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From Tomato Fields to Tourists: Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County, South Carolina, 1950-1983

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Margaret Anne Shannon entitled "From Tomato Fields to Tourists: Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County, South Carolina, 1950-1983." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

James C. Cobb, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

W. Bruce Wheeler, Charles Johnson

Accepted for the Council:

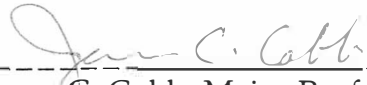
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

FROM TOMATO FIELDS TO TOURISTS:
HILTON HEAD ISLAND AND BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH
CAROLINA,
1950-1983

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Margaret Anne Shannon

December, 1996

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DEDICATION

In deep gratitude, this thesis is dedicated
to Sam and Charlie who wouldn't let me give up.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anyone who has been to college knows how important the support of family, friends and faculty is to the eventual success of the student. In my case, such support has been particularly critical. I have benefitted immeasurably from the commitment and effort of a wide variety of people, and hope that this small gesture can convey a sense of my sentiments. However, these dear friends and family members deserve only praise and gratitude--blame for whatever flaws there may be in the final result is mine alone.

I am deeply indebted to Bill Fowler, Susan Becker and Paul Bergeron who all encouraged me to enter the Master's program here at Tennessee, and to James C. Cobb, my major professor, who made that choice a reality.

I'm obliged to my friends in the world of scholarly publishing who provided constant encouragement that after I finished my degree I had a promising career ahead of me. While I was at the University of Tennessee Press, Jennifer Siler, Meredith Morris-Babb, Kim Scarbrough and Jackie Hurst who all patiently listened to me discuss my research as I struggled to reach a conclusion. Ken Cherry of the University Press of Kentucky expressed more than polite interest in my work and encouraged me to expand my work into a book-length project and seek publication. I probably won't, but it's nice to think that the thesis had that potential. Bard Young (scholar, poet, and knightly gentleman) of Vanderbilt University Press edited the final chapter and translated the original IBM disks to MacIntosh.

Through my research across the state of South Carolina I met many new friends who provided support and assistance. In particular, I'm indebted to Gretchen Krug of the Hilton Head Public Library and Jill Foster, Long Range Planner of the Town of Hilton Head Island. Thank-yous also go to the staffs of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's Interlibrary Loan department for working miracles, to the staff of the microfilm room at Clemson University, to the staff of the Highlander Center for one of the most pleasant research experiences a scholar could hope for, and to the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina.

Much-needed financial support came from Janette Hightower, Anne Shannon, Pauline Payne Eyler, Dr. and Mrs. Wallace Taylor, Stephen W. Taylor and Mr. and Mrs. Cecil A. Payne. These family members also provided desperately needed moral support. Thanks!

Throughout my graduate career, my major professor James C. Cobb unhesitatingly gave me his honest opinion. From his (sometimes painful) comments I have profited much. I'm appreciative of the role my committee, Cobb, W. Bruce Wheeler and Charles Johnson have played, not only in my thesis but also my career plans.

Stephen W. Taylor read the manuscript innumerable times. That in and of itself must qualify him for sainthood, but never one to rest on his laurels, Stephen continued to provide moral, financial, and logistical support while also serving as my research assistant and proofreader. Throughout all the ups and downs his unfailing love and tenderness made the adventure worthwhile and frequently fun. Thank you, thank you, thank you all!

ABSTRACT

Between 1950 and 1983, Hilton Head Island was transformed from a sleepy rural barrier island to a humming urban tourist destination. In the process, Hilton Head's native black population which had originally dominated the island was ultimately both politically and economically marginalized. This study seeks to answer two questions: first, what are the ways in which blacks sought to retain political power in the face of massive demographic and economic change? and second, how successful were they? I examined three issues through which blacks at Hilton Head sought political empowerment. They are the question of land acquisition and use, the controversy over the location of a potentially polluting industry just upstream of Hilton Head, and the final incorporation of the town of Hilton Head Island itself. I concluded that although blacks were informed and active participants in the island's political and economic life, the dramatic influx of whites with different economic profiles ultimately overwhelmed blacks through sheer numerical superiority.

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Chapter One

From Tomatoes to Tourists

On May 5, 1951, a small article in the bottom right-hand corner of the *Charleston Evening Post* reported that a 10,159-acre tract of land on the southern end of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina had been sold for \$600,000. The buyers then sold the timber rights to a Spartanburg, South Carolina corporation for \$600,000 and made plans to build cottages on individual plots to be sold as vacation homes after the timber was harvested.¹ Thus began the process that turned a quiet, anonymous sea island into the golden golf and tennis resort of world fame.

Located in Beaufort County, South Carolina, near the Georgia border, Hilton Head is a barrier island in Port Royal Sound. The island, which is shaped like a running shoe, is bisected by swamps and Broad Creek across the isthmus. Prior to the Civil War, Hilton Head was just another barrier island, with large plantations where Sea Island cotton grew. Numerous former slaves remained on the island after the Civil War. In 1862, along with other Sea Islands in the area, Hilton Head fell to the Union Army. Fleeing the invaders, slaveowners abandoned slaves and plantations. After operating the farms for a few crops, the Federal government subdivided the land and sold it to the freedmen for back taxes. Accordingly, after the Civil War, former slaves assumed ownership of the same land their former masters had compelled them to work.

¹ "Hilton Head Tract Sold for \$600,000," *Charleston (SC) Evening Post*, May 5, 1951.

The years between the Civil War and 1951 passed relatively quietly. Whites returned after the end of Reconstruction and reclaimed ownership of some of the land, but most left the island in the 1890s due to the combined effects of the falling price of cotton and a devastating hurricane which blew through in 1893. The descendants of former slaves operated small farms and fished the ocean. By the 1950s, there were four oyster packing sheds and at times the island's residents shipped as much as 500 bushels of butter beans a day. Automobiles were a rarity, as there was only one paved road; most of the island's population traveled on horses. At the southern end of the island, a private club held a large tract of land as a hunting resort. While the island was never completely isolated from the mainland, the lack of a bridge made travel between the island and the mainland difficult at best, and relatively rare.²

Charles Fraser, a twenty-one-year-old graduate of the University of Georgia, first visited Hilton Head Island in 1950. Getting around was not easy--he used a tractor to explore the island's muddy dirt roads. Fraser worked for his father's lumber company, and saw tremendous money-making potential in Hilton Head's undeveloped landscape. In his first year at Yale Law School, Fraser began to form an idea of developing Hilton Head into a planned community where he would use deed covenants to control the path of development and create an aesthetically appealing mix of homes, tourist attractions, and businesses while maintaining the island's natural

² "Hilton Head Catches Up with Progress of State," *Charleston (SC) News and Courier*, July 19, 1951; "Hilton Head Lacks only Easy Communication," *Charleston (SC) News and Courier*, July 30, 1951.

beauty. Then, in 1951, using his father's money, Fraser put together a consortium of investors and bought the hunt club's land on Hilton Head.³

The population grew slowly as long as the island remained unconnected to the mainland. The state established a ferry service in 1953, but because it was too small and too slow, it quickly became inadequate to meet the needs of the increasing number of people who wanted to visit the island. The ferry held only nine to twelve cars and a maximum of eighty people. These visitors could only stay through the day, as there were no overnight accommodations. At this time, developers were already building homes and establishing tourist attractions. In 1956 the first bridge to the island was built. Developers and observers alike expected the bridge to accelerate the island's growth.⁴

Table 1 illustrates economic growth at Hilton Head after the bridge was built. In the years following the construction of the bridge from the mainland, the island underwent a dramatic transformation. More and more houses, condominiums, and apartment complexes sprang up every year.

Most newcomers came from places other than Beaufort County. Of the 305 lots sold by September 10, 1956, more than 50 percent were sold to families from out of state, some to families from as far away as Michigan and Kansas. The remaining portion went to South Carolinians, but not all of these were from the Low Country.⁵

³ Jonathan W. Oatis, "Hilton Head Opened New Era in Development," *Charlotte (NC) Observer*, September 6, 1982.

⁴ "Opening of Hilton Head Bridges Expected to Trigger Great Development," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, May 26, 1956.

⁵ W. D. Workman, "Traffic to Hilton Head Increasing as Additional Homes are Constructed," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, January 24, 1957.

The *Beaufort Gazette* noted the changes early after the construction of the bridge. Bridge traffic provides one indicator of the island's growth. Cars using the bridge paid a toll, with fares being used to retire the debt undertaken to construct it. From May 20, 1954, to May 19, 1955, the last year when the ferry was the only means of transport, 29,233 vehicles traveled to the island. After the bridge was built and opened for business on May 20, 1956, 61,645 vehicles made the trip in just the six months to the end of November 1956. This far exceeded all expectations; anticipated bridge tolls were \$99,000 in the first year, but by the beginning of 1957 the Hilton Head Toll Bridge Authority estimated that toll revenues would exceed \$140,000.⁶

Table 1. Hilton Head Island New Construction, by Type, 1960-1993.

	Single Family Number of Units	Multi Family Number of Units
1960	43	--
1965	88	82
1970	108	44
1975	183	14
1980	511	1895
1985	472	708
1990	404	71

Source: Building Permit Records, Department of Community Development, Town of Hilton Head Island.

Then, in mid-1957, an event took place which to a large extent shaped the modern image of the island. Charles Fraser's father, Lt. Gen. J. B. Fraser, chairman of the corporation which bought the old hunt club, announced plans for the Sea Pines Plantation development. Sea Pines Plantation would

⁶ *ibid.*

be a planned residential community with oceanfront lots, a wildlife preserve, yacht club, inn, golf courses and other recreational facilities. Extensive deed restrictions included zoning that would determine which lots would be permitted only vacation cottages and which lots could have luxury residences intended for year-round habitation. These deed covenants also restricted architectural design--for example, paint colors and roofing materials were controlled, in order to create the visually quiet atmosphere Charles Fraser envisioned.⁷

Table 2 further illustrates the changes undergone by Beaufort County as a whole. It covers the period between 1949, just before Charles Fraser first visited the island, and 1983, when the town of Hilton Head Island was incorporated. Here, the impact of development is shown on Beaufort County's retail and farming economies, as well as on migration to the county and in family income. Notice, for example, the increase in the number of retail stores. In 1952 there were only 192 stores in the county, and this number remained relatively constant until the census survey in 1960, the year in which the impact of the construction of the bridge to Hilton Head would begin to be apparent. By 1960, the number of stores had increased by more than 10 percent. Moreover, the number of paid employees of retail stores had increased by 45 percent; not only was the number of retail stores increasing, but their size was increasing as well.⁸

⁷ "Major Seacoast Resort is Planned: Hilton Head's Sea Pines Plantation," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, July 4, 1957.

⁸Bureau of the Census, *A Statistical Abstract Supplement: County and City Data Book 1949-1983*, Bureau of the Census (Washington, DC, 1949-1983 inclusive.) These figures reflect Beaufort County as a whole: as noted on page IV-5 of the 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Beaufort County was never broken down by the Census into smaller tracts until 1990. Therefore,

Table 2. Change in Beaufort County, South Carolina, 1952-1983.

	1952	1957	1960	1967	1972	1977	1983
# Retail Stores	192	197	223	214	275	402	546
# Paid Retail Employees	482	593	875	911	1135	2030	2653
Acres of Land in Farms	172K	133K	105K	105K	83K	25K	67K
Total Population	26993	26993	44187	44187	51136	54372	65364
Population Black	57.5%	57.5%	38.7%	38.4%	32.9%	32.9%	32.9%
Migration to County	12%	--	47.8%	--	6.4%	--	43.6%
Family Income	\$1382	\$1382	\$3597	\$3597	\$6590	\$6590	\$17044

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, County and City Data Book 1952, 1957, 1960, 1967, 1972, 1977, 1983.

At the same time, the number of acres of land in farms decreased. In 1952, Beaufort County had 172,000 acres of farmland. By 1960, this number had dropped to 105,000, and by 1983 it had fallen to 67,000 acres. These years correspond to years of significant increases in growth at Hilton Head.⁹

Population and construction trends tell another story. The year 1960 saw a 61 percent increase in population over 1957, by 1972 population increased by 86 percent, and by another 83 percent by 1983. The early 1970s were boom years for Hilton Head. Between 1970 and 1974, total construction amounted to about \$220 million. These boom years accounted for over fifty percent of all construction on Hilton Head cumulatively as late as March 1979.¹⁰

Not only was the island's population increasing in number but it was also changing in racial composition. On the eve of development at Hilton Head, the population of the county was 67.1 percent African-American. By 1983, so many whites had moved to Beaufort County that the percentage of African-Americans had fallen to just 32.9 percent. Part of this is explained by population migration figures; African Americans were not leaving the county, but whites were arriving in large numbers. In 1952, 3275 new people moved to Beaufort County, accounting for about twelve percent of the

IV-5 of the 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Beaufort County was never broken down by the Census into smaller tracts until 1990. Therefore, statistics for smaller areas are from either special Censuses or from other municipal or county-level sources.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Don Hobart, "How We Got Here--From There," *Hilton Head Islander*, March 1979, 33-36.

population. After 1960, newcomers comprised more than forty percent of total population in the county.

Not all of Beaufort County's changes can be attributed to growth at Hilton Head, although Hilton Head's growth does explain much of it. The other main factor in these figures is the presence of military installations in Beaufort County. During the fifties, while Hilton Head remained relatively undeveloped and inaccessible, almost all in-migration was due to the military; during the 1950s, 12,738 people migrated to Beaufort County, an increase of more than forty percent. After 1967, the county's population increased again by almost sixteen percent, reflecting both resort development at Hilton Head and increasing military enrollment at Parris Island. The seventies saw cutbacks at Parris Island, thus increasing population figures in those years reflect growth at Hilton Head almost exclusively.¹¹

So after the bridge was built, Hilton Head Island began to see extensive economic development, but this growth, while dramatic for the island itself, did not even begin to make a county-wide impact until the 1970s. Consider the development of businesses at Hilton Head, encapsulated in Table 3. Looking at this table, as well as figures from the previous table "Change in Beaufort County, 1949-1983" we see that in 1972 there were 275 retail establishments in the county, and that by 1983 there were 546, an increase of almost one hundred percent. At Hilton Head in 1972 there were 120 commercial businesses, and by 1982 there were 950, an increase of almost

¹¹ Lowcountry Council of Governments, *Lowcountry Overall Economic Development Program, Update 1976-1980*, (Lowcountry Council of Governments, 1980), 6-8; Paul Sanford Salter, "Changing Economic Patterns of the South Carolina Sea Islands" (Ph. D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1965,) *passim*.

Table 3. Island Business and Employment, 1972-1982.

	1972	1974	1976	1978	1980	1982
Companies Interviewed	120	205	438	598	855	950
Total Employees	2963	3777	4572	7540	9534	12144
# Island Residents	1400	1719	3294	4283	5808	7028
# Off Island	1563	2058	1278	3257	3729	5116

Source: Hilton Head Chamber of Commerce, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.

seven hundred percent. So Hilton Head Island's retail businesses were growing at a faster rate than others in the county.

The United States Census Bureau conducted two special enumerations in 1975 and 1985, and these illustrate the growing population at Hilton Head, as well as its changing racial characteristics. In 1975, the island had 6,511 people, of whom 5,212 were white and 1,283 were black, with sixteen members of "other races." Whites represented over eighty percent of the island's population. In 1985, there were 17,622 residents, of whom 15,488 were white and 2,000 black; the island's population was over 87 percent white.¹²

When development of Hilton Head Island began, the island's population was almost all African American. Then, as businesses developed the island into a tourist spot and retirement community, the island's demographics began to change, and the black residents comprised a smaller proportion of the population. Moreover, the development of the island tended to benefit newcomers with money, without offering the island's native residents opportunities to raise their economic status. This was because the island's original residents had less access to capital. They were poorer, and being both poor and black, found it difficult to obtain financial backing. Thus, lifelong islanders found themselves in a political and economic bind. They struggled to gain their own place in the development, and strove to take part in the increasing prosperity of the island.

An important resource in this struggle was the Penn Center. Laura Towne, a Philadelphia Quaker who came to St. Helena after the Civil War,

¹² Bureau of the Census, *Special Census Population of Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County, South Carolina, 1975 and 1985*, Bureau of the Census (Washington, D.C., 1975 and 1985.)

founded the Penn Center in 1865. The Center's dual mission encompassed both education and promotion of economic independence. It offered basic education courses, as well as technical and trade courses. The center also operated a model farm. In 1948, the county's public school system took over the Center's academic functions; thereafter the Center concentrated on community services, including civil rights activities. Through the efforts of Penn Center leaders, public water came to the Sea Islands. The Center developed market cooperatives and health services and taught the rights and responsibilities of land ownership. Moreover, the Penn Center served as one of the few places where interracial groups could meet for civil rights meetings and plan campaigns.¹³ It was very effective in the Beaufort area; for example, in the 1964 presidential election, Beaufort County saw all of its eligible African Americans vote, returning several precincts for Lyndon Johnson. Bernice Robinson, a citizenship teacher at the center, attributed this to the Penn Center's work.¹⁴

The Penn Center's success in the area of black political empowerment was also felt in county-level politics. For example, in 1960 Leroy E. Browne of St. Helena in Beaufort County registered as a candidate for the County Board of Directors. Calling the action a "bombshell," the *Beaufort Gazette* noted that Browne was the first African American to run for a county-wide office in

¹³ "\$350,000 Granted to Penn School," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, September 14, 1967; Nancy L. Mohr, "Treasures on an Island: Preserving the Traditions of South Carolina's Gullah Culture has Long Been the Mission of the Penn School," *American Visions*, October 1989, 29-31.

¹⁴ Bernice Robinson, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Citizenship Education Program: from a taped report by Miss Bernice Robinson, SCLC Citizenship School Supervisor at the Highlander Board of Directors' Meeting, May 14, 1965. Original transcript at the Highlander Center Library, New Market, Tennessee.

thirty years.¹⁵ On election day (June 14, 1960), Browne carried most of the vote in his precinct, Frogmore, where the population was overwhelmingly black, earning 308 votes as compared to 128 divided among two other candidates. Prior to Browne's successful campaign, while African Americans had held appointive offices, none even ran for elective office (save for a Republican candidate) since the 1930s. Interestingly, only ten years earlier, in the municipal election held in May 1951 only twenty-five votes were cast, in an election for mayor and city council in which all candidates ran unopposed. The civil rights movement obviously made black Beaufort Countians more politically active.¹⁶

Two years later Browne was the only member of the County Board to be reelected. His precinct, Frogmore, consisted of two islands, St. Helena and Lady's Island. St. Helena was mostly black while Lady's Island was mostly white, and voting followed racial lines. But St. Helena had a larger population than Lady's Island, and St. Helena was home to the Penn Center. African Americans at St. Helena turned out in droves and voted as a bloc for Browne. The figures tell the story: on Lady's Island, 195 votes were cast, 40 for Browne (twenty percent) and 155 for his opponent, R.M. Morris. On St. Helena, 364 votes were cast, 271 for Browne or 75 percent.¹⁷

¹⁵ "Negro Seeks Board Office; Sample Shoots for Senate," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, March 24, 1960.

¹⁶ "Waddell is Senator; Harvey and Sams Sent Back to House: All Contests Decided Except One Tuesday," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, June 16, 1960; "Only 25 Ballots Cast in Beaufort Election," *Charleston (SC) Evening Post*, May 5, 1951.

¹⁷ "Negro Board Member is Only Successful Incumbent Tuesday," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, June 14, 1962.

African Americans continued to campaign for their rights. In 1963 the *Beaufort Gazette* noted a particularly large voter registration drive, reporting that African Americans accounted for almost 78 percent of all new voters registered. The chairman of the Beaufort County registration Board, F. B. Webb, told the newspaper that at that time, African Americans constituted thirty percent of the county's registered voters, and their percentage of the county's registered voters was steadily increasing.¹⁸

Of course, African Americans could not undertake actions such as these unopposed, although overt racism in Beaufort County seems to have been less pronounced than in other areas of the South. In 1965, following a three-day conference on school integration at the Penn Center, the Ku Klux Klan announced a rally targeting the Penn Center. In the same issue of the *Gazette* which announced the rally, Beaufort Mayor F. W. Scheper denounced the rally, saying "I call upon all of our citizens to give no aid and comfort to those who preach bigotry and hatred."¹⁹ Beaufort County's legislative delegation in Columbia joined Mayor Scheper in condemning the Klan, declaring "...if [the Klan's meeting] is for the purpose of intimidating any of our citizens or organizing for violence or for unlawful purposes, we condemn the meeting before it is held." The *Gazette* believed it to be the first Klan rally in the county since the 1930s.²⁰ Although not without racism, Beaufort County enjoyed a relatively mild racial climate.

¹⁸ "Negroes Register in Large Turnout," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, October 10, 1963.

¹⁹ "KKK Plans Rally Here May 22," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, May 13, 1965; "Mayor Scheper Denounces Klan Meeting," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, May 13, 1965.

²⁰ "Delegation Issues Warning to Klan," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, May 20, 1965.

By 1970, African Americans in elective office were no longer a novelty. For example, in a Democratic primary race for the state House of Representatives, African American nominee Hyland Davis obtained enough votes to force a run-off with a white man, James H. Moss. In the end Moss won, but it is significant that black political power had increased to make the race so close.²¹ In 1980 a largely white Hilton Head Island elected to the county commission a native islander, Morris Campbell. A black Democrat, Campbell won an at-large seat in a largely Republican area. Hilton Head's mostly white Precinct No. 2, at the south end of the island, gave twice as many votes to Campbell as to either of his white opponents, both of whom were incumbents.²² While African Americans enjoyed political success at Hilton Head, they tended to have more success in county-wide races.

The changes at Hilton Head--just one corner of Beaufort County--had a ripple effect on the county as a whole, and perhaps even further. As whites poured into the area, seeking their places in the sun, African Americans fought for the dual goals of economic prosperity and political power. Who won? At Hilton Head, it is easy to see. At the hotels, counter employees are white, while room cleaners are black. At restaurants, servers are white, while cooks and tablecleaners are black. Behind the "plantation" gates, golf pros are white, groundskeepers are black. Every day, chartered buses drive hours

²¹ "Harvey Nominated, Moss, Davis in Race, Morris Defeats Belser in Contest," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, June 11, 1970; "Run-Off Primary Set for Tuesday," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, July 18, 1970.

²² Debbie Breland, "Campbell Seeking At-Large Council Seat," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, February 19, 1980; "Campbell says Vigorous Campaigning Helped," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, November 6, 1980; Debbie Breland, "New Councilman Recalls Days of Farming, Segregation," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, November 20, 1980.

inland to pick up blacks and drive them to the island where they scrub toilets and perform other menial tasks.²³ It is clear who dominates the course of development at Hilton Head. However, Hilton Head specifically and Beaufort County as a whole both possessed strong, politically active black communities. So, to what extent were these communities able to compel whites to address the desires and needs of the black community? Were blacks able to force change or at least force amelioration of the effects of the whites' plans?

Two studies have offered an analytical framework for other subregions which may help explain black political behavior at Hilton Head in the face of these economic changes. One study of tourism, by John Gregory Peck and Alice Shear Lepie, offers clues as to how the benefits of the development of a resort economy at Hilton Head would be distributed, and Lawrence J. Hanks analyzes black political empowerment.

Peck and Lepie in "Tourism and Development in Three North Carolina Coastal Towns" argue that the people who enjoy the greatest benefit from tourism development and who bear fewer costs are those who have the most control over the changing economy. High levels of community political involvement lead to higher levels of benefit from tourism development through greater control. Moreover, the slower the rate of change, the more control residents can exercise over tourist development. These factors--rate of development, community involvement and control

²³ One discussion of the job conditions for blacks on Hilton Head can be found in Peter Applebome's article "Tourism Enriches an Island Resort, But Hilton Head Blacks Feel Left Out" *New York Times*, September 2, 1994, National Edition.

over change--together determine the amount of the benefit from tourism development as well as the distribution of costs.²⁴

In the case of Hilton Head, white developers and "plantation" residents dictated what kinds of development would take place at Hilton Head, and because of their numerical superiority they contributed most of the community involvement. In later years, through the drive for incorporation, white property owners also sought to control the rate of change. Consequently, they received most of the payoff and bore lower costs, shifting much of that burden to the blacks they so outnumbered. Moreover, as Peck and Lepie point out, "a strong power base tend(s) to direct the development toward compatibility with the local community and tend(s) to foster integration of newcomers into the established network." So, following the model set up by Fraser's Sea Pines Plantation, the island developed in ways that attracted more and more affluent whites, further entrenching the power base of the overwhelmingly white "plantation" residents.²⁵

Application of Hanks's research helps answer the question, how could the black residents of Hilton Head resist white domination of the island's destiny? In *The Struggle for Black Political Empowerment in Three Georgia Counties*, political scientist Lawrence J. Hanks offers a possible answer. Hanks studied Hancock, Peach, and Clay counties in Georgia, finding successful black political empowerment in Hancock County, and lower levels of success in Peach and Clay. He attributed the success of African Americans in Hancock

²⁴ John Gregory Peck and Alice Shear Lepie, "Tourism and Development in Three North Carolina Coastal Towns," in *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, ed. Valene L. Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 159, 172 and *passim*.

²⁵*ibid.*

County to a mild political climate which encouraged political activism, as well as black numerical superiority and racial solidarity which led to greater black political representation. Moreover, black leaders secured federal money and support which provided security against violence or economic manipulations; thus, African Americans saw immediate improvements in their daily lives resulting from their political activism, which in turn increased black political activism. Factors working against black political success in Peach and Clay counties included the inability to combat economic intimidation effectively, the inability to bridge class differences within the black community, and the lack of material resources which would have provided an economic incentive to political participation. In other words, Hanks suggests that political behavior depends on economic well-being and personal risk assessment.²⁶

Black Hilton Headers faced a particular set of advantages and disadvantages in their political struggle. On the one hand, they enjoyed a relatively mild political climate, relatively free of racial fear and antagonism, as opposition to the Klan rally illustrates. They enjoyed a well-respected, well-supported, and skilled leadership, flowing from the Penn Center. In some areas of the county, such as the north end of Hilton Head Island, African Americans enjoyed a numerical advantage. The black community was fairly united. So the risks associated with political empowerment were relatively low, and the gains potentially very high. They had most of the characteristics which Hanks would cite as good predictors of success.

²⁶ Lawrence J. Hanks, *The Struggle for Black Political Empowerment in Three Georgia Counties* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 152-3 and *passim*.

On the other hand, increasing numbers of white residents of Hilton Head quickly and inexorably diluted the power of the black population at Hilton Head, especially at the critical time of the early 1970s, so that no amount of bloc voting would help. In the end, that made all the difference.

Chapter Two

Land Acquisition and Use

With the increase of the white population at Hilton Head, black land ownership fell, both in absolute acreage and number of individuals, as well as in proportion to the island's white population. Scholars and activists attribute this decline to economic change, ignorance, traditional inheritance patterns and outright fraud. Beaufort County and Hilton Head are just small examples of a South-wide problem.

People who own their own land tend to be more independent and self-sufficient. They are more likely to register and vote, they are more likely to run for office, and they have more personal and public dignity. Black landowners have more political power than landless blacks, and they also seem to have a better image of themselves. In a capitalist system, ownership of one or more of the factors of production--land, labor, or capital--is necessary for political power. Declining black landowning deprives African Americans of a base of political power and restricts their political autonomy.²⁷

Several factors have contributed to the decline of black land ownership in the South. One important indirect factor has been the migration of African Americans out of the South. This pattern of outmigration began between the

²⁷ Leo McGee and Robert Boone, "Introduction," in *The Black Rural Landowner--Endangered Species: Social Political, and Economic Implications*, eds. Leo McGee and Robert Boone (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979), xvii-xviii; The Black Economic Research Center *Only Six Million Acres: The Decline of Black Owned Land in the Rural South* (New York: The Black Economic Research Center, 1973), 25; William E. Nelson, Jr., "Black Rural Land Decline and Political Power," in *The Black Rural Landowner*, 83-84.

two great wars and accelerated during the 1940s due to the push effects of mechanization of southern agriculture and the pull effects of high paying jobs in northern industry. Accordingly, southern black landowners' heirs moved away and when parents died, heirs either sold the land or forgot it. Either way, due to migration, over time more and more land began falling out of black control.²⁸

Migration of African Americans from the South has aggravated the problem of "heirs property." Many black landowners have failed to make wills specifying who should inherit their land. Thus, titles to black lands are often in the name of a long-deceased ancestor, with multiple living heirs, siblings and cousins each holding varying percentage shares in the entire plot. These shares can become so numerous as to make any division of the land impractical. Selling the land and giving each heir a portion of the proceeds consistent with the share held becomes the only way to clear the title under such conditions. According to the Black Economic Research Center, this situation invites fraud, in which a developer who has access to cash will buy out one heir's share, usually someone who has moved away and no longer cares about the land but does want the cash. Having bought an heir's share, the developer then sues to have the title cleared. This action forces an auction, at which he offers the highest bid. Thus many black families have been legally deprived of their land.²⁹

²⁸ Frank G. Pogue, "The Mobile Black Family: Sociological Implications," in *The Black Rural Landowner*, 27.

²⁹ Leo McGee and Robert Boone, "A Study of Rural Landownership, Control Problems, and Attitudes of Blacks Toward Rural Land," in *The Black Rural Landowner*, 64; *Only Six Million Acres*, 51-57.

Other problems leading to the decline of black landownership include the difficulty African Americans have had in obtaining mortgages, either because of racism or because of unclear titles. This precludes initial purchase as well as the construction of improvements which would make the land more profitable. Unable to increase the profitability of their land, but faced with rising land values, many African Americans in developing areas have found themselves increasingly pinched by limited incomes and rising property taxes. Frequently, this situation results in loss of land at tax auction.³⁰

In Beaufort County, South Carolina, the Penn Center has played an instrumental role in helping blacks retain their land. The Penn Center's project, Black Land Services (a joint venture with the Black Economic Research Center), has found that the greatest threat to black landownership is the problem of intestate property. In South Carolina, heirs' property cannot be improved and cannot be used to secure a mortgage. In a report, the Penn Center obliquely charged Hilton Head developers with exploiting this situation. "A great deal of the intestate property has become valuable due to the development of large nationally known, 'plush' resorts. Developers have begun the quieting title process which frees the land from the claims of the heirs."³¹

³⁰ McGee and Boone, "A Study of Rural Landownership, Control Problems, and Attitudes of Blacks Toward Rural Land," 64; *Only Six Million Acres*, 51-53.

³¹ "Quieting" a title to land is a legal manouever by which one owner of a share of jointly- or severally-owned land will sue to force a sale of the tract, the proceeds being divided between the owners according to the size of their share. Here, the Penn Center was complaining about developers who sued to quiet land titles in order to force sale of the entire tract at auction at which they would be the highest bidder. "Report on the Black Land Services

One means of educating people on the means by which land was taken and how it could be saved was a booklet produced by the Penn Center. Intended for legal professionals such as paralegals and lawyers, the booklet outlined the ways in which black landownership was threatened and explained South Carolina law on each point, citing strategies to save the land. It also contained a stinging indictment of Hilton Head developers:

Hilton Head, which developers bill as the "Western Hemisphere's Riviera," was at one time owned by Blacks. The white, sandy beaches make the island "ideal" as a recreation and resort location. Speculators moved in and started land grabbing operations. Just recently, speculators offered the Black heirs to a particularly attractive portion of realty \$1200 per acre for title to the property. Some of the vendors sold at the offered price. With the aid and assistance of personnel from Project Black Land, other property owners in the vicinity are receiving offers upward of \$30,000 per acre. The speculators who have purchased the land in the area have been able to sell the land at up to **\$100 per square inch.**³²

In later years, African Americans on Hilton Head would call themselves an "endangered species" which was being driven out by economic development of the island as a rich man's paradise. Where once African Americans owned their own homes and operated their own small farms and lived independently, new style "plantations" sprang up.

Project" (Appendix K) in *Only Six Million Acres*, K1-K3. Another organization, the Emergency Land Fund (ELF) helps out by keeping a revolving fund to bid up prices at tax auctions, so that even if ELF is unable to save the land, it is able to ensure that the owners get fair market value for it; see Charl H. Marbury, "The Decline in Black-Owned Rural Land: Challenge to the Historically Black Institutions of Higher Education," in *The Black Rural Landowner*, 102.

³² Harold R. Washington with P. Andrew Patterson and Charles W. Brown, *Black Land Manual: "Got Land Problems?"*, (Frogmore, South Carolina: Penn Community Services, 1973), 5.

Over time, the decline of black landownership would make itself felt in other ways. Hotels organized buses to pick up African Americans who had been driven off the island to the mainland and carry these workers on one- and two-hour one-way commutes to scrub toilets for the tourists. Young people attracted to the relatively high-paying menial work in the resort industry on the island tended to drop out of school early. The decline in black landowning signifies loss of independence, as small, autonomous enterprises such as farms and fishing operations disappeared, leaving behind a dependent black underclass at Hilton Head.³³

What happened? After the Civil War, African Americans either bought or assumed ownership of subdivided, abandoned and confiscated plantations. On these lands, subsistence farming and fishing provided the residents of Hilton Head with a simple but sustainable livelihood. It also kept land values low. When in the 1950s developers began to buy land on the island with an eye towards residential and tourist development, land values began to rise. Initial development of the island took the form of lumbering operations which briefly served as a source of income for residents of the island. After the bridge's construction in 1956, land values increased dramatically. This increase in the value of land led to a rise in land speculation, and these factors, along with the problem of heirs' property, contributed to the decline of black landownership at Hilton Head.³⁴

³³ "We are an Endangered Species," *Southern Exposure*, May/June 1982, 37-39; "Sea Island Plantations Revisited," *Southern Exposure*, May/June 1982, 33-34; "No Place in the Sun for the Hired Help," *Southern Exposure*, May/June 1982, 35-36; Peter Applebome, "Tourism Enriches an Island Resort, But Hilton Head Blacks Feel Left Out," *New York Times*, September 2, 1994, National Edition.

³⁴ "No Place in the Sun for the Hired Help," 35-36.

In 1972, a group of South Carolina state housing office officials, NAACP leaders, and state and federal bureaucrats visited Hilton Head, observing the disparity of housing conditions there. Observing that the practice of holding title to land as heirs' property was one of the problems keeping African Americans in poverty there, they promised federal funds to assist African Americans in developing their land, noting that without a clear title, African Americans at Hilton Head could not secure mortgage money for development.³⁵

Heirs' property further complicated matters by making it difficult for African Americans at Hilton Head to claim monies legally owed them. For example, when the county widened Highway 278 in 1978, it condemned by eminent domain many black families' land. Although the Beaufort County Council intended to pay fair market value for the land, much of the land was owned as heirs property, so the council was not sure whom to pay, or how much.³⁶

In addition to the problems created for the black community by the loss of their land is the problem of how land remaining in black hands can be used. This problem is in part symptomatic of the differing goals the two races at Hilton Head had for the land. Newcomers valued the island for its environmental qualities and as a residence or vacation destination. On the other hand, native islanders saw the island as their ancestral home and a location for their livelihood--be it fishing, farming, or some other occupation. As newcomers grew to dominate island politics and control the island's

³⁵ "NAACP Meeting," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, October 19, 1972.

³⁶ Fran Smith, "Heirs' Property: Problems," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, July 13, 1978.

destiny, native islanders found a threat to their freedom to use their land as they chose threatened.

For example, a 1972 effort by Beaufort County to zone a corridor along highways 278 and 46 as Forest-Agricultural drew fire from island blacks who resented being cut out of the growing economic opportunities of the island's development. These two roads form the spine of the island's road system and are among the most heavily traveled on the island. They also contained excellent locations for business, and at that time included much of the land owned by African Americans.³⁷

Such zoning orders compounded black Hilton Headers' land problems. In order to retain their land, they needed to develop it profitably. Hilton Head's developing tourist industry offered many lucrative opportunities, but the zone proposal fenced many away from a chance at economic self-improvement. At a community meeting called to deal with the issue, George Peyton, a Charleston attorney representing the island NAACP, pointed to a fifteen-acre tract near Singleton Beach on which owners hoped to build a mini-mall. However, as part of the highway 278 corridor it was zoned agricultural and therefore the owners were prevented from developing.³⁸

Efforts to preserve the island's esthetic appeal often formed the basis for complaints that developers were forcing restrictions on how the island's native residents could use their own land. In 1978, faced with new businessmen who refused to abide by earlier "gentlemen's agreements" on the island's appearance, the Beaufort County Joint Planning Commission

³⁷ Jack Bowle, "Blacks Take Zoning Complaints to Council," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, May 11, 1972.

³⁸ "NAACP Meeting," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, October 19, 1972.

proposed a set of stringent land use guidelines. These guidelines specifically excluded the "plantations," because they had land-use restrictions of their own in deed covenants. Thus, the new restrictions targeted non-plantation land where most of the island's native black population lived. They protested that these provisions unfairly restricted their ability to make money out of their land. "We do not intend to stand idly by while poor people are indirectly robbed of their land," the island's NAACP leadership warned.³⁹

Responding to such charges, chairman of the Beaufort County Joint Planning Commission Peter Hyzer pointed out that the proposed codes would not prevent, for example, the location of a junkyard along US 278; the codes would merely insist that a fence hiding the junkyard be built. The island's black residents considered this to be a slippery-slope provision adding increasing financial burdens on black entrepreneurship until African Americans were driven out.⁴⁰

By the early 1980s, developers and "plantation" residents began development of a long-range land use plan, with an eye to predicting what sorts of sewer, water, garbage and road needs could be expected. Long-range planning seemed the most efficient means of providing for the island's infrastructure. However, this kind of planning was met with skepticism by the island's native population, who considered it just another effort by whites to control blacks' land. According to Chris Porter, a reporter for the *Hilton Head Island Packet*, "the truth as far as many black property owners are

³⁹ Terry Plumb, "JPC Hearing Draws Variety of Comments," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, July 23, 1978.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

concerned is that development is going on all around them, and it's serving only to raise their own property taxes to a point where they either have to sell or develop."⁴¹

For most African American families, however, development was not a real option. For example, in the wake of the island's successful incorporation bid, the Penn Center newsletter opined "(D)ecisions regarding development standards will have a major impact on Black landowners since, in most cases, Blacks lack capital for high quality development as advocated by the incorporation forces." Moreover, many island residents were concerned that giving the Beaufort County Joint Planning Commission any information about their plans for their land would hamstring them later if their decision changed.⁴²

Black Hilton Headers did not oppose control of development on the island, nor did they oppose the aesthetic goals articulated by developers like Charles Fraser. They merely wanted to preserve their own self-determination. Therefore, black activist, Beaufort County Councilman and Hilton Head Island resident Morris Campbell's February 1982 proposal of a moratorium on construction at Hilton Head was not contradictory. He noted that the council was reviewing forty-seven new projects, of which thirty-six were at Hilton Head. The moratorium on building permits for ninety days would permit the council to "catch up" and control development at Hilton Head along appropriate lines. Campbell's leadership role in the island

⁴¹ Chris Porter, "Land Use Plan Met with Skepticism by Blacks," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, September 29, 1981.

⁴² *ibid*; "The issue of Hilton Head's Incorporation," *Penn News (Frogmore, SC)*, November 30, 1983.

NAACP obviously placed him in touch with the currents of activist thought in the area, so his position on development is noteworthy. Although the measure failed, it shows that black Hilton Headers did not necessarily oppose the principle of controlled development.⁴³

Campbell kept up his fight for a moratorium on multi-family dwellings, which islanders derisively called "stack-a-shacks." Later, after reducing his measure from ninety days to sixty, he gained the support of the Joint Planning Commission chairman, but in a second try the measure failed again in a vote of four to two. Eventually Campbell's proposal, in spirit at least, won out when the Joint Planning Commission voted not to consider for forty-five days any developments proposing to construct with a density of more than eight units per acre.⁴⁴

Another complaint by African Americans about the use of land at Hilton Head centered on the gated "plantations" which formed the luxurious residential communities on the island. Before development began, the island's native residents could go anywhere on the island they wanted. After development, access was restricted to residents or people with residents' permission, such as workers or guests. In the case of Sea Pines Plantation, non-residents could gain admittance by paying a \$3 fee.⁴⁵

⁴³ Chris Porter, "Moratorium Move Dies," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, February 25, 1982.

⁴⁴ "JPC Chairman Backs Moratorium," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, March 23, 1982; Chris Porter, "Moratorium Bid Fails Second Time," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, March 25, 1982; Chris Porter, "JPC Holds off High Density Construction," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, April 1, 1982.

⁴⁵ Julia Cass, "Newcomers and Natives Square off on Hilton Head," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 3, 1983.

In part, African Americans were offended by the very existence of gates intended to keep them out except when admitted by permission, as in antebellum times when slaves were admitted at the back door to clean the Big House. "I find it **very** offensive that more than half the island I grew up on is behind gates," one islander complained. But newcomers did not seem to understand the concerns of the African Americans who had lived on Hilton Head all their lives. "There are lots of private areas all over the country.... If they want to fence off their property, nobody is stopping them," said one Sea Pines resident.⁴⁶

Some saw aspects of development as blatantly racist attempts by whites to recreate Jim Crow in a post-*Brown* South. Emory Campbell (Morris Campbell's brother) recalled welcoming the bridge in 1956, thinking it would make travelling to Savannah to shop easier. But development followed the bridge, and development brought problems native islanders had never before faced. In 1960, Campbell and some friends were on their way home from work as caddies when a white deputy pulled them over, inquiring, "What are you boys doing up here anyway?" Twenty-eight years later, Campbell explained, "That was the first time that I knew there were places on Hilton Head or places anywhere in this world that I couldn't go because I was black."⁴⁷

More infuriating, African Americans found themselves shut away from family cemeteries when the "plantations" developed around these sites,

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ E. Fred Grimm, "Culture vs. Condos," *Miami (FL) Herald*, June 27, 1988.

and they resented paying the fee to visit their ancestors, who, after all, had been there first. Charles Fraser refuted these charges:

They complain about the gates. My guess is, if those gates had not been installed the amount of jobs on Hilton Head today would be 10 percent of what it is and their land would be worth about \$1,500 an acre instead of \$50,000. . . .

Did they they tell you about the cemetery? It's their favorite gambit with the media. "Oh, they won't let me visit old granddaddy's burial place." That's absolute hogwash! The road to it was impassable when we bought the property and there have been more burials since we took over than in the previous 50 years. From Day One, there have been orders if anyone wants to visit or bury someone, let 'em through.⁴⁸

Black Hilton Headers and white Hilton Headers just could not see eye to eye. What looked like positives to whites, such as rising land values, were negatives to blacks because each group had different goals and different values. Those gates, which Charles Fraser said contributed to rising land values on the island, symbolized what Emory Campbell was talking about when he said that it was in 1960 that he first experienced racial segregation.

In the struggle for black political empowerment at Hilton Head, land ownership and use comprised an important issue. As Hilton Head's development progressed, fraud, rising taxes, land-use restrictions and the inaccessibility of development loans threatened black land ownership. As land ownership and control implies political power, any threat to these led at Hilton Head to increasing political activism.

African Americans, however, were not just concerned with ownership of their own land as a reservoir of political power; as the island's longest residents, they deeply resented newcomers dictating land use laws to them.

⁴⁸ Cass, "Newcomers and Natives Square off on Hilton Head."

Similarly, they hated the gated "plantations" which denied the island's native residents free access to areas previously available. These gates served as uncomfortable reminders of lingering stratification in a post-Brown South.

Finally, because whites and blacks at Hilton Head had differing values and goals for the land itself, the dispute over land at Hilton Head became a divisive force socially, creating misunderstanding and resentment between the communities. Because of their greater numbers, newcomers' goals for the island overcame natives' objections, ultimately contributing to the decline of black political power at Hilton Head. However, because African Americans did fight, they were able to maintain some voice in the decisions about changes that took place on the island, and were able to prevent their total political disappearance.

Chapter Three

The BASF Controversy

Blacks and whites at Hilton Head have not always disagreed over the island's development. For example, in the controversy over the location of a Badische Anilin Soda Fabrik (BASF) plant in Beaufort County, whites and blacks at Hilton Head banded together, despite differing motives.

Beaufort County, like many southern counties and municipalities, had been striving to attract industry to the area since the 1930s. County boosters offered cheap land, low-wage non-union labor, favorable tax conditions, and often ignored pollution. In return, the county would get more jobs and economic growth, albeit at a high price.⁴⁹

On June 14, 1969, the Beaufort County Planning Board met to discuss the possible location of the West German company BASF at Victoria Bluff in Beaufort County. Many Hilton Headers did not think they would benefit from industrial development as would the rest of Beaufort County. Hilton Head possessed a thriving economic base of growing retirement communities and resorts, as well as a profitable fishing industry, and therefore did not believe they needed the plant. Moreover, pollution from the plant would flow down the Colleton River into the waters around Hilton Head, spoiling its natural beauty.

Black Hilton Headers relied heavily on fishing and oystering for their livelihoods, as well as their jobs in the plantations and resorts, and so had

⁴⁹ James C. Cobb, *The Selling of the South: The Southern Crusade for Industrial Development, 1936-1990* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1993.)

their own reasons to oppose the plant. "I've got a seventh grade education and can make \$300 to \$400 a week fishing. I don't think the plant will pay me that much" said Hilton Head fisherman David Jones, a black man. Another black Hilton Header, Henry Driessen, owned a service station and thought the plant would benefit his business. However, Driessen took a long view; "in the long run [the plant] would destroy jobs for black citizens."⁵⁰

In contrast to Hilton Headers, Beaufort Countians living upstream of the plant's proposed site favored it and resented opposition by Hilton Headers. "It will provide jobs and that's what is needed" said Melvin Jefferson, a black man who worked at the courthouse in Beaufort.⁵¹

Earlier efforts to locate industrial facilities in Beaufort County had failed due to fears of pollution. Two, a wool scouring company from Philadelphia (in 1963) and the Berkshire Chemical Corporation (in 1967), quickly fell to anti-pollution forces. In both cases, Beaufort County was one among several potential sites, and the companies had not yet bought land. Another factor setting these two cases apart from the BASF controversy is that they both would have located upstream from the city of Beaufort, thus affecting a larger portion of the county's residents.⁵²

Additionally, the growth of the population and the economy of Hilton Head during the 1960s sets the BASF controversy apart from other proposed plants in the Beaufort area. Hilton Headers were more numerous and had

⁵⁰ Hank Drane, "The Fight for Hilton Head Island," *American Forests*, May 1970, 60-61.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² "County Loses Wool Company: Effluent may be Harmful to Seafood," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, May 30, 1963; "Pollution Fight Gains Momentum," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, March 9, 1967.

more to lose from the BASF plant than in earlier cases. Moreover, earlier plants proposed to locate further north of the city of Beaufort, while BASF proposed to locate at Victoria Bluff, which is downstream from Beaufort but just upstream from Hilton Head. So in the past, unlike this time, Beaufort stood to take more of a direct hit from any pollution generated by the plant. Beyond that, the stakes were higher with BASF. It was a bigger plant, more expensive, potentially much more profitable to the county, and the plans were firmer. Other firms had merely explored the possibility of locating in Beaufort County and backed out at the first sign of opposition. By the time of the announcement, however, BASF had already committed to the County by buying the land. Therefore, BASF had more to lose than previous plants had, and decided to stand and fight.

"It's Official!" the *Beaufