content reflected this sense of connection with the Civil War South. The article “The Quick and The Dead in Richmond, Virginia” featured Peter Rippe, director of Richmond’s Confederate Museum. The spread included a photo of him in front of the Robert E. Lee Monument sitting in Lee’s chair and dressed in a uniform of the Confederate general.<sup>264</sup> Another article discussed Robert E. Lee’s “first military post” at Fort Pulaski National Monument on Cockspur Island near Savannah,

---

<sup>262</sup> Carey Hinds, “Pilgrimage,” *Southern Living*, July 1967, 10-14.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>264</sup> Paul Plawin, “The Quick and The Dead in Richmond, Virginia,” *Southern Living*, November 1966, 20.

Georgia.<sup>265</sup> The Civil War battle near Murfreesboro, Tennessee where “83,000 Union and Confederate troops...clashed in 1862” was the subject of article “The Week Stones River Ran Red.”<sup>266</sup> One story talked about “a new 160-acre park to celebrate what was perhaps the most unique incident of the Civil War,” while another one described Pilot Knob, Kentucky, the lake “where Confederate guns stilled Union gunboats” and sank the Navy.<sup>267</sup> All of these articles glorified the Confederate troops as heroes, as if they were not part of a rebellion against their own countrymen.

*Southern Living* ran the article “Your Confederate Money May Be Worth More Than You Think” in its February 1967 issue. The piece began with:

‘Save your Confederate money, boys, the South will rise again!’ This cry is commonly regarded as a joke. Not that the South isn’t rising, in a sense, again. But most folks will tell you those Confederate bills aren’t much good for anything except souvenirs or play money for the kids or dust catchers in boxes in granddaddy’s attic. Hold on though. Your Confederate money may be worth more than you think.<sup>268</sup>

Such an article assumed more than audience interest but that readers even owned Confederate money and cared about its value. The article also reinforced the idea that southerners shared a common bond to a Civil War past. The reality was that southern society was not homogenous at all, including in its reverence of Civil War memorabilia.

The magazine also portrayed the southern appreciation of historical locales as superior to that of the rest of the country. For example, a piece on the Georgia coast began with the tagline: “A visit here is like a journey back in time to regain the

---

<sup>265</sup> “This Fort Was Robert E. Lee’s First Military Post in 1829-31,” *Southern Living*, March 1968, 16.

<sup>266</sup> “The Week Stones River Ran Red,” *Southern Living*, March 1968, 22.

<sup>267</sup> “Virginia’s Battleground of Boy Heroes,” *Southern Living*, July 1968, 14; “Pilot Knob, Where the Cavalry Sank the Navy,” *Southern Living*, March 1969, 28.

<sup>268</sup> “Your Confederate Money May Be Worth More Than You Think,” *Southern Living*, February 1967, 28-29.

squandered legacy of beauty, history, and sea wilderness irrevocably lost to most Americans.”<sup>269</sup> Such a description underscored the untouched beauty of the South, while devaluing the vast wilderness available in other areas of the United States. The region also apparently had more appreciation for genealogy, according to staff member John Logue. In an article on tracing family lineage, he said: “Not only is the South a leader in the interest in genealogy, but the South also is a haven of archives, church histories, old courthouse records, country newspapers, and small, forgotten cemeteries—all ‘soul material’ for the practicing genealogist.”<sup>270</sup> According to *Southern Living*, southerners had more interest in their history than other regions did. This notion underestimated the historical reserves and genealogical interest in other areas of the country, particularly in places rich in American history like New England, and it was another way to emphasize to southerners the importance of their regional identity and their exclusiveness from the rest of the United States.

Sometimes the historical connection was little more than fiction. Susan Myrick, an accent coach for the actors in *Gone With the Wind*, reminisced about her experiences in an article in October 1967. According to Myrick, the movie shot thirty years earlier in Atlanta was a “faithful representation of Margaret Mitchell’s magnificent story of the South, the Civil War, and the ‘Tragic Era’ of Reconstruction.”<sup>271</sup> The article assumed the reader was familiar with the storyline and had an interest in the Civil War-era fiction, and

---

<sup>269</sup> “The Georgia Coast, Where the Tides of History Wash on the Shore,” *Southern Living*, June 1969, 26. This particular article was also paired with an ad section on Georgia (see pages 27-35). Linking advertising and editorial content in this way, especially concerning regional tourism, was common.

<sup>270</sup> John Logue, “Tracing the History Of Your Family Can Be Fun, It Can Be Funny, It Can Even Be Historic,” *Southern Living*, July 1968, 42.

<sup>271</sup> Susan Myrick, “All My Friends Have Gone With The Wind,” *Southern Living*, October 1967, 33.

it demonstrated an idealized understanding of the time period and a willingness to accept fiction as fact.

The version of history that *Southern Living* invoked was often one of the romantic moonlight and magnolias variety, where the South might have lost the Civil War but not its exceptional identity. This unique culture was one rooted in an appreciation of the past, something worth celebrating during the social upheaval of the 1960s. As massive change came to the region in all sorts of forms, many white southerners reached back to a nostalgic time and to a fictitious South before racial tension, the demise of farming, and outside interference—a time when African Americans were loyal slaves, when white aristocrats had shining plantations, and when all segments of society knew their place. The magazine connected readers with this shared ideal and reassured them that the dysfunction of the region was not permanent; the traditional stratifications of southern society were so ingrained that no government mandate could really change the fabric of the region. *Southern Living* claimed that while many other Americans might forget from where they came, the South was supremely proud of its individuality, its heritage, and its quixotic ideals, even when its mentality put southerners in the dialogic cross-hairs of the nation.

### Defining Southerners

Occasionally, *Southern Living* spoke directly to its readers through its “Life at Southern Living” department. Its founders sincerely believed they were their audience:

white, moderately educated, upper-middle class, and a generation or two removed from the farm. Publisher Emory Cunningham in March 1968 told readers that the “magazine was created by people like you, for people like you....”<sup>272</sup> In April 1969, the magazine used the same department to boast that it had 576,000 subscribers and to remind its audience of their importance: “We owe much of our success to the rapid growth and distinctiveness of our region, and to you, our discerning readers, who have made a place for *Southern Living* magazine in your lives and, in this way, have made a place for *Southern Living* in the South.”<sup>273</sup> Progressive Farmer Company had hoped to inspire the same audience loyalty with its new magazine as it had with *Progressive Farmer* through its authenticity and its friendly tone, and it did receive warmth and devotion back from readers. The magazine’s founders believed the key to their success was to reach southerners like themselves and to speak with them in a common language. It is clear from the magazine’s content in its first four years of publication that *Southern Living* was speaking only to a subset of southerners.

First of all, very few images of African Americans appeared in the magazine at all. In fact, the ones that did appear in the forty-two magazines analyzed showed African Americans in stereotypical servant positions, such as Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*, a manservant, or a maitre-d.<sup>274</sup> The one exception was a photo of Louis Armstrong in a story about New Orleans jazz.<sup>275</sup> The only article that centered on an African American highlighted Aunt Fanny’s Cabin in Atlanta, a restaurant where “the Old South completely

---

<sup>272</sup> Emory Cunningham, “From the Publisher,” Life At Southern Living department, *Southern Living*, March 1968, 7.

<sup>273</sup> Life at Southern Living department, *Southern Living*, April 1969, 6.

<sup>274</sup> Myrick, 32; “George Washington Supped Here,” *Southern Living*, July 1967, 54; “From Perdita’s of Charleston: Fruits de Mer,” *Southern Living*, March 1968, 42.

<sup>275</sup> “Jazz, New Orleans Style,” *Southern Living*, May 1968, 45.

surrounds you” in former slave quarters on an old plantation. There customers could expect “authentic old Southern cooking” and menus in the form of a “young Negro boy in a white jacket...wearing a slate around his neck and chanting the main courses listed thereon....”<sup>276</sup> Though it advertised an African American business, the magazine did so in a stereotypical way, still limiting the appeal of the restaurant to an ideal of the Old South and black southerners as good cooks and servants.

Though the 1960s in the American South was a time of racial unrest, *Southern Living* rarely alluded to race relations at all. It held firmly to its commitment to steer clear of such content, with only a few exceptions. An article on southern author Wilma Dykeman struck a surprisingly moderate note in its discussion of her book *Neither Black Nor White*, which “cover[ed] the entire South” and dealt with “the Southern scene, Southern heritage, Southern problems.”<sup>277</sup> An article about teenagers in Greensboro, North Carolina, began: “When their social clubs were abolished, hundreds of teenagers banded together into service clubs with goals more worthwhile.” But it breezed through the 1962 “unpleasant incident” that “brought about abolishment of social clubs at all schools in Greensboro” without mentioning that the likely culprit had to do with racial discrimination and integration.<sup>278</sup> Another piece on universities in the region mentioned African American universities as “lagging in the improvement process, although they are making strides particularly in remedial education.”<sup>279</sup> Though it at least brought African American students into the wider discussion of southern education, it did so in a way that

---

<sup>276</sup> Sarah Shields Pfeiffer, “Eating Out In Atlanta?,” *Southern Living*, May 1966, 38.

<sup>277</sup> “Wilma Dykeman—She Casts a Tall Shadow,” *Southern Living*, June 1966, 74.

<sup>278</sup> Henry J. Smith, “Greensboro, North Carolina...A City Enriched by Its Teenagers,” *Southern Living*, October 1966, 24.

<sup>279</sup> Richard M. Morehead, “Those Young University Presidents,” *Southern Living*, September 1966, 33.

portrayed African American schools as inferior and constraining the progress of other schools in the region. It also failed to explain why African American education lagged, the result of centuries of disavowing their right to equal educational opportunities.

The only mention of the civil rights movement itself was in a piece related to the Fourth of July. In discussing United States history, Chaplain of Birmingham-Southern College Donald G. Shockley said that:

the decade of the 1960's [sic] will be remembered as one of the most frightening periods in American history, embracing as it does the violent death of a President, the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, the war on poverty, the 'death-of-God' theology, the 'new morality,' and a host of other events and movements the very mention of which brings surges of emotion—positive or negative—to every American breast.<sup>280</sup>

In the article, Shockley was more concerned with societal upheaval in general and less with the underlying reasons for such disturbances, but he did acknowledge the sweeping changes many white southerners feared.

In November 1966, Alexander Nunn's editorial "A Bright, Modern South Writers Are Missing" did not openly reference civil rights, but it did express the frustration many white southerners felt toward their place in the national consciousness: "Us Southern cats on a hot tin roof have had many a long hot summer of our discontent based in the kind of literary treatment this region has been given." He then committed a major sin in the magazine—he actually used the word *lynched*:

In continuing basic sets of images handed down to them, in refusing to consider the South's mid-20<sup>th</sup> century awakening into as much steel, chrome, and plate glass as any other geographic section, the fictional progenitors have continued to conform as if they would be lynched for not doing so.<sup>281</sup>

---

<sup>280</sup> Donald G. Shockley, "For the Future: Rededication to Independence," *Southern Living*, July 1967, 52.

<sup>281</sup> Logue and McCalla, 85.

The editorial spoke volumes about the anger underlying *Southern Living*. It argued southerners were above the belittling of outsiders, since they were just as savvy to industrialization as other Americans. The editorial also reinforced the separateness of white southerners from the rest of the country; however, what is most telling is that the magazine printed the term *lynched* in a context that eliminated the African American claim of horrific violence to it. It inverted the meaning of the word from being an unspeakable act against African Americans to being a metaphorical mob act against northern writers who might cut white southerners some slack. Emory Cunningham had shunned the idea that editorials would ever grace *Southern Living*'s pages, so he must have been horrified at this veer off course. It was the only editorial of its kind; no other openly resentful missive appeared in the magazine. In fact, the few articles that did allude to racial tension appeared in 1966 and 1967. The magazine moved even farther away from discussion of social unrest in 1968 and 1969 by not covering it at all.

The portrayal of women in the magazine also shifted in the early years. Throughout its first issues, *Southern Living* included features on hair styles and fashion on a regular basis, glorifying female beauty. For example, "The College Girl And Her Weekend Wardrobe" described a young woman's clothing for a weekend spent visiting her boyfriend at a nearby university. It underscored the importance of appearance: "The canny Southern coed takes full advantage of the opportunities weekends provide to see and be seen. But there's really no reason why everyone, from student to alumna, can't be



just as smartly dressed for a fall weekend of any kind.”<sup>282</sup> This fashion trend began to taper off during the 1968 issues and was virtually non-existent by 1969.

Frequently, the magazine illustrated women as their family’s cook and the primary household consumer, in both editorial and advertising content. One ad in particular warned: “There are some people around who want to spoil woman’s greatest indoor sport: Shopping.”<sup>283</sup> The article “The Bride Cooks Dinner” began:

The furniture’s been delivered, the crystal and china are unpacked and stored in the brandnew [sic] china cabinet, the linens are pressed, and the glamour of eating out has worn a bit thin. This is the time the young bride wants to start using her wedding gifts, try out some of her new recipes, and show her husband that even though she has a college degree, she can cook!<sup>284</sup>

*Southern Living* demonstrated an ambivalence toward women working outside the home and bound women to their roles within the home.

