Salters, South Carolina

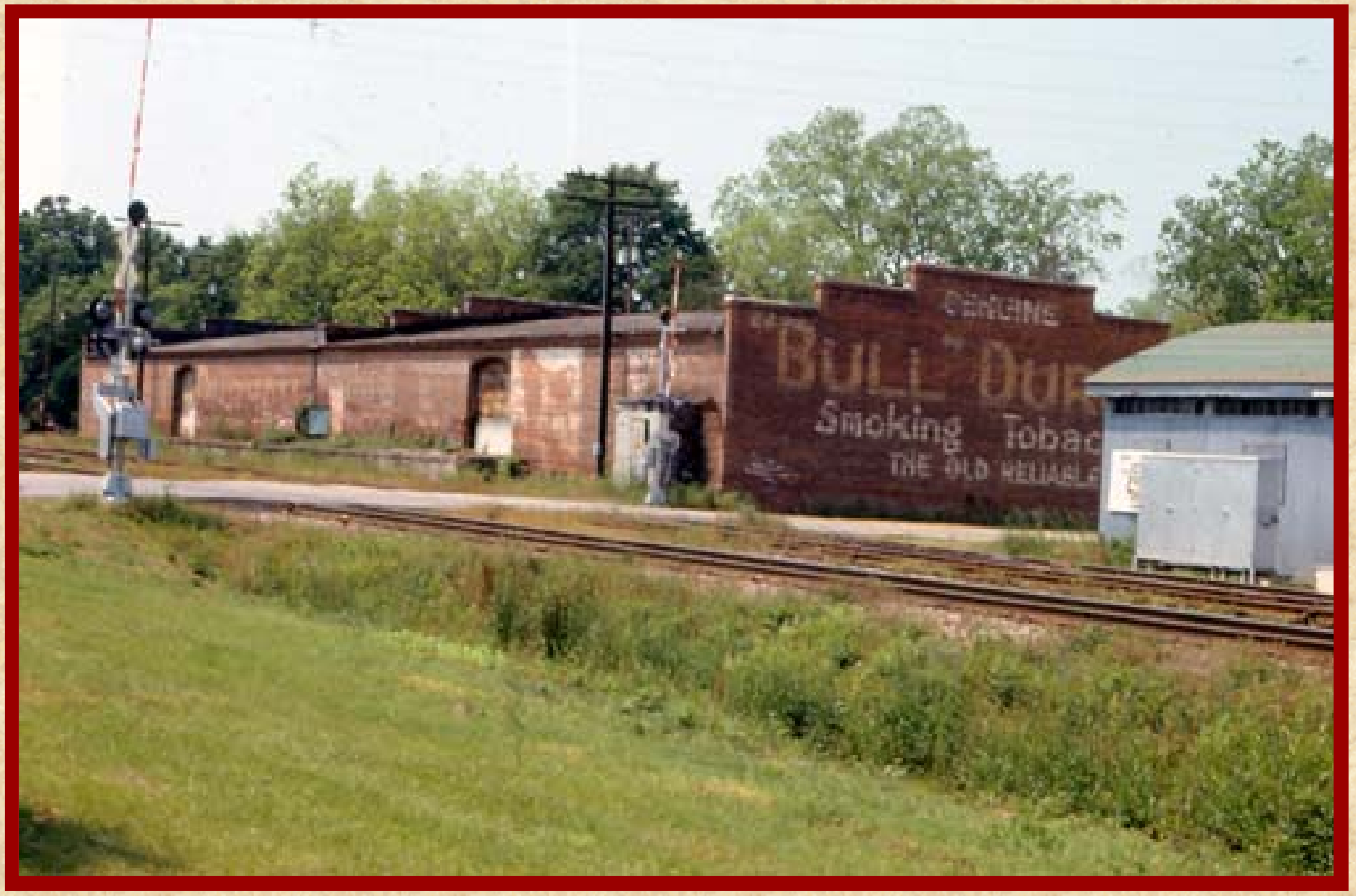
Railroad Towns

- The greatest number of South Carolina towns owe their origin to the railroad.
- Shift in focus and expansion of the rail system during the postbellum period
- The focus shifted away from Charleston.
- Commercial towns developed around railroad depots between 1880 and 1920.
- Railroad officials laid out the street patterns and often named the towns.
- The architectural style of both commercial and residential buildings reflect the design preferences of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

Steam locomotive arrives at Ridgeway, South Carolina.

Pinewood, South Carolina

Railroad towns often were called tank towns because the water tank was visible before one could see the town.



Estill, South Carolina

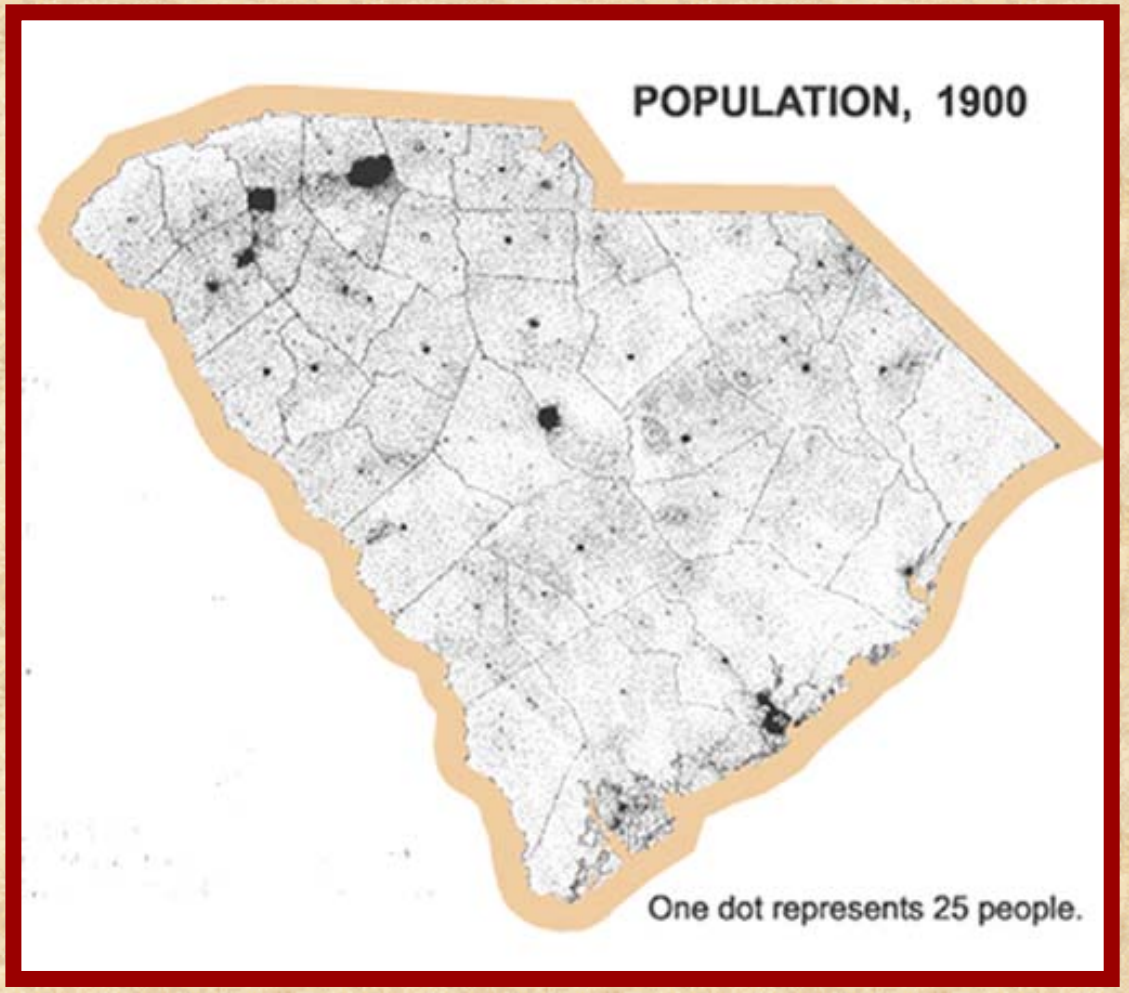
Cotton warehouses are common features of railroad towns. A railroad siding served the warehouse. Baled cotton was loaded on the train from the platform.

BULL DURHAM
Smoking Tobacco
THE OLD RELIABLE

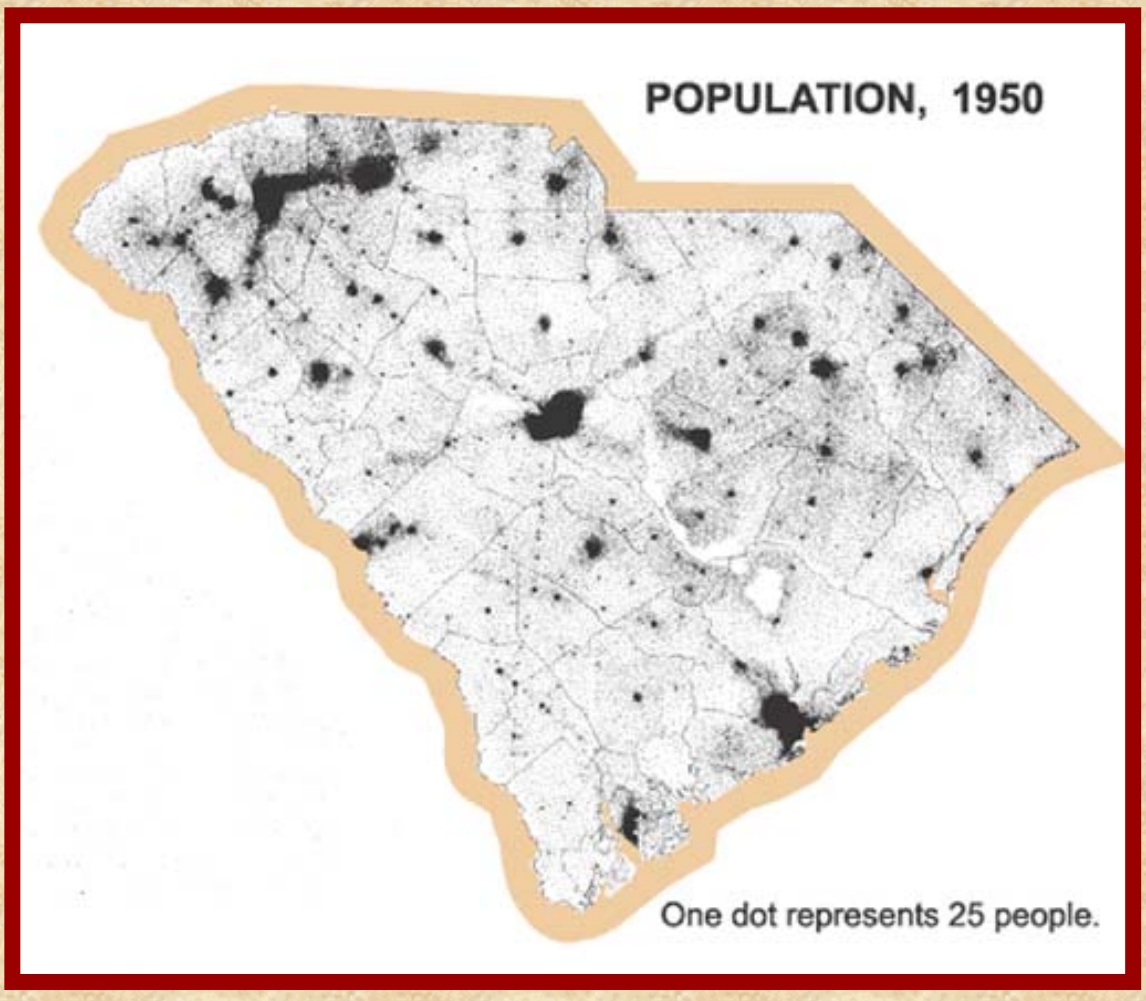
Most railroad town Main Streets look very similar.

Varnville, South Carolina

Notice how the rail network focused on Charleston in 1860. By the 1920s, the network looked more like that of the present-day. Major lines connect the state with the Northeast and Middle West.



This map shows the distribution of population in 1900. Each small dot represents 25 people. The larger dots represents towns and cities. Notice that many towns are situated near the middle of the county. These usually are courthouse towns. Most of the other towns are railroad towns.



The population distribution map of 1950 shows the development of towns along the railroad lines. They appear as "*beads on a string*" that radiate out from the major cities. The railroad towns are especially apparent in southern, western, northwestern, and northeastern directions from Columbia.

Batesburg-Leesville, SC

Poultry, Peaches, and Truck Farming are important agricultural activities in the Batesburg-Leesville area.

Shealy's Barbecue is a Batesburg-Leesville landmark. The two railroad towns were known as the *twin cities* until they merged in 1992.

Elloree, SC

Many railroad towns had balconies along Main Street. Few still remain, but they have been preserved in Elloree.

Mullins, SC

In addition to a depot or station, most larger railroad towns had a hotel for visitors and *"drummers" or* traveling salesmen.

Denmark, SC had a large victorian style hotel near its railroad station. Unfortunately, it was demolished to make way for a retail store and parking lot. Later, the town commissioned a mural to preserve the memory of the hotel.

Bracknell's store in Plum Grove, SC

North, SC

Fort Motte, SC
1971

Owing to outmigration, many railroad towns have virtually disappeared.

Fort Motte, SC 1989