Women were often important because of the men in their lives, such as Mrs. Jack Valenti, a former aide to President Lyndon B. Johnson. The writer described her as a “pretty blonde from Texas,” and photos showed her as a mother to two children. Little is said about her former career in politics and her life outside the home.<sup>285</sup> Though the magazine usually highlighted women in its “Singular Southerners” department for their own accomplishments, it also struggled with how to portray them. For example, in September 1967 the department showcased Mrs. George (Marie Louise) Snellings, who had “three degrees” but would “tell you jokingly, ‘All I do is cook.’” Snellings had

---

<sup>282</sup> “The College Girl And Her Weekend Wardrobe,” *Southern Living*, September 1967, 41. See also: Bonnie Carr, “Lovely To Look At: Form the Lone Star State,” *Southern Living*, March 1967, 42-44A. “The Fair Girls at HemisFair,” *Southern Living*, August 1968, 38. “It Matters Not If You Win or Lose, But How You Look at the Game,” *Southern Living*, November 1968, 34.

<sup>283</sup> Advertisement, *Southern Living*, September 1967, 57.

<sup>284</sup> “The Bride Cooks Dinner,” *Southern Living*, March 1968, 76.

<sup>285</sup> Bradley C. Byers, “Mrs. Jack Valenti,” *Southern Living*, August 1967, 34.

graduated from Newcomb College, Tulane Law School, and Columbia University, certainly an impressive resume, but *Southern Living* promoted her as an accomplished cook, as well as an “ardent horsewoman” and member of the local school board.<sup>286</sup>

Another example is Celestine Sibley, a journalist and court reporter who used her maiden name. She certainly failed to fit a traditional ideal of womanhood, but she said “women don’t have to battle for their rights” and “sex [was] no hindrance,” underscoring a perceived parity in the treatment of the sexes.<sup>287</sup>

The magazine overlooked any controversy surrounding women’s rights. For the most part, it was conservative in its expectation of southern women to be smart shoppers, excellent cooks, and superior hostesses. Occasionally, the editorial slant of the magazine sounded confused, as if not exactly sure how to portray a successful southern woman in a role that did not include the home. Part of this mentality might have been related to the purpose of the magazine as a whole, to glorify the southern home, but it also reinforced traditional gender roles. The largely male leadership and male staff most likely had no intention of such an effect; they were creating the content in a time and place when the purpose of a woman was deeply rooted to her husband, her family, and her house. They were shaping gender roles in *Southern Living* as they believed the world around them defined womanhood.

*Southern Living* also exuded an elite status. For example, in one story Mrs. William James Rushton III of Birmingham, who was married to the president of

---

<sup>286</sup> “Kitchen Counselor,” Singular Southerners department, *Southern Living*, September 1967, 28.

<sup>287</sup> “Success Without Strife,” Singular Southerners department, *Southern Living*, September 1967, 28.

Protective Life Insurance, “prefers to entertain with seated dinners.” The magazine glamorized her luxurious lifestyle:

Her hostess gown, a vibrant red silk, is from Neiman Marcus. On her trips to and from Oklahoma, her home state, she says she gets helpful ideas about entertaining from her mother. Between tennis matches, this vivacious mother and homemaker finds time to be a garden club member and a Junior Leaguer. This fall, she was in charge of decorations for the Symphony Ball, a function which raises money for the outstanding Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.<sup>288</sup>

Rushton was fabulously dressed, had time to entertain, and socialized with the upper-crust in Birmingham, all pleasures of the affluent.

The types of homes featured in *Southern Living* were usually in suburban settings with large yards to landscape and plenty of room for renovations and expansions. For example, an article showcased Mountview, “an 8-acre contemporary country estate” outside of Greenville, South Carolina.<sup>289</sup> Furniture choices and decorating tips were frequently fodder for discussion, and the magazine spoke to people who could not only afford to spend time and money on the aesthetics of their home but also could purchase a vacation home—or at least dream about it.<sup>290</sup> One story even detailed how eleven-year-old Jack Westbrook, Jr.’s parents built him “a many-splendored treehouse.” The article provided the treehouse’s floor plan, which had two single beds, a kitchen unit, a half-bath, and a porch. Jack was even fortunate enough to have “an intercom system, telephone, television, FM radio, electric heating, refrigerator, toaster, and hotplate” at his disposal, as well as “[t]wo heavy cast iron barbeque stands, similar to ones in public

---

<sup>288</sup> “Christmas Cheer is an Elegant Table,” *Southern Living*, December 1966, 32.

<sup>289</sup> “A House Created for Its Setting,” *Southern Living*, September 1968, 41.

<sup>290</sup> See: *Southern Living*, April 1969, 80, 108, 110; “Families Share This Second Home,” *Southern Living*, April 1969, 116.

parks” for outdoor entertaining.<sup>291</sup> His treehouse was probably more livable than some of the region’s housing.

*Southern Living* intended for its readers to have plenty of extra income. It was not interested in readers unable to consume heartily; that demographic would be worthless to advertisers. But, more than just targeting its audience, the magazine created a fraternity of sorts—people who spoke the same language, ate the same food, and had the same vacations. These people had a space within the pages of *Southern Living* to live a glamorized life, one that was significant and special. While the elite of other regions might scoff at their backwardness, the rich and famous of the South could snip right back at the criticism, demonstrating their own valuable culture with *Southern Living*, and the white, southern middle class could flip through the magazine and dream about a more fulfilling life for themselves. *Southern Living* had no intention of addressing African Americans, poor whites, immigrants, or any other southerner who failed to fit its specific demographic qualifications.

Though the magazine often addressed the home, the traditional domain of women, it did consistently incorporate content for men. Articles discussed decorating a “sportsman’s dream room of storage,” Major League Baseball spring training, and golf tournaments.<sup>292</sup> *Southern Living* also regularly picked All-South football teams.<sup>293</sup> One advertisement for Arkansas from April 1969 called it the “Playstate of the Year” with a

---

<sup>291</sup> *Southern Living*, February 1968, 51.

<sup>292</sup> “A Sportsman’s Dream Room of Storage,” *Southern Living*, April 1969, 89; “Those Daffy Days of Spring Training,” *Southern Living*, February 1968, 24; “How To Master The Masters,” *Southern Living*, April 1968, 51. “South’s Pros Dominate the PGA Tour,” *Southern Living*, August 1967, 55.

<sup>293</sup> For example, see *Southern Living*, September 1967, 37.

photo of a woman in a bikini.<sup>294</sup> Such a reference to *Playboy* magazine certainly would not have been limited to female readers. The magazine's founders had never been interested in a magazine only directed at women. They hoped to reach families, so the magazine strived to include men in a direct way in every edition.

*Southern Living*'s content from 1966 to 1969 spoke to white southerners, both male and female. It largely excluded African Americans, as well as any political or social issues outside the scope of economic growth. It targeted southerners eager to read something uplifting about the towns and cities they called home, and it reached out to people who had more money than ever to spend on dinner parties, decorating their homes, landscaping their yards, and traveling across the region.

### Shifting Content, Steady Message

Throughout its first four years of publication, *Southern Living*'s content shifted, but the overarching messages stayed very much the same. *Southern Living* expected its readers to have the income for a modern, consumption-based lifestyle. Its content was for adults enthusiastic about traveling, home ownership and renovation, and entertaining. The emphasis on female fashion dwindled, as did the references to African Americans. The magazine had launched with a strong push for economic growth that decreased after the first two years, but it remained pro-business, shifting its emphasis of outright economic boosterism to travel. It encouraged southerners to vacation within the region—

---

<sup>294</sup> Advertisement, *Southern Living*, April 1969, 58.

to spend their money at home. The magazine also heralded a number of these regional destinations based on a whitewashed-version history. The South was a white space in the magazine, where regional history was connected to a glorification of the Confederate cause in the Civil War. As the magazine hit its stride, it reinforced, month after month, that *Southern Living* was a magazine for white southerners.

*Southern Living* accepted the premise that southerners were intrinsically different from other Americans, but it twisted that into a positive—that they offered the country a distinctive culture. *Southern Living* prided white southerners on their hospitality, the beauty of their region, and their economic progress. The magazine also defined the region as being the antithesis of “the North,” insinuated to be industrial, urban, and economically stagnant. It was especially defensive of northern criticism concerning the southern way of life.<sup>295</sup>

*Southern Living* represented what was best about the region and provided a public relations function, selling a better version of the South than was available in the national media. In this way, it was remaking the South’s image. Publisher Emory Cunningham described this role in the “Life at Southern Living” department: “Our greatest satisfaction comes from the knowledge that Southern Living contributes to the quality of the distinctive Southern scene it depicts and is contributing also toward a better national understanding of what the South has to offer.”<sup>296</sup>

---

<sup>295</sup> For example, see “Meteoric Morris Dees: Young Southerner on the Grow,” *Southern Living*, May 1966, 74. “Fashion in the South,” *Southern Living*, April 1967, 45. Gary McCalla, Life At Southern Living department, *Southern Living*, December 1969, 6.

<sup>296</sup> “From the Publisher,” Life at Southern Living department, *Southern Living*, March 1968, 7.

Perhaps the best example of the editorial philosophy was in the words of Eugene Butler. He penned a missive titled “Southern Living In Tune With Today’s South” in the very first issue:

You will soon find that this magazine is edited for the South’s unique differences—its differences in geography and climate—in the way it works and lives—its differences in a hundred other ways. Our Southern region is one of changing habits and customs, booming economy, and favorable climate. It is a part of the nation where emphasis is given to social, cultural, and recreational life. The magazine you now hold will truly be Southern—edited for people living in the South. It will be a special interest family magazine for both men and women. We hope to interest you and others who want to improve your homes, like to travel, enjoy good food, take part in community affairs, and seek to know more about the South’s people and progress. It will be our goal to publish a timely, vibrant magazine for you and others who live better because you are taking advantage of assets found more abundantly in the South than in any other part of the nation. You live better because you use and enjoy the South’s open country, its mild climate, long growing season, and relatively uncrowded highways. And we earnestly seek the friendship of such Southerners who take weekend trips, enjoy outdoor living—hunting, fishing, camping, boating—and are home owners.<sup>297</sup>

The overwhelming message was one of southern exceptionalism, that the region was separate from and better than the rest of the country. It triumphed the variety of the southern landscape, its extensive culture and unique identity, and the significance of its economic progress. Turning a blind eye to regional problems, Butler called attention to troubles in the rest of the country, particularly in urban areas.

Butler’s claim that *Southern Living* “truly” represented what it meant to be southern excluded a vast number of southerners who were not white and middle- to upper-middle class. It reinforced that its readers were the *real* Southerners. In this way, the magazine was more than just a good business decision for Progressive Farmer Company or an innocent fantasy for readers. Launched in Birmingham, Alabama, in

---

<sup>297</sup> Eugene Butler, “Southern Living In Tune With Today’s South,” *Southern Living*, February 1966, 4.

1966, the magazine provided an excuse for readers to pretend that the South's problems no longer existed. They could remove themselves to their suburbs, turn their focus inward, and open up the latest issue of *Southern Living* to ignore the social reality around them. They could comfort themselves with the knowledge that they, and they alone, were members of a fraternity of southern identity, and whether or not the rest of the country understood mattered little, because they were unified in their appreciation of all that was good about southern living.



## CHAPTER SIX

In January 1966, when Progressive Farmer Company launched *Southern Living* magazine, it sought to recoup losses from *Progressive Farmer* magazine's declining audience. The company's leadership hoped to reach a new territory of urban and suburban southerners who had no magazine representing their lifestyle. These men were part of a trend of people leaving the farm, and they knew that a market existed for people like them who loved the region and clung to all its traditions but who also sought the American Dream in cities and towns across the South.

Remarkable socioeconomic changes were sweeping the country; the American South was no longer a white space where white men had all the advantages. While *Progressive Farmer* leaders were planning *Southern Living*, their world was changing around them. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 made workplace sex discrimination illegal. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 made all the behavior that had barred African Americans from full citizenship illegal. Certainly, prejudice still existed, but these landmark legislative decisions were indicative of a turning tide. No longer would the country ignore rampant discrimination, even in the South.

Progressive Farmer Company knew it had a gem. *Southern Living* had potential to save the company, to make all its leaders and shareholders wealthy, and to be a force in the national magazine marketplace. It would be a way to thumb the southern nose at the rest of the country, to show them how cultured southerners really were. It would also give southerners a rallying cry, a place to congregate and tell each other how superior their culture was. In 1966, Emory Cunningham said in a speech to the Houston

Advertising Club: "For a long time we have thought the South and Southwest contained a group of literate people who would respond warmly to a magazine dedicated exclusively to this area and its people. We thought an editorial format that was completely Southern would strike a hot spark among these people."<sup>298</sup> Progressive Farmer Company aimed for the stars with *Southern Living*.

In order to achieve that success, Progressive Farmer had to sidestep a number of landmines. If the magazine sounded too negative, southerners would have no interest in it; they already had plenty of bad news. If *Southern Living* was not attractive enough, the magazine would land with a thud, while well-to-do southerners continued reading *Better Homes & Gardens*. If *Southern Living* failed to be authentic, to sound like southerners talking to fellow southerners, its readers, who were already sensitive to outside influence, would ignore it as some Yankee publication. If Progressive Farmer's leadership could not find common ground and if they continued to tug the magazine in opposing directions, *Southern Living* would be pulled apart. The magazine needed to express a forceful, energetic, and consistent message; it had to be a reassuringly familiar package month after month, while also offering something new to excite readers. Its success depended upon its ability to hook readers and then offer them the same rewards each issue. It had to be ambivalent on all the political, social, and economic challenges facing southerners, but if it sounded milquetoast, it would fail to inspire the enthusiasm and loyalty Progressive Farmer Company desired. *Southern Living* walked a fine line.

---

<sup>298</sup> Text of Emory Cunningham speech, TD, 25 January 1966, Folder 28, Box 11, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi, 1.

## Refining the Editorial Content

In 1965 and 1966, Sid Noble, who owned his own advertising agency in New York City, offered his advice to Progressive Farmer Company. In October 1966, he mailed two pages of typed suggestions to Eugene Butler. He grouped the advice into seven categories: covers, text type, headlines, illustration, layout, regular features, and the magazine's image. Overall, Noble's opinion was that the magazine needed more refinement, that it should have better headlines, photography, and design elements. The writing should be friendly and engaging, but not saccharine and folksy, the voice that sometimes crept into the editorial content. The Times Roman font was all wrong with its "cramped economy."

Worst of all was the magazine's vision. Its title suggested that the magazine covered life in the South, but what did that actually mean? Noble told Butler that defining that image and tailoring the content for it would "improve the whole magazine [more] than anything else conceivable." He ended his suggestions with a half compliment: "Much more is good, and a lot is bad, but the worst fault is a confused image." He told Butler that Progressive Farmer Company must choose its audience carefully and then design the magazine specifically for them "so that they can identify themselves completely and wholeheartedly with your effort." Noble advised the magazine's founders to create their ideal reader—to decide age, income, education, hobbies, and where that person lived. He wanted them to visualize that reader's thoughts and beliefs:

Do they believe that they are smart, intelligent and sophisticated? Do they want to add sparkle, energy and growth to their lives? Are they proud of the panorama

of the Southern scene? Do they want all of the gracious living they can afford? What are their aims and desires for their future in the South? If a magazine is to establish empathy with these people, it has to be all of these things too, so that they immediately identify with it.<sup>299</sup>

Once Progressive Farmer did this preparation, then the company could hire the people who could best create their vision, but Noble's bottom line was that before they could improve the magazine, they had to unify their conception of *Southern Living*. He told Butler if they followed his advice, he believed they would create "one of America's truly great magazines" and their success would be guaranteed.<sup>300</sup>

The problems Noble identified continued throughout *Southern Living*'s first year of publication. Much of the content was based on *Sunset* magazine's formula of homes, gardening, food, and travel, but random topics sporadically appeared. "The first issue contained humor and cartoons; other early issues had articles on teenage drivers and other subjects relating to young people, as well as a section on fashion including such articles as 'The World of Wigs.'"<sup>301</sup> A 1967 memo outlined the editorial content as including a "features department where such subjects as education, Southern personalities, Southern cities, and states are sometimes treated." This last department was where much of the ambiguity and confusion over *Southern Living*'s concept still existed. It was a catch-all

---

<sup>299</sup> Sid Noble to Eugene Butler, TD, 25 October 1966, Folder 28, Box 11, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> John Quenelle, "The Story of Southern Living: A Man Plus an Idea" MSs, 24 June 1987, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama, 143.

space in the magazine where the founders could throw their varying opinions about meaningful content for southerners.<sup>302</sup>

*Southern Living* remained disorganized, as behind the scenes Progressive Farmer Company's leadership argued about what the magazine should be. Freelance writers had difficulty writing in the practical, factual, and friendly voice of the new magazine, and editors frequently returned their stories for revisions. Wilson Hicks, a consultant for the magazine, told Nunn in October 1966 that *Southern Living* was "a problem, a very real and vital problem." He felt the magazine was old-fashioned and failed to speak to modern southerners, much of which was attributable to Alexander Nunn's influence and his connection to *Progressive Farmer*.<sup>303</sup>

The magazine's editor, O.B. Copeland, faced a variety of opinions among his own staff. One writer wanted the magazine to include more business editorial, while another believed it should be a *Life* magazine for the South. The magazine's cover committee had postponed putting anyone political on the cover until at least 1967, but some staff members still suggested stories that highlighted economic, political, and social issues the magazine was supposed to be avoiding. Emory Cunningham and Alexander Nunn continued to wrestle over the overall editorial concept, whether to advocate for the South openly or not. Copeland had a natural tendency to side with the man who had been his superior for the past six years, but Cunningham provided convincing arguments.<sup>304</sup>

Copeland struggled. When he did disagree with Nunn, he was formal and respectful but

---

<sup>302</sup> "Southern Living: The Magazine of the Modern South," in "*Southern Living*: The Birthing" (a binder of documents in the archive said to be from Roger McGuire's files), 1 November 1967 (date written in pencil on the document), Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>303</sup> John Quenelle, 143-146.

<sup>304</sup> John McKinney to Charlie Scruggs, TLS, 9 August 1965, Folder 11.205, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Quenelle, 118.

also timid. About the budget for editorial copy in *Southern Living*, he told him: “Dr. Nunn, I do not mean to be disagreeable about this, and there may be many reasons why we should go ahead with the budget and plans as now outlined by Hal, but I am concerned in the ways I have indicated above, and it seemed to me I needed to say these things to you.” Copeland was almost apologetic in having to challenge Nunn’s authority. This loyalty to Nunn created additional friction as Copeland tried to be equitable in his balancing of the opinions about *Southern Living*.<sup>305</sup>

Since the fall of 1963, Eugene Butler had been gently but firmly pushing Nunn toward the vision he shared with Cunningham for *Southern Living*, but Nunn simply did not buy into a model of *Southern Living* that eliminated advocacy. To Butler’s assurances that they were on the right track and that additional research could be pursued after the magazine’s launch, Nunn responded:

Orville Demaree and Emory seem to believe they have all the market factors.... I would not argue about ‘market factors.’ I would have a very strong conviction that we do not have enough ‘audience wants’ information. In my judgment, if *Southern Living* should be broken out, we can most nearly insure its success if we do our deadlevel best to find out the subtle things that are in the minds of Southern people today, then strive within bounds of integrity and good journalism to incorporate those qualities. While we may be pretty sure of what some of these subconscious things are in the minds of Southern farm people, I don’t believe we have a similar grasp or understanding of such trends in thinking in the minds of our urban and non-farm people.

Nunn flat-out disagreed with Butler that they should even launch the magazine, much less that *Southern Living* should follow Cunningham’s concept. He worried that they could predict the concerns, opinions, and interests of *Progressive Farmer* readers, but *Southern Living*’s audience was more of an unknown. The heart of the matter was that Nunn

---

<sup>305</sup> O.B. Copeland to Alexander Nunn, TLS, 8 September 1966, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

continued to have a *Progressive Farmer* magazine mindset with an entirely different publication.<sup>306</sup>

Though Butler was generally in agreement with Cunningham, he had a tendency to encourage the magazine to be too broad. In a 1966 speech to the advertising department, he said that in addition to the standard lifestyle recipe of travel, history, food and entertainment, home improvement, and gardening and landscaping, he also believed that *Southern Living* occasionally should contain articles about southern sports, writers, and health. The rationale for including these topics was that “these are obviously subjects of interest to people with fairly good incomes and opportunities to enjoy better things in life.” He never envisioned *Southern Living* as simply a southern version of *Sunset*. Rather, Butler believed that “Southern Living should cover a somewhat broader and more comprehensive field,” particularly by including serious discussion of “critical urban and suburban problems.” He worried that *Southern Living* had failed to include enough of this type of content in its early issues:

We do not want Southern Living to be a stodgy magazine seeking to solve the ills of the world. No one can be more tiresome than one who considers himself a messiah with a call from heaven to save mankind. So we plan to guard against too much crusading copy in Southern Living. But so far, Southern Living impresses me as perhaps having too much foam and not enough beer. Or since Southern Living doesn't carry beer advertising, perhaps I should say too much gravy and not enough meat.<sup>307</sup>

---

<sup>306</sup> Eugene Butler to Alexander Nunn, TL, 23 September 1963, Folder 11.262, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Alexander Nunn to Eugene Butler, TLS, 9 October 1963, Folder 11.262, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>307</sup> Eugene Butler speech to Progressive Farmer Company advertising department, TDS, 22 March 1966, Folder 11.9, Box 3, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

Butler referred to Wilson Hicks, the editorial advisor, who wanted readers to remember “some outstandingly significant article[s]...long after they lay the issue aside.”<sup>308</sup> Butler was afraid that in choosing an apolitical path the magazine was too light without enough substance. He was also trying to mediate more of the extreme opinions at the company by including as many viewpoints as possible.

Cunningham and Butler differed about *Southern Living*’s substance. For Cunningham, “outstandingly significant articles” were only useful to the magazine’s purpose if they remained in the lighthearted realm of décor, recipes, and the natural landscape. The magazine had to avoid any mention of regional problems, which would only alienate readers; its best advocacy was in the positive example it set for the region, month after month. This tug-of-war over *Southern Living*’s content was the familiar one between the Old Guard, who represented *Progressive Farmer* magazine’s mindset, and younger employees ready to embrace a new direction, for the company and for the region.

### The Response to *Southern Living*

Though internal dissension limited *Southern Living* in its early years, many readers did not appear to notice. They flocked to the magazine. They wrote flattering letters to the Progressive Farmer Company, and they spread the word about the new magazine to fellow southerners. They were so eager for a magazine they could trust from

---

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.



people like themselves that they overlooked the magazine's fuddy-duddy appearance and its jumbled content.

On March 22, 1966, Eugene Butler spoke to the Progressive Farmer Company advertising department in Birmingham. Butler told his audience that while the market justified two million subscribers, a "more logical" goal was to focus on a smaller number of readers, "people with fairly good incomes and opportunities to enjoy the better things in life." The first issue of the magazine had a circulation of 30,000, but Butler believed that number would reach 500,000 by January 1969.<sup>309</sup> Readership numbers climbed much quicker than Butler or even hired consultants forecast. The magazine reached 550,000 in November 1968, and by January 1970, its guaranteed circulation was 600,000, though four months later the press run was actually 729,846. A readership survey also reinforced that they were reaching both men and women; only sixty percent of readers were female.<sup>310</sup>

Some of this success was no doubt the result of reader satisfaction with the magazine. Progressive Farmer Company leaders also facilitated a close relationship with readers that endeared the company to them, as they had with *Progressive Farmer* magazine. For example, in computerizing readership data, the risk was that some subscribers would be lost or mistakes would cause them to quit the magazine. Emory Cunningham responded to this concern by saying: "We're not going to give up on a one.

---

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> "Southern Living Involvement Survey," October 1968, Folder 11.257, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Minutes from Progressive Farmer Company Board of Directors Meeting, 19-20 November 1968, Folder 40, Box 2, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; Quenelle, 133.

We're going to try to save every one of them."<sup>311</sup> O.B. Copeland, editor of *Southern Living*, said that he had learned from Cunningham how to satisfy readers: "[L]iterally thousands of subscriptions have been extended beyond normal periods, extra books have been sent, or refunds have been issued to try to please our customers."<sup>312</sup> Progressive Farmer Company treasured its readers, and it made sure they knew how much the company appreciated them.

A 1968 survey of two thousand readers suggested that *Southern Living's* audience reciprocated this closeness. Four out of five audience members used recipes from the magazine, while more than half took gardening advice. Forty percent used travel tips from *Southern Living*. People were doing more than just flipping through the pages; they found the magazine useful, relevant, and helpful. They also shared the magazine with those closest to them. A whopping three-fourths reported telling friends and family about something in the magazine, while nearly two-thirds recommended the magazine itself. Another two-thirds passed copies of *Southern Living* to friends and family.<sup>313</sup> About the audience reaction to *Southern Living*, Eugene Butler said:

In 1964 and 1965 when *Southern Living* was in the planning stage, we thought a regional magazine for the South would strike a hot spark and be given an enthusiastic reception by readers. This did happen. Response from readers was exciting and satisfying. It may be true that no other magazine in the history of the country was given a warmer, more cordial reception by readers.<sup>314</sup>

---

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Quenelle, 134.

<sup>313</sup> "Southern Living Involvement Survey," October 1968, Folder 11.257, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>314</sup> Eugene Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TD, 1968 section, Folder 31, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 4.

For most readers, Progressive Farmer Company was a known quantity, an established southern company with a good reputation through its *Progressive Farmer* magazine. They welcomed a new magazine from such a trusted company, especially a publication that proclaimed it would herald the superiority of southern identity.

Butler saved a number of letters responding to *Southern Living*. Most were from readers, but advertisers and individuals from the magazine industry also responded. Nearly all were positive. They glorified the magazine concept and execution, suggested articles and advertising, and patted various staff members on the back for their achievement. Mrs. H.N. Benton, hostess at the Garden Club Center at Sears in Birmingham, said that she enjoyed the first issue of the magazine so much that she had a hard time putting it down: "It is, without a doubt, the most interesting and informative magazine I have ever read. You can rest assured I'm going to be a walking advertisement for it."<sup>315</sup> Frank Rossiter of the Savannah, Georgia *Morning News* and *Evening Press* newspapers, said:

"Southern Living" bears no resemblance to a freshly-born magazine, rather it has all the quality, interest and warmth of one that has basked in the Southern sunshine for many years. It is amazing how completely you have captured the charm of the South in your very first trip to the printer. The field of Southern interest is so vast that I predict "Southern Living" will prosper and grow in stature and circulation with each passing month. Will you have your Circulation Dept. send me a one year subscription.... Like any horse player, I am willing to put up \$2 on a winner.<sup>316</sup>

Most letters shared the enthusiasm of Benton and Rossiter; readers were thrilled to support the magazine.

---

<sup>315</sup> Mrs. H.N. Benton to J.L. Rogers, TLS, 19 January 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>316</sup> Frank Rossiter to Eugene Butler, TLS, n.d., Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

Many readers shared their approval of *Southern Living*'s portrayal of the region. Alice Virginia Shaver of Arlington, Virginia, said: "How pleased I am with your new magazine, 'Southern Living.' It is lovely and portrays splendidly my beloved Southland in all its God-given beauty—and talents."<sup>317</sup> C.P. Everest, Sr. of Winston-Salem, North Carolina said: "Mrs. Everest and I are looking forward to future issues. Keep up the good work and success will be certain. Please accept our congratulations for the publication that reflects the gracious [sic] living that endears most of us to Southland, U.S.A."<sup>318</sup> R.O. Parrish, the Director of Advertising at Stitzel Weller, a distiller of Kentucky bourbon, said: "First of all, as a reader, I think this is a sorely needed medium, if it is written for and by Southerners. With the tremendous growth—both industrial and cultural—that is taking place in the South, such a magazine should have a terrific future...."<sup>319</sup> All these readers expressed gratefulness for a publication that understood the South they called home and could be trusted to create a faithful representation of it.

People who adored the magazine were not just the Deep South southerners—some readers were retirees from outside the region, while others were living on the edges of *Southern Living*'s territory. Norman MacDonald of Fayetteville, Arkansas, had a request for the staff of *Southern Living*. He wondered if they would send a copy of the magazine "to a friend of mine who is planning to retire to the South—like I did!... I

---

<sup>317</sup> Alice Virginia Shaver to Eugene Butler, TLS, 8 February 1966, Box 6, Folder 11.264, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>318</sup> Charles P. Everest to Eugene Butler, TLS, 25 January 1966, Box 6, Folder 11.264, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>319</sup> R.O. Parrish to James Rodgers, TLS, 5 January 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

would send him my copy, but I find it too valuable.”<sup>320</sup> MacDonald’s friend lived in Elgin, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Ray Kuester of St. Louis, Missouri said:

Gil Hunter brought back from Birmingham the February issue of Southern Living and gave it to me yesterday. I was thrilled at its content and appearance, but I decided to give it the real test, so I took it home and gave it to Olga and asked her to look it over. She sat down with it at about seven o’clock and got so interested that she forgot all about the TV until it was time for the ten o’clock news.<sup>321</sup>

Missouri, where Kuester lived, was not even one of the states Progressive Farmer Company targeted.

Rose Hughes of Norfolk, Virginia, expressed how much she enjoyed the magazine each month, and then she said: “Sometimes I wonder if you all are trying to make all of us displaced Southerners so homesick, we’ll go back home so the South can rise again! Once a rebel—always a rebel! Please keep up the good work.”<sup>322</sup> A staff member wrote a note to *Southern Living*’s editor O.B. Copeland asking: “Is she under the delusion that Virginia is not part of the South?” The assistant advertising manager wrote Hughes back a letter thanking her for her dedication to the magazine but pointing out that *Southern Living* did not consider Virginians to be “displaced Southerners.”<sup>323</sup>

George Blair, a friend of Progressive Farmer Company employee Don Cunningham, said:

I had intended to write you after the first issue came out. I was very much impressed with it. And the second issue confirms my original enthusiasm. Format, content, lay-out and diversified appeal – it has everything. Mary was

---

<sup>320</sup> Norman L. MacDonald to Southern Living, LS, 1 March 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>321</sup> Ray Kuester to Jim Rogers, TLS, 11 January 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>322</sup> Rose M. Hughes to F.E. Henderson, LS, 3 October 1968, Box 6, Folder 11.264, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>323</sup> Smith W. Moseley to Rose M. Hughes, TLS, 17 October 1968, Box 6, Folder 11.264, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

impressed also, and believes the book will have strong appeal with women. I believe a combination of continuing features, for the gardener, home-maker, hobbyist, sportsman etc. combined with special stories of interest to the Southerner (such as the Houston story by Plawin) will give wide appeal to the magazine and should build circulation steadily.<sup>324</sup>

Blair was apparently not distracted by the confusion over the magazine's content, nor was he displeased with the appearance of the magazine, which were two major concerns in the internal discussion about *Southern Living*. Dozens of respondents to *Southern Living* had this same grateful tone, as if they were so thrilled with what *Southern Living* could offer that they were willing to overlook its glitches as a new magazine.

A few letter writers expressed irritation at how national media portrayed their states. For example, G.B. Southernwood, a tax agent with Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad Company in Dallas, Texas, was particularly concerned about Texas's depiction. He offered his advice based on the promotional brochure he had received prior to *Southern Living*'s launch:

May I compliment you on your slick, colorful presentation in introduction to Southern Living. This is exactly the type of magazine sorely needed. I would like to go further in stating that most national magazines dismiss Texas as having little more than drawls, cactus and desert. I am weary of tongue-in-cheek slurs and that talked-down-to manner in anything written about Texas and Texans.

He then proceeded to outline in great detail a number of story ideas on Texas that showed it as a populous, progressive, modern state with Dixie heritage, as opposed to a dry, rugged, sparsely-populated Western state.<sup>325</sup>

---

<sup>324</sup> George Blair to Don Cunningham, TLS, 21 February 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>325</sup> G.B. Southernwood to James Rogers, TLS, 29 December 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

Some readers expressed conservatism in wishing to hold on to the way things were. William V. Howland of Biloxi, Mississippi wrote:

Mrs. Howland came back from the Beauty Parlor this morning all enthused about a copy of your magazine (your first issue) she saw over there and said she wanted me to subscribe to it for her at once. Said she is tired of all these sophisticated magazines you see these days and would appreciate a good, clean, Southern magazine, for a change. The last 2 issues of Time carried an article she thought never should have been printed. We take Town & Country, Ladies Home Journal, McCall's, House & Garden etc. etc. and are getting fed up with a lot of the stuff they print....From the way we are going in the old U.S.A. these days, I don't know what we are coming to. We are going down hill fast.<sup>326</sup>

From the letter two things are clear: Howland did not consider *Southern Living* "sophisticated" on the level of national magazines, but *Southern Living*'s simplicity was a compliment. It was a safe space, a reliable place to read both engaging and non-controversial articles.

Reader Bill Wood from Birmingham wrote to Oscar Dugger:

I have read the second issue of "Southern Living," and feel that I must take time out to write how refreshing it is to read this new publication. In todays [sic] world there is so much "junk" published that puts us in a bad frame of mind when we read it, not with "Southern Living." I took the second issue home last night, read everything in it except the article on North Carolina. I intend to read that tonight if I can get the magazine before the wife beats me to it.<sup>327</sup>

Frances Murrell of the English department at Troy State College in Troy, Alabama, wrote: "I want to tell you how much I enjoy the magazine Southern Living. It was like a breath of fresh spring air. It is delightful to find a magazine in which there are no dirty stories and in which the people in the South are not being stoned as absolute

---

<sup>326</sup> William V. Howland to Southern Living, TLS, 29 January 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>327</sup> William C. Wood to Oscar Dugger, TLS, 23 February 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

Monsters.”<sup>328</sup> Readers like Bill Wood and Frances Murrell expressed relief to have a magazine they could trust to be wholesome and uplifting. Other publications had the potential to irritate or injure their pride—there was no telling what article might be lurking within the pages of national magazines not so sensitive to the troubles of white southerners.

Some letters contained bitterness about the country’s negative connotation of the South. Martha McCafferty from Tuscumbia, Alabama said:

For years I have wished that we had a magazine published here in the South; at last someone is doing something about it. The South has been ridiculed in the North. It is time for someone to show our side of the picture and publish the true facts about our wonderful section of the country; gentlemen, I hope you will strive to do this.<sup>329</sup>

Mabel Clare Thomas of College Station, Texas wrote:

Few readers have had more wonderful years of “Southern Living” than I have, and none will be happier to welcome this “voice” that presents it in truth to readers. I am so tired of hearing life in the South criticized by people who know nothing about it except what their own prejudice has allowed them to see. SOUTHERN LIVING will give the South a true and sincere voice of its own, and I want to thank you for it. The magazine is not only beautiful, but it is an inspiration to our own people to continue making Southern living better.<sup>330</sup>

Florence Fritz of Fort Meyers, Florida, expressed nearly the same sentiment to Eugene Butler. She said:

What a fine thing you are doing for us all! Too long the wrong people have “depicted” what they considered the South—usually from what went on in their own minds. We who are old enough to see the past and the future know that the most desperate need of the South today is understanding of all levels and aspirations—not just the lower levels of our problems. The beauty, charm, and

---

<sup>328</sup> Frances Murrell to Eugene Butler, TLS, 2 February 1966, Box 6, Folder 11.264, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>329</sup> Martha McCafferty to Southern Living, TLS, 15 January 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>330</sup> Mabel Clare Thomas to Eugene Butler, TLS, 27 January 1966, Box 6, Folder 11.264, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.



ideals of the South are still the shining future of America, if any semblance of the founding ideas are to remain on this continent. And without saying such things, your magazine—just born—seems on the way toward offering the Nation a mirror of those things.<sup>331</sup>

Fritz believed that *Southern Living* could be a mirror of a southern society she recognized, reflecting a more positive image of the South to the rest of the country. These readers all reveled in the image *Southern Living* presented, and they desired for the magazine to answer all the critics who had nothing but negative comments about the region. They turned the accusations of their prejudice around on “northerners,” who were instead the culprits of discrimination against white southerners. They were so cocooned in their way of thinking that they were unable to see that the beauty of their regional identity was overshadowed not just by bad press or regional bigotry. Americans were having more and more trouble overlooking the region’s racial violence and blatant prejudice while still appreciating such insignificant matters as the quality of table linens and antique silverware, the brilliance of azaleas, or the superiority of red-eye gravy.

Other readers responded with more bile toward outside influence. Ralph Townsend of Fairfax, Virginia, said:

The progress of your magazine is delightful to behold, living proof that raucous vulgarity need not be the prime characteristic of a successful periodical in America. This is to beg that you do not let any Bronx liberals move in to give Southern Living a touch of swank, just a little zip and flourish, more modern flair, more arresting covers, and more streamlining, and finally, dead-end ruin. That’s their record with Collier’s, the Saturday Evening Post, the old New York Sun and Post and endless others. Over the years my work brought me into direct observation of their streamlining talents, from first flourish to final finish, not

---

<sup>331</sup> Florence Fritz to Eugene Butler, TLS, 18 January 1966, Box 6, Folder 11.264, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

alone in publications, but in much else, maybe including lastly the United States as a nation.<sup>332</sup>

Townsend believed people who did not understand the audiences of magazines such as *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post* had demolished the otherwise sound publications. Not all Americans wanted a slick, edgy magazine; some readers still desired quaint, traditional, and maybe even old-fashioned magazines. His explanation oversimplified the downfall of these national institutions, but one aspect of his critique is valid. In the rush to compete in a national marketplace, some publishers forgot who their audiences were and what they wanted.

Interestingly, Emory Cunningham sent a memo attached to this letter to the Board of Directors and Progressive Farmer Company leaders. He said: "This is such an unusual letter I wanted to share it with you.... I agree with much that Mr. Townsend says."<sup>333</sup> What part of Townsend's letter resounded so strongly with Cunningham is unclear, but Cunningham most likely recognized how lost conservative Americans felt in the national dialogue and how firmly they clung to a world they recognized. Even seemingly small matters, such as the appearance of favorite magazines, were significant. In this way, *Southern Living* was clearly more than a magazine; for both its creators and its audience, it represented a way to escape change, to embrace nostalgia, and to foster a community of likeminded white southerners. The magazine was a place of solace that acted as a counterbalance to a rapidly disintegrating world, and if it did not mirror reality, it did mirror a white southern romantic ideal. Its importance to its audience, and even to men

---

<sup>332</sup> Ralph Townsend to Editors of Southern Living, TLS, 5 May 1969, Box 6, Folder 11.264, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>333</sup> Emory Cunningham to Board of Directors, John Tosarello, Gary McCalla, Harold Dobson, and Bob Haney, TDS, 23 May 1969, Box 6, Folder 11.264, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

like Cunningham who were forward-thinking on the surface, should not be underestimated.

Noteworthy business and political leaders responded favorably to *Southern Living*, most likely because it was helping to rework an image that was detrimental to the economic bottom line. Clinton Milstead, District Director of Public Relations for United States Steel in Birmingham, said: “After reviewing the first issue, I was so impressed with it that I would like to also have it sent to my office. I feel it will be of interest to our visitors and of assistance in keeping us abreast of what is happening throughout the South.... My congratulations to you and your staff on this splendid production.”<sup>334</sup> Some political leaders also expressed their genuine desire to see a more positive picture of the South. Orval Faubus, the Arkansas governor famous for his stand against integration in Little Rock, wrote:

This is to express my sincere appreciation for receipt of the 1<sup>st</sup> volume of SOUTHERN LIVING. This is an excellent publication, and I predict that it will enjoy great success. In fact, by the time the magazine reached me, I noted that certain deletions had been made along the line—recipes, etc. All my staff members seemed equally delighted with it; therefore, I think you should place me on your permanent mailing list....<sup>335</sup>

Progressive Farmer Company was obviously striking the right tone for discontented white southerners if it had Orval Faubus so enthusiastically on board.<sup>336</sup>

---

<sup>334</sup> Clinton R. Milstead to James Rogers, TLS, 27 January 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>335</sup> Orval E. Faubus to Ed Wilborn, TLS, 11 February 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>336</sup> Orval Faubus was Arkansas’s governor during the integration of Central High School in Little Rock in 1957. Throughout his political career, he wavered between moderate and conservative tones, but just before nine African American teenagers attempted to integrate the school, Faubus chose a tact that pandered to the extremists in the state. He said: “It is my opinion—yes, even a conviction—that it will not be possible to restore or to maintain order and protect the lives and property of the citizens if forcible integration is carried out tomorrow in the schools of this community.” He put his support behind

A few letters came from within the journalism field. The dean at Auburn University, E.V. Smith, wrote: "You are certainly to be congratulated on publishing a magazine of such excellence that it will compete so successfully for the advertising dollar."<sup>337</sup> The senior editor of *Reader's Digest*, Ben Hibbs, said: "I think this issue is a dandy, and if you can hit this same pace in future issues I see no reason why Southern Living shouldn't be a thumping success. The selection of material is excellent, I think, and the magazine is well written, well laid out and beautifully illustrated."<sup>338</sup> Emory Cunningham must have been particularly proud of this correspondence, because he bragged to all the advertising offices and the Board of Directors about what a compliment it was to have "a recognizably expert source" give such a tribute.<sup>339</sup>

Advertisers also sent letters expressing their approval, generally the result of increased consumer activity that they attributed to advertisements in the magazine. Forrest Gilliam, owner of Tri-State Sales in Paducah, Kentucky, said: "In comparing Southern Living with two of the other magazines we selected, House Beautiful and House and Garden, our pull percentage-wise to the investment was greater from Southern Living....I think the returns that we have had speaks well for Southern Living and the

---

segregationists. The scene that ensued was one of vicious, white protestors and the National Guard operating on behalf of Faubus to turn the students away. A standoff ensued, and Faubus gained national attention as a segregationist leader. The events put Little Rock, Arkansas, on the map for racial discrimination. See: Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 151-180. Faubus's quote is available on page 158.

<sup>337</sup> E.V. Smith to Emory Cunningham, TLS, 28 March 1969, Box 6, Folder 11.264, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>338</sup> Ben Hibbs to Smith W. Moseley, TLS, 14 January 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>339</sup> Emory Cunningham memorandum to All Advertising Offices, TDS, 17 January 1966, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

market it covers in the New South.”<sup>340</sup> Though *Southern Living* offered a reduced cost for advertisers to encourage their investment in the new publication, their positive response suggested another reason for enthusiasm. *Southern Living* was reaching an untapped market of affluent southerners promising to advertisers, who were clearly pleased with the return on their advertising dollars.

One striking commonality is that nearly all the letters written to Progressive Farmer Company sound personal, as if the readers shared a bond with *Southern Living*. They had a stake in the magazine’s success. An us-against-them mentality strengthened this connection. Progressive Farmer Company was more than a publishing company—it was a *southern* publishing company speaking to fellow *southerners*. It took them seriously, respected their perspective, and uplifted them. Progressive Farmer Company did not lecture or scold. It imbued its pages with positive images that gave readers a reason to smile, and they responded with loyalty and enthusiasm. One letter Butler saved said:

I want you to know how pleased I am with the new magazine, “Southern Living.” Every article in it was interesting & I’m looking forward to future issues. The cover picture was especially beautiful & attractive I think & the fact that the magazine is written especially for our region of the country certainly appeals to me. I am a true blue Southerner & love my state & like the Southern people, climate, food – & everything pertaining to the South. I’ve lived in the North for almost a year at one time & I really think those “Yankees” envy us. More power to you and all those on the staff.<sup>341</sup>

*Southern Living* struck a chord—exactly the chord they had hoped they would strike—but the response was more than they had imagined. The well of frustration and hurt pride

---

<sup>340</sup> Forrest E. Gilliam to Jim Moon, TLS, 22 July 1967, Box 5, Folder 11.263, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>341</sup> A Reader to Eugene Butler, L, 26 January No Year, Box 6, Folder 11.264, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

was much deeper than even Progressive Farmer Company had predicted. *Southern Living* was able to tap into the white southern desire to defend the region against the negativity of “the North,” or outsiders. It reflected their desire to escape the reality of their time and place into a South that was as good as its cuisine, as dynamic as its tourism, and as lovely as its landscapes. It also skillfully skirted issues that required it to have an obvious opinion, so that the audience could read into the pages whatever they wanted to see.

Not all the feedback was positive. Eugene Butler compiled a list of negative reactions to the charter subscription brochure, and they all challenged the magazine’s portrayal of southern identity, especially in light of the region’s current affairs. Alicia Smith of Pompano Beach, Florida, returned the charter subscriber card with a note that said that *Southern Living* only meant to her “The K.K.K. The White Citizens Councils The Birch Society, etc. Selma, etc. I am white and protestant – but I am often ashamed of it....” Not only did Smith reject being a *Southern Living* subscriber, she wanted nothing to do with a magazine that reminded her of all the negative connotations of white southern identity.<sup>342</sup>

The other responses that Butler saved had much the same irritation with the magazine’s depiction of the region, its denial of racial discrimination, and its cheerful tone at such a critical time in the South’s history:

Remembering our shock this summer at seeing the Confederate flag instead of Old Glory atop the capitol building in Montgomery, I doubt that our family would be interested in reading SOUTHERN LIVING.

---

<sup>342</sup> Alicia Smith note on a charter subscriber card, Folder 28, Box 11, Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

W.I. Fallis, Dallas, Texas

Anything from the State of Alabama makes me ashamed of being a Southerner...No thanks.

Nashville, Tennessee (unsigned)

Questions: Among the "Many Faces of Your South" will there be included:

- 1 – The rape of justice in Southern Courts?
  - 2 – The calculated denial of Negro voting rights in Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia?
  - 3 – The horror of bombs thrown into children's Sunday School classes?
- Plus many other faces so ugly it sickens one to think of them in the same face of azaleas and roses?

I would be interested in knowing!

George A. Sraver, Alexandria, Virginia

As long as you have a George Wallace as Governor, so long as Hayneville, Ala., (sp?) has its own brand of justice– we boycott anything and everything that smacks of Alabama. We think the state should be made to secede.

Thomas I. Murphy, Dallas Texas

I am completely out of accord in regard to a magazine of this kind. I think it is time for Southerners to stop thinking in terms of sectionalism and begin to think of themselves as Americans, under the Stars and Stripes, as members of a sovereign nation composed of individual states – not sovereign states.

The South either through malice of forethought or unconscious inferiority makes no comparisons outside itself. It is always the best, the largest, the finest, etc., in the South.

I think it is high time that the South psychologically become a part of our great Union and get into the main stream of American life. Until this is done it is victimizing itself and its people to the curse of stagnation.

When you edit a magazine to this purpose I shall subscribe.

How much of the reaction to *Southern Living* was unfavorable is unknown, but the existence of these negative letters is significant. First, Butler saved them. He chose to single them out of the volume of correspondence he surely received. It is also noteworthy that out of the dozens of letters Butler saved, the only ones that were negative did not discuss boring editorial content or poor design choices. They were strongly opposed to the messages in the magazine, the way *Southern Living* portrayed the lifestyle of white southerners. To these people, the magazine disparaged the difficulty of the time and the severity of the region's problems.

These letters also demonstrate that white southerners might have eagerly subscribed to the new magazine, but the response of all white southerners was not monolithic. *Southern Living* did strike a "hot spark" with hundreds of thousands of people in the region; however, there were also white southerners who resented the magazine and its claim on the southern lifestyle. They recognized any southern identity that omitted African Americans as false. The African American experience was bound so intricately to that of southern whites that excluding them denied their place in southern culture and undermined the severity of their oppression. White southerners might be more than their history of racial discrimination, but they also could not hide from it. In fact, ignoring race in the South in the 1960s was yet another way to condone the bigotry.

---

<sup>343</sup> "Comments Received from People Invited to Become Charter Subscribers: SOUTHERN LIVING," TD, n.d., Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.



## Changes at Progressive Farmer Company

*Southern Living*'s stifling relationship with *Progressive Farmer* was an ongoing challenge in the years after the launch. The magazine's first six issues were classified as an edition of *Progressive Farmer* by the Audit Bureau of Circulation, and the two magazines shared the same front cover. Having different ideals and editorial content was impossible as long as the two magazines were so intertwined. By the end of 1966, Progressive Farmer Company formerly split the two publications, removing any mention of *Progressive Farmer* from *Southern Living*, but Eugene Butler believed more need to be done.<sup>344</sup>

Butler finally decided that the magazine needed—and deserved—its own publisher, someone who had no responsibility to *Progressive Farmer* magazine. He had kept the role of publisher for himself, overseeing much of the launch, but it had always been one of several competing interests for Butler. Now that *Southern Living* was printing monthly, he needed a deputy to oversee it, someone who would handle the daily pressures and only call his attention to dire problems. The company had also expanded by nearly twenty percent in 1966, increasing from 400 to 475 employees. Supervising each magazine and all of the new personnel, directing the company's expansion efforts, and representing the interests of the Board of Directors pulled Butler in too many directions. Abdicating the publisher role would allow one person the time to focus solely

---

<sup>344</sup> Quenelle, 143-144.

on *Southern Living*'s success and would eliminate any obligation to the farming magazine.<sup>345</sup>

Some of *Progressive Farmer*'s longtime top brass had retired, leaving two people as obvious contenders for the publishing role: Alexander Nunn and Emory Cunningham. Nunn had more seniority, but he was also closer to retiring from the company than Cunningham. Butler approached Nunn about becoming publisher of *Southern Living*. Nunn had volunteered to handle Herbert Mayes, the outside adviser who provided excellent suggestions but also had a tendency to ruffle feathers. Butler requested that Nunn take over a more formal leadership role with *Southern Living*, which "probably presented Nunn with a paralyzing dilemma." Of course Nunn would fancy the position because "he didn't seem to want to lose editorial control of anything published by the company," but *Progressive Farmer* was his baby. Nunn resisted.<sup>346</sup>

During this time, Wilson Hicks, the other consultant, wrote to Nunn that in his assessment, *Southern Living* was "outdated." The magazine's major hindrance was its reliance on *Progressive Farmer* staff members, who were accustomed to an agricultural magazine. Both consultants also recommended to Advertising Director (and Cunningham's immediate superior) Oscar Dugger not only that *Southern Living* have its own management but that Emory Cunningham serve in that capacity. Dugger traveled to Dallas to discuss the matter with Eugene Butler.<sup>347</sup>

---

<sup>345</sup> Eugene Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TD, 1966 section, Folder 31, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 9; Quenelle, 144.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 143-144; Eugene Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TD, 1967 section, Folder 31, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 13.

<sup>347</sup> Quenelle, 145-147.

Alexander Nunn refused Butler's offer, and within days he announced his retirement from Progressive Farmer Company, intending to avoid the company's imminent decline. He had always been hesitant about the launch of *Southern Living* and now viewed the company's direction as detrimental to the future of *Progressive Farmer*.<sup>348</sup> The board had also passed a rule in 1964 that company employees had to retire at age sixty-five to receive their company pension and retirement benefits. Though Nunn, Fowler Dugger, and Eugene Butler were all excluded, the pressure for them to leave the company gracefully still remained. In fact, on January 1, 1968, Fowler Dugger retired, just six weeks after Nunn. These vacancies helped to make room for Emory Cunningham at the top of the company.<sup>349</sup>

In June 1967, Eugene Butler circulated a memorandum that announced Emory Cunningham was *Southern Living*'s new publisher. Butler said: "The best service Emory can render the Company for the next 12 to 18 months is as Publisher of Southern Living. If he can put his full time on Southern Living, I believe we'll have our best chance to put that part of our operations on a paying basis." Butler thought that the two of them working together could finally give *Southern Living* the consistency it had needed from the beginning to unify the editorial content. He said: "With both Emory and myself working to get Southern Living on the right editorial track, I believe we can solve our present most critical Southern Living problem."<sup>350</sup> Butler was correct. With the stability of Cunningham at the helm and the turnover of *Progressive Farmer* loyalists, *Southern*

---

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 144-147.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 197; Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TD, 1967 section, 13.

<sup>350</sup> Eugene Butler to Jim Kilgore, Charles Poe, Cordra York, Ben Kilgore, and Gordon Smith, TLS, 29 June 1967, Folder 11.9, Box 3, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

*Living*'s editorial content steadily improved, as did its circulation numbers and advertising revenues.

During this time, Cunningham's star rose as rapidly as the fortunes of *Southern Living*.<sup>351</sup> Eugene Butler began a slow retirement from his family's company, and he announced that on September 1, 1968, Cunningham would take over his place as President of Progressive Farmer Company.<sup>352</sup> Though Butler continued to have a leadership role on the Board of Directors, he retreated from formal authority over the magazines that had dominated his professional career. Emory Cunningham became the face of Progressive Farmer Company as it morphed into a national player, changed its name to Southern Progress, and entertained multi-million dollar buyout offers.

Cunningham received notoriety as the man who launched *Southern Living*. The headline in the *Tuscaloosa News* in his obituary read: "'Southern Living' founder Emory Cunningham dies." The article gave him sole credit for the feat that had involved so many figures. It said: "Cunningham, beginning as an ad salesman for the Progressive Farmer, joined Southern Progress in 1948, rose through the ranks and as a corporate

---

<sup>351</sup> Emory Cunningham received a 7.7 percent raise in August 1967, from \$26,000 to \$28,000. Cunningham's salary was four times the median household income in 1967, which was \$7,200. Only 10 percent of the population earned over \$15,000. For comparison, in 2010 Cunningham's salary would be equivalent to about \$183,000. See: Minutes from a Progressive Farmer Company Executive Committee meeting, 8-9 August 1967, Folder 11.146, Box 5, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama; "Consumer Income: Household Income in 1967 and Selected Social and Economic Characteristics of Households," 15 July 1969, Series P-60, No. 62, Census Bureau, available from <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/popscan/p60-062.pdf>; Cost of Living calculator, American Institute for Economic Research, available from <http://www.aier.org/research/worksheets-and-tools/cost-of-living-calculator>; CPI Inflation Calculator, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor, available from [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>352</sup> Quenelle, 148-150.

executive convinced the company to launch *Southern Living* magazine in 1966.”<sup>353</sup> His *New York Times* obituary also commended Cunningham as the man who “launched his Martha Stewart-like vision of a glossy new Dixie in 1966 in a magazine called *Southern Living*.” It continued:

Mr. Cunningham pressed the argument that as the South rapidly urbanized, *Progressive Farmer*’s potential growth in readership was limited. With *Southern Living*, he wanted to reach the growing number of people who lived in cities and their suburbs, though he still saw their country backgrounds as perhaps their most important commonality.<sup>354</sup>

Though Cunningham did have a key role and the most accurate vision of the southern market, he was one of several men responsible for *Southern Living*. Had Eugene Butler and the Board of Directors refused their support for the magazine, it never would have seen the light of day, and had Oscar Dugger, Cunningham’s superior in the early 1960s, not argued on his behalf, Cunningham’s viewpoint might have been overshadowed by that of Alexander Nunn and other *Progressive Farmer* leaders.

What had once been a questionable venture became a success story. *Advertising Age* said in 1977: “By almost any significant measure of magazine publishing success, *Southern Living* has been a phenomenon.”<sup>355</sup> Its founders attributed this fortune to its “crucial” timing. *Southern Living* was the only lifestyle magazine made for white southerners by white southerners at a time of heightened tension between the South and the rest of the country, between races within the region, and even between southern

---

<sup>353</sup> “‘Southern Living’ founder Emory Cunningham dies,” *The Tuscaloosa News*, 26 January 2000, 5, available from <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=cTsdAAAAIABAJ&sjid=EqYEAAAAIABAJ&pg=6641,4367241>.

<sup>354</sup> Douglas Martin, “Emory O. Cunningham, Publisher, Dies at 78,” *The New York Times*, 28 January 2000, available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/01/28/us/emory-o-cunningham-publisher-diesat78.html?pagewanted=2&src=pm>.

<sup>355</sup> Quenelle, 148-150 and 183.

whites divided over how to handle the problems. Progressive Farmer Company had the unique ability to say what scores of white southerners wanted to hear, and it had credibility as a regional publishing company with a reputation for faithfully serving its audience. Had an outside company tried to recreate *Southern Living*'s accomplishment, it would have fallen flat; this audience was particularly sensitive to outsiders. They distrusted the national dialogue, and they walled themselves off from the opinions of people they deemed as not qualified to have an opinion. If you did not live in the region, you were in no position to judge, and if you lived in the region and you judged, you were not a true southerner. You were a traitor. This closed mentality meant that only a truly southern company could portend to speak for or to white southerners.<sup>356</sup>

Eugene Butler felt the socioeconomic changes sweeping the region. He and the other men at Progressive Farmer Company could not ignore the happenings around them. In fact, Butler said: "...I am convinced that the winds of change are blowing hard and that they'll blow us right out of business unless we adapt to them."<sup>357</sup> *Southern Living* was their way of riding that wave of change, and they chose discontented white southerners as their future. What Oscar Dugger called "local pride" spurred the fortunes of *Southern Living*. Southerners rallied around the new magazine, eagerly subscribing to it and passing issues to friends and family. Emory Cunningham said: "At the time *Southern Living* was launched, of course, much of the coverage of the South in nationally distributed magazines was negative. *Southern Living*'s positive coverage appealed to

---

<sup>356</sup> Roger McGuire to Eugene Butler, TLS, 20 January 1969, Folder 36, Box 8, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

<sup>357</sup> Eugene Butler's talk to advertising salesmen at Callaway Gardens, 6 September 1967, page 6, Folder 8, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

many active, well-heeled, well-educated Southerners. The magazine's circulation and advertising numbers show that the approach continues to succeed."<sup>358</sup> Circulation numbers rapidly climbed, as white southerners embraced their magazine. They overlooked the chaotic content, the dull appearance, and the boring writing in those first issues. They were thrilled to have an authentic representation of their lifestyle, by their own definitions, and they forgave *Southern Living* for not being as sophisticated as other lifestyle magazines. Progressive Farmer Company struck at the "ideal time," a time when white southerners were so relieved to receive a magazine like *Southern Living* that they accepted the magazine, even with its warts.<sup>359</sup> Eugene Butler said: "The publication came along at just the right time and apparently was filling the long felt desire of Southern people for a magazine of their own that would present the bright side of Southern life."<sup>360</sup>

Alexander Nunn and Emory Cunningham represented two schools of white thought in the South in the 1960s. Nunn openly refused the change around him. He saw federal involvement as wrong, the forcing of integration as short-sighted, and the decline in a wholesome, farm-centered lifestyle as detrimental to the region's future. He was angry, and he wanted to do something about it. Cunningham knew the region had problems, but he was more discreet. He believed that *Southern Living*'s subtle messages would encourage southerners toward better behavior, particularly concerning environmental conservation:

---

<sup>358</sup> Quenelle, 165-166.

<sup>359</sup> Carolyn Green Satterfield, "Interview with Mr. Oscar Milton Dugger," TD, 22 June 1977, page 4, Folder 50, Box 2, Southern Progress Archive, Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>360</sup> Eugene Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TD, 1966 section, Folder 31, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 1.

Cunningham has said from *Southern Living*'s first issue that getting a family to go camping together is far more effective in convincing people to protect our natural resources than ten editorials condemning littered landscapes or poorly planned development. The person who experiences the joys and benefits and even the misfortunes of gardening is much more likely to be an avid protector of the soil and of the environment than someone who reads newspaper articles deploring the losses of soils through erosion and the contamination of the environment with chemicals.<sup>361</sup>

Perhaps this encouragement did help readers appreciate the southern landscape, but the magazine was about so much more than just trees and flowers. Its founders had promised a publication full of southern people that spoke directly to southern people, but these southerners were always white and affluent. Where were African Americans? Where did they belong in the region's future? *Southern Living* said little on this topic. It suggested that they did not exist, that southern culture was distinctively white, and that white southerners should continue to cherish a sentimental, nostalgic, and narrow conception of southern identity. African Americans were also the artisans of southern culture, their history was as present in the history of plantations as the white men who had owned them, and an identity removed of them was false. *Southern Living*'s subtle advocacy ignored that reality.

---

<sup>361</sup> Quenelle, 165-166.



## CONCLUSION

This dissertation relies heavily on archival research. Most beneficial were the hundreds of inter-office memorandums between Eugene Butler and the Progressive Farmer Company staff, which provided a means to observe conversations about *Southern Living* magazine, even though its founders are no longer living. They are records of ideas, opinions, and concerns long ago thought. These men, if asked, might blunt the edges of reality, remembering less dissension and more accord. Archival documents give us a peek at a life and a time we will never experience for ourselves.

While archival material can provide great historical insight, such sources have clear limitations. They are subject to natural disasters and human tampering, which may render some valuable documents unavailable. Also, the researcher views the documents out of their everyday context. In the example of a company memorandum, the impetus for its issuance and the response of its readers may remain unclear.<sup>362</sup> Another problem is that the process in which researchers, archivists, and collectors gather documents and make them available is not without its own politics. Which documents are saved, why, and where they are located are all decisions that affect the outcome of archival research. These documents are then subject to the rules and restrictions of the various libraries, institutions, and companies where they are located. Though archives provide a rich area for scholarship, the researcher is bound by the limitations of her time. I will never walk in the shoes of the men of Progressive Farmer Company, and my research is only as

---

<sup>362</sup> Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 38; Elizabeth Bramm Dunn, "Preserving or Distorting History? Scholars Reflect on Archival Repositories," *Historical Methods* 40, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 160.

reliable as my sources. The documents both enable and limit my view into another world.

My reliance on archival documents and my examination of their greater societal context are what set this dissertation apart from previous research on *Southern Living*. Much of the information available in the archives in Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama were an untapped resource. My research unearthed the intimations within the walls of Progressive Farmer Company, which previously were unknown, as was the struggle between Alexander Nunn and Emory Cunningham. This dissertation also includes the most thorough investigation of *Southern Living*'s editorial and advertising content to date, providing examples of the actual magazine to illuminate the discussion.

Room for future research exists on both *Southern Living* and *Progressive Farmer* magazines. *Southern Living* has continued to be a force among magazines published in the United States for more than four decades, providing many fruitful areas for research concerning its mission, its success, and its place in southern culture. *Progressive Farmer* was more than a farm rag; it was a publication at the forefront of agricultural education, making it an excellent topic for anyone interested in the movement that spurred agricultural colleges, improved farming technology, and the consolidation of farming companies into conglomerates. Comprehensive collections of *Southern Living* magazine are available at several locations in the United States, including the University of Texas's Center for American History and the J.D. Williams Library at the University of Mississippi. Though my research on *Southern Living* magazine's early content was thorough, it was the result of one researcher's examination. My interest was in its relationship to its wider sociocultural environment during the 1960s, particularly

concerning race relations. Further in-depth research on *Southern Living*'s editorial and advertising content throughout its history would contribute to the wider scholarship on magazines. Progressive Farmer Company's all-male decision-makers in a time of changing gender roles would also be a rich area for research.

Magazines are a valuable medium for research because, particularly since the 1950s, they aim for specific individuals and create a community with them, unifying their readers around interests, ideals, and concerns. Magazines reflect the society that produces them and then reinforce its beliefs. *Southern Living* targeted a specific audience, white southerners, created a community with them, and then reinforced their mentality about all the virtues of white southern culture. Magazines, such as *Southern Living*, provide a unique link to our understanding of our past because they highlight some experiences and ignore others, presenting clues about the values of their audiences and creators. They do not have to mirror reality or to reinforce the factual to be worthy of investigation, and their place in popular culture should not be a deterrent to researchers in mass communication or history. Identity is as much about what people want to be as it is about what people actually are, and publications that serve the fantasies of a society should receive scholarly scrutiny. For this reason, magazines as a medium deserve more serious research.

This dissertation contributes to magazine scholarship by exploring the launch of one of the nation's most successful publications during the period of magazine specialization. It also examines the inner-workings of the creation of a magazine, from the research and development phase through the chaotic first years of publication. As a business history, the heart of this research is the examination of Progressive Farmer

Company from the perspective of the people most invested in it. This dissertation underscores how bountiful corporate records can be and should serve as an encouragement both to scholars interested in business history and to forward-thinking executives willing to preserve the good, bad, and ugly for future generations. Finally, this research is media history, an area worth the time and energy of many more scholars. History might not repeat itself, but only through appreciating its lessons do we have context for the significance of the present and future.

Eugene Butler is responsible for this research. He left volumes of documents behind with the intention that the company's history be a guide for its future.<sup>363</sup> In saving even the most mundane handwritten note, Butler left a trail of his own thoughts for future generations. In his written correspondence, Eugene Butler was careful, respectful, and genuine. A sincere devotion to his company and its employees shows through his words, as if he treasured his place at the helm of the family business and took seriously the duty such a position brought. This is the man who did not stop working until he was one hundred years old, just before his death. He passionately wrote about the region's concerns, he believed in the value of agriculture to a society, and he viewed Progressive Farmer Company as an advocate for the average farmer. He also lived his entire life off of the farm, followed father's footsteps into the family business as a young man, and fostered his own son's place in the company. To some extent, Eugene Butler's entire life, from beginning to end, was threaded through the Progressive Farmer Company.

---

<sup>363</sup> Eugene Butler, "A Year by Year History of Progressive Farmer Company (later Southern Progress) from Its Origin in 1903 to 1968," TD, Preface, Folder 29, Box 7, Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 1-2.

Alexander Nunn and Emory Cunningham represented the poles of opinion at Progressive Farmer Company. Nunn owned his own farm, believed to his core in the superiority of an agricultural lifestyle, and reveled in his role at *Progressive Farmer* magazine. He was dear friends with the men at Progressive Farmer Company. Though he submitted to their plans for *Southern Living*, he was never comfortable with the magazine's threat to *Progressive Farmer*, nor with the social change it represented. As a man with a long history as an agricultural journalist, he could not envision a future at Progressive Farmer that did not involve farming or open advocacy.

Emory Cunningham also had a farming background, as so many southerners did, but he was not tethered to it. He joined the company as an ad man, and he was quick-witted and people-savvy. Cunningham saw a need for *Southern Living* magazine years before anyone else, and as he rose through the ranks of the company, he brought the idea with him. Had he not fostered *Southern Living* and fought for it as an apolitical publication meant for southerners leaving the farm, the farm-centric Progressive Farmer Company would likely have taken the magazine in a direction that doomed it. Perhaps Cunningham's greatest gift was in encouraging Progressive Farmer Company in a new direction without alienating himself or *Southern Living*. Without Cunningham, Eugene Butler and other Progressive Farmer leadership might have chained the company's future to a hunting and fishing magazine or on some subset of farming, but the credit for *Southern Living* also rests with Butler, who was willing to envision greatness for his company and to allow it to expand outside the limitations of agriculture.

My research at Southern Progress's headquarters presents a challenge in that it will be difficult to replicate. Though I have thousands of documents in my possession,

many more outside the scope of my dissertation remain untouched in boxes in the archive in Birmingham. I was incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to access Southern Progress's archive. Had I not contacted the company's librarians in the last weeks of their employment, I would have missed the opportunity of a lifetime. As the two librarians dismantled the library and prepared for their own termination, they willingly opened the archive for me. At that time, they were working to secure a donation of all the archival material to one of several universities in the region. They told me that the leadership at Time Inc. did not favor the idea of donating the documents and were leaning toward simply closing the doors to the vault and leaving the documents there. I do not know the fate of the dozens of boxes of documents spanning more than one hundred years of history. My hope is that future historians will also have access to them.

Gary McCalla, who became *Southern Living*'s editor in July 1969, said that maintaining a connection to readers was hardly a challenge because "[w]e live like our readers live."<sup>364</sup> *Southern Living*'s founders were their readers: white, affluent, only a generation or two removed from the farm, and educated. They bristled at the national dialogue about a backward South, and they sought to prove the criticism unfounded. *Southern Living* would put a smile on (white) southern faces, it would be a how-to manual on the right way to be southern, and it would blunt the criticism about racial discrimination, lack of education, and poverty. To some extent, these men were right. Their lives were more than what the country saw on the national news; southerners did have positive traits to pass on to American culture. But, white southerners were also

---

<sup>364</sup> John Quenelle, "The Story of Southern Living: A Man Plus an Idea" MSs, 24 June 1987, Southern Progress Archives, Birmingham, Alabama, 155.

beleaguered by their own resistance to change, their refusal to admit mistakes, and their fear of accepting African Americans into their lives. The rest of the world was fed up with their excuses.

In this way, *Southern Living* magazine reflected its sociocultural environment. Its pages were a response to the large-scale economic and demographic changes happening in the region: the decline of agriculture, urban and suburban population growth, and people with more leisure time and spending money. It was also a magazine purposed for southerners frustrated by negative publicity about their hometowns, their values, and their beliefs. These white southerners embraced a world in the pages of *Southern Living* that did not exist, but their fantasies speak volumes. They wanted tranquility, a connection to an idealized past, and reassurance that their way of life was valuable. They also sought a manual for living the American Dream, southern-style. *Southern Living* did all that and more; it also encouraged travel within the region as a way to boost local economies, and it became the definitive guide for white southern identity. *Southern Living* reinforced ideals about the region's unique appreciation of history, its hospitality, and the superiority of its culture. In this way, *Southern Living* absorbed the mentality of its founders and its audience and shined that ideal back to its readers.

*Southern Living* was also a whole-scale rejection of the world around it. The South was never just a land of azaleas, white-columned plantations, and happy white people drinking sweet tea. Birmingham, Alabama, an industry town torn apart by economic stagnation and the tense racial divide, was exactly the opposite of the nostalgic fantasy *Southern Living* provided. When Progressive Farmer Company did attempt to highlight social troubles, namely rapid urban growth, it intended only to present

solutions. It would not discuss problems with no answer, and after the publication's first year, any mention of regional challenges dissipated into static. There was no place for negativity; *Southern Living* would have nothing to do with racial discrimination, the busing of public school children, integration, the implementation of civil rights, arguments of states' rights, or any other topic that reminded its readers of the grave concerns they faced. The magazine also had no place for the scores of working-class whites who called the South home. In fact, for many southerners there was no face in the magazine to represent them. *Southern Living* perpetuated a narrow, exclusive definition of southern identity for upper-class whites. The men at Progressive Farmer Company reserved the term *southern* for the people like themselves: not poor whites or African Americans or Cajuns or Hispanics or those living in Appalachia. The vast scope of southern identity was condensed into a narrative that was anything but reality, and the face of *Southern Living* was unquestionably white, the neutral non-color.

For some readers, a trip through *Southern Living* might have been an hour-long vacation from reality; for others, the magazine was a mandate to ignore the obvious, that the South had endemic troubles and no easy answers. *Southern Living* gave these readers an excuse to be obtuse—to dismiss outsiders as failing to understand or appreciate their way of life. The magazine might have denied the region's culpability, but its avoidance of controversy in that very time and place and its phenomenal success were actually indicative of the fissures in southern society. In the midst of the darkest days of Birmingham and some of the most contentious civil rights battles in the nation, the spark of *Southern Living* actually flamed.



The argument exists that *Southern Living* was simply a magazine, lighthearted and pleasant for the reading pleasure of its audience. Had it been anything other than cheerful and friendly, it would have been a flop. That critique is a fair one, but it is beside the point. This research does not dispute the soundness of the business plan, the finesse of the final product, or the loyalty the magazine created with its audience. It is the fact of the magazine's success—that *Southern Living* had to omit the troubles that existed around it—that is so telling. A magazine that reminded readers of the societal upheaval around them would have been an enormous failure, but that is exactly the crux of the problems in the region. The decision to whitewash the magazine only buried the problems, and the absence of African Americans only underscored the larger societal struggle with how to define southern identity in terms that were not binary, literally black and white. To totally exclude African Americans and to overlook their place in southern culture was a decision in itself. African Americans had been part of the essence of southern identity since the region's earliest days. Ignoring them in *Southern Living* was indicative of a larger mindset; if white southerners could not see African Americans, who were relegated to their own schools, businesses, and communities, then they did not exist.

For most white southerners, there was too much change, too much turmoil, and too much negativity. The world was changing, and their place in it was no longer certain. The areas they were being asked to examine were too personal—the schooling of their children, their economic security, the equity of their society. So many southern whites were wholly unwilling to accept that they were wrong, their friends were wrong, and their parents and grandparents had been wrong. African Americans were more than their skin color; they were people entitled to all the same rights as their white brothers and sisters.

This equality had to be more than the kindness a good Christian bestows on the hired help. This kind of change meant that white southerners had to reconfigure their perspective to accept that people were people and that the color of one's skin should be neither a ticket to opportunity nor a shackle to the bottom rung of society. How much easier it would have been to ignore that reality than to embrace it. What a relief a magazine like *Southern Living* would have been, reassuring in its confidence that the South was exceptional, not because it was exceptionally racist, not because its laws were exceptions to basic American tenets, and not because its state governments acted as exceptional units outside of federal authority. The South was exceptional because of the beauty of its landscape, the charm of its people, and the taste of its cuisine.

Human nature is intricate and multi-faceted. It is reassuring to assume the upholding of antiquated and unfair racial mores was the act of lower class rednecks afraid of losing their tenuous place in society. It is simpler to view the culprit as the power-hungry patriarchs who stirred up the masses. But how does one understand the educated, upper-middle class family man, the everyday white southerner resisting equal rights for his African American counterparts? Racism is just that insidious. Middle of the road southerners, uninterested in radical change or in violence to maintain the status quo, viewed their position as reasonable, peace-loving, and most beneficial for the region, but in seeing themselves in that light, they had to reject African Americans as their equals, because otherwise they would be unable to call their position fair and just. The men at Progressive Farmer Company would not have identified themselves as racists, as resistant to change, or as cherishing a past that never was. In *Progressive Farmer* editorials Eugene Butler and Alexander Nunn both advocated basic rights for African Americans—

the ability for “qualified” citizens to vote, funding for education, and protection from violence. Progressive Farmer Company’s choice to embrace demographic changes with *Southern Living* was forward-looking; however, its blindness to the African American place in southern culture and its defensiveness concerning the judgment of outsiders speak to the pervasiveness of prejudice.

Racism is an infestation; it seeps into the hearts and minds of unsuspecting people, even otherwise decent folks. It is most damaging where it is invisible in the actions of people totally unaware of its consequences. The violent and obvious acts of oppression gain attention and, eventually, condemnation in nearly all crevices of society, but, in some ways, the American story of racial oppression is one of all the things left undone, the words left unsaid, and the actions overlooked. So many Americans truly believed the color of one’s skin mattered in cognitive and social ability. Some of them still do. Even people too good to say it or to openly act on it could maneuver through life avoiding people they believed were lesser than them. They did not have to advocate violence; it was their inaction that blocked the way for African Americans. Like ostriches burying their head in the sand, they let bad things happen, and then they pointed the finger at African Americans for wanting equal rights. It was *their* fault for demonstrating. It was *their* fault for pushing the envelope, and, rather than seeing what was right in front of them, white southerners blamed everyone else for the chaos around them. Hatred can find its way into the hearts of even the people who would give the shirts off their backs for another human being, people who in every other respect are God-fearing, charitable, and kind. It is much easier to vilify the rednecks shouting epithets at children, their faces purple with rage; it is harder to understand the people who

found themselves lost in the middle, caught up in change they could not, or would not, accept.

The story of Progressive Farmer Company and of *Southern Living* magazine is not one of outright racism. Instead, it is the story of looking the other way, refusing to be empathetic, and being so sure of one's position that all sense of reason is lost. Placed in its sociocultural context, even the seemingly-innocent pages of *Southern Living* magazine suggest the underlying tragedy of its time and place. Prejudice was not just the mistake of idiot, uneducated, bigoted white southerners hell-bent on maintaining their position of supremacy in society; it was not just an American mistake, the result of colonialism, slavery, and then segregation ground into the minds of generations of citizens. The pervasive racism of the 1960s Birmingham, Alabama, is compelling because it demonstrates just how deep and wide fear can spread, and it is a warning about how corrosive hatred is to a society. White southerners in the Jim-Crow South were not the only humans capable of being close-minded. This story is just one small footnote in a very large book.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

Eugene Butler Papers, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

Eugene Butler Papers, Manuscripts Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

*Southern Living* magazine, February 1966 through December 1969.

Southern Progress Archive, Southern Progress headquarters, Birmingham, Alabama.

### Secondary Sources

Abrahamson, David. "Magazine Exceptionalism: The Concept, the Criteria, the Challenge." *Journalism Studies* 8, no. 4 (2007): 667-670.

———. *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Postwar Periodical*. Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press Inc., 1996.

———. *The American Magazine: Research Perspectives and Prospects*. Ames: Iowa St. University Press, 1995.

Allen, Robert. *Black Awakening in Capitalist America: An Analytic History*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised Edition*. New York: Verso, 1983, 2006.

Anderson, Carol. *Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Ashmore, Harry S. *Civil Rights and Wrongs: A Memoir of Race and Politics, 1944-1996*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997.

Bains, Lee, Jr. "Birmingham, 1963: Confrontation over Civil Rights." In *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956-1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights*, ed. David Garrow, 151-199. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing, 1989.

- Barnard, William D. "Introduction." In *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956-1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights*, ed. David Garrow. Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, 1989.
- Bass, S. Jonathan. *Blessed are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail."* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001.
- Berglund, Barbara. "Western Living *Sunset* Style in the 1920s and 1930s: The Middlebrow, the Civilized, and the Modern." *Western Historical Quarterly* 37 (Summer 2006): 133-157.
- Birmingham News*, "Senior Citizens' Names Announced," 16 May 1963, microfiche, 2.
- Birmingham Post-Herald*, "Senior Citizens Group Urges Support of Action," 16 May 1963, microfiche, 2.
- Black, Earle and Merle Black. *The Rise of Southern Republicans*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Blackmon, Douglas A. *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Doubleday, 2008.
- Blanchard, Margaret. "The Ossification of Journalism History," *Journalism History* 25, No. 3 (Autumn 1999): 107-112.
- Branch, Taylor. *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years 1965-1968*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.
- . *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988.
- . *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963-1965*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998.
- Brunn, Stanley D. and Karl B. Raitz. "Regional Patterns of Farm Magazine Publication." *Economic Geography* 54, no. 4 (October 1978): 277-290.
- Burke, Peter, ed. *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 2nd ed. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001.
- Carey, James W. "The Problem of Journalism History." *Journalism History* 1 (Spring 1974).

- Carson, Clayborne. *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Chappell, David L. *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.
- Clark, Roy Peter and Raymond Arsenault, eds. *The Changing South of Gene Patterson: Journalism and Civil Rights, 1960-1968*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002.
- Classen, Steven D. *Watching Jim Crow: The Struggles over Mississippi TV, 1955-1969*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Cloud, Barbara. "The Variety of Journalism History: 26 Years of Scholarship." *Journalism History* 26, No. 4 (Winter 2000-2001):141-146.
- Cobb, James C. *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- . *Redefining Southern Culture: Mind and Identity in the Modern South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999.
- Cohn, Alexander. "The Past in the Present: The Civil Rights Images of the *Birmingham News*." Master's project, University of Missouri, 2006.
- Connerly, Charles E. *The Most Segregated City in America: City Planning and Civil Rights in Birmingham, 1920-1980*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005.
- Cox, Thomas H. "From Centerpiece to Center Stage: Kelly Ingram Park, Segregation, and Civil Rights in Birmingham, Alabama." *Southern Historian* 18 (1997): 5-28.
- Crespino, Joseph. *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Cunningham, Emory. *Eighty-Nine Years of Service in the South: The Story of the Progressive Farmer Company*. New York: Newcomen Society, 1975.
- DeButts, Jimmy. "Progressive Farmer Parent Sold for \$445M." *Birmingham Business Journal*, 19 September 2008, available from <http://birmingham.bizjournals.com/birmingham/stories/2008/09/22/story9.html>.
- . "Southern Progress Cuts More Jobs as Advertising Revenue Slips." *Birmingham Business Journal*, 12 November 2009, available from <http://birmingham.bizjournals.com/birmingham/stories/2009/11/09/daily31.html>.

- Dietzel, Susanne B. "Consuming Southern Landscapes: Visual Representations of the American South." *The Southern Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1998): 39-49.
- Dittmer, John. *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- Domke, David. "The Press, Race Relations, and Social Change." *Journal of Communication* 51, no. 2 (June 2001): 317-344.
- Duck, Leigh Anne. *The Nation's Region: Southern Modernism, Segregation, and U.S. Nationalism*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2006.
- Dudziak, Mary. *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Dunn, Elizabeth Bramm. "Preserving or Distorting History? Scholars Reflect on Archival Repositories." *Historical Methods* 40, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 159-163.
- Eskew, Glenn. T. *But for Birmingham*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- . "The Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and the Birmingham Struggle for Civil Rights, 1956-1963." In *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956-1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights*, ed. David Garrow, 3-114. Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, 1989.
- "Eugene Butler Collection Finding Aid," Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, available from <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/tamucush/00143/tamu-00143.html>.
- "Eugene Butler Collection Finding Aid," Manuscripts Division, Special Collections Department, Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.
- Fairburn, Miles. *Social History: Problems, Strategies, and Methods*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Folkerts, Jean. "American Journalism History: A Bibliographic Essay." *American Studies International*, 29 (October 1991): 4-28.
- Forbes*. "The Most Profitable Magazine in the U.S." June 1977, 31.
- Fischer, David Hackett. *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.



- Franklin, John Hope and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Knopf, 2000.
- Friedman, Barbara, and John D. Richardson. "A National Disgrace: Newspaper Coverage of the 1963 Birmingham Campaign in the South and Beyond." *Journalism History* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 224-232.
- Fry, Katherine. "Old South, Agrarian Midwest, and Frontier West: Discourses of Repression and Consumption of *Southern Living*, *Midwest Living*, and *Sunset Magazines*." Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1994.
- . "Regional Consumer Magazines and the Ideal White Reader: Constructing and Retaining Geography as Text," in *The American Magazine: Research Perspectives and Prospects*, ed. David Abrahamson. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995.
- Fulghum, Emily Wilkerson. "Selling the South to Itself: Rhetoric, Mythology, and the Making of *Southern Living*." Master's thesis, North Carolina State University, 2005.
- Gaines, Kevin Kelly. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Garrow, David J., ed. *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956-1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing, 1989.
- Gilens, Martin. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Goldfield, David. *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.
- Grantham, Dewey W. *The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994.
- Halberstam, David. *The Fifties*. New York: Villard Books, 1993.
- Hale, Grace Elizabeth. *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.
- Hendrickson, Paul. *Sons of Mississippi: A Story of Race and Its Legacy*. New York: Knopf, 2003.
- Hobson, Fred C. *But Now I See: The White Southern Racial Conversion Narrative*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999.

- Howell, Martha and Walter Prevenier. *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Hubbard, Russell. "Time Warner Inc. Sells *Progressive Farmer* Magazine," *The Birmingham News*, 3 Jan. 2007, 1A.
- Janken, Kenneth Robert. *White: The Biography of Walter White, Mr. NAACP*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2003.
- Jones, Megan Norris. "Defining the Southern in *Southern Living*." Master's thesis, University of Missouri, 2009.
- Kansas City Star*. "Nine Famous Star Employees." 4 February 2010, available from <http://www.kansascity.com/2010/02/04/1727493/famous-employees.html>.
- Kitch, Carolyn. *Pages from the Past: History & Memory in American Magazines*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Kneebone, John T. *Southern Liberal Journalists and the Issue of Race, 1920-1944*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Kruse, Kevin M. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- LA Times*. "Progressive Farmer Magazine Sold." 3 January 2007, available from <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/jan/03/entertainment/et-magazine3>.
- LaMonte, Edward Shannon. *Politics and Welfare in Birmingham, 1900-1975*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1995.
- Lassiter, Matthew D. *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Lauder, Tracy. "The Birth of *Southern Living* in the 1960s." Ph.D. diss., University of Alabama, 2004.
- . "The *Southern Living* Solution: How The *Progressive Farmer* Launched a Magazine and a Legacy." *Alabama Review* (July 2007): 186-221.
- Logue, John and Gary McCalla. *Life at "Southern Living"*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000.
- Lublin, David. *The Republican South: Democratization and Partisan Change*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

- Lutz, Catherine A. and Jane Collins. *Reading National Geographic*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Martin, Douglas. "Emory O. Cunningham, Publisher, Dies at 78." *New York Times*, 28 January 2000, available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/01/28/us/emory-o-cunningham-publisher-dies-at-78.html?pagewanted=2&src=pm>.
- McPherson, Tara. *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003.
- McWhorter, Diane. *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama: The Climatic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.
- Meyerowitz, Joanne. "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958." *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 4 (March 1993): 1455-1482.
- Middleton, David and Derek Edwards. *Collective Remembering*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990.
- Miller, Steven P. *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2009.
- Mills, Kay. *Changing Channels: The Civil Rights Case That Transformed Television*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004.
- Minor, Bill. *Eyes on Mississippi: A Fifty-Year Chronicle of Change*. Jackson, Miss.: J Prichard Morris Books, 2001.
- Morgan, Charles Jr. *A Time to Speak*. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.
- Mossholder, Diane. "Patterns of Success: Three Regional Magazines." Master's thesis, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1994.
- Nerone, John. "The Future of Communication History." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23, no. 3 (August 2006): 254-262.
- . "Theory and History." *Communication Theory* 3, no. 2 (May 1993): 148-157.
- Nord, David Paul. "Intellectual History, Social History, Cultural History, and Our History." *Journalism Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 645-648.
- . "James Carey and Journalism History: A Remembrance." *Journalism History* 32 (Fall 2006): 122-127.

- . “A Plea for Journalism History.” *Journalism History*, 15 (Spring 1988): 8-15.
- Novick, Peter. *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Ohmann, Richard. “Where Did Mass Culture Come From? The Case of Magazines.” *Berkshire Review* 16 (1981): 85-101.
- Oshinsky, David M. *Worse Than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice*. New York: Free Press, 1996.
- Popp, Richard K. “Magazines, Marketing, and the Construction of Travel in the Postwar United States.” Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 2008.
- Pride, Armistead S. and Clint C. Wilson II. *A History of the Black Press*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1997.
- Ransby, Barbara. *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Rigsby, Enrique D. *A Rhetorical Clash with the Established Order: An Analysis of Protest Strategies and Perceptions of Media Responses, Birmingham, 1963*. Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 1990.
- Riley, Sam G. *Magazines of the American South*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986.
- Roberts, Diane. “Living Southern in *Southern Living*.” In *Dixie Debates: Perspectives on Southern Cultures*, ed. Richard H. King and Helen Taylor, 85-98. New York: New York University Press, 1996.
- Roberts, Gene, and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation*. New York: Alfred P. Knopf, 2006.
- Romano, Renee C. and Leigh Raiford. *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006.
- Saxon, Wolfgang. “Herbert Mayes, 87, Former Top Editor of Magazines, Dies.” *New York Times*, 1 November 1987, available from <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/01/obituaries/herbert-mayes-87-a-former-top-editor-of-magazines-dies.html>.
- Schudson, Michael. “Toward a Troubleshooting Manual for Journalism History.” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 463-476.

- Schulman, Bruce J. *From Cotton Belt To Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Schwalbe, Carol B. "Images of Brutality: The Portrayal of U.S. Racial Violence in News Photographs Published Overseas (1957-1963)." *American Journalism* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 93-116.
- Shafer, Byron E. *The End of Southern Exceptionalism: Class, Race, and Partisan Change in the Postwar South*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Silver, James W. *Mississippi: The Closed Society*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964.
- Sokol, Jason. *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975*. New York: Knopf, 2006.
- Standard Rate & Data Service. *Consumer Magazine Advertising Source* 91, no. 1 (Spring 2009).
- Startt, James D. and William David Sloan. *Historical Methods in Mass Communication*. Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1989.
- Sugrue, Thomas J. *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*. New York: Random House, 2008.
- Tebbel, John and Mary Ellen Zuckerman. *The Magazine in America 1741-1990*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Time*. "Person of the Year: Martin Luther King, Jr." 3 January 1964, available from <http://www.time.com/time/subscriber/personoftheyear/archive/stories/1963.html>.
- Torres, Sasha. *Black, White, and in Color: Television and Black Civil Rights*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Tullos, Allen. "Azalea Death Trip: A Journey Through the Land of *Southern Living*." *Southern Changes* 1, no. 10 (1979): 7-10, 32, available from [http://beck.library.emory.edu/southernchanges/article.php?id=sc01-10\\_005](http://beck.library.emory.edu/southernchanges/article.php?id=sc01-10_005).
- The Tuscaloosa News*. "'Southern Living' founder Emory Cunningham dies." 26 January 2000, 5, available from <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=cTsdAAAAIBAJ&sjid=EqYEAAAIBAJ&pg=6641,4367241>.

Watts, Steven. *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008.

White, John. "Safe to Have on Your Coffee Table: *Southern Living* Reconsidered." *The Alabama Review* 47 (July 1994):185-209.

Wilkie, Curtis. *Dixie: A Personal Odyssey through Events That Shaped the Modern South*. New York: Scribner, 2001.

Williamson, Joel. *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Wilson, Bobby M. *Race and Place in Birmingham*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000.

Wright, Lin H. *Shy Giant of the South*. Starkville: Mississippi State University, 1988.

Zoglin, Richard. "New Additions, Southern Style." *Time*, 4 March 1985, available from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,961966,00.h>

## VITA

Summer Hill Vinson received a Master of Arts degree in journalism from the University of Mississippi, and she graduated magna cum laude from the University of Mississippi with a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism. While at the University of Mississippi, she was a member of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College and Phi Beta Kappa honor society. Before returning to graduate school, she was the Production Editor for Strafford Publications in Atlanta, Georgia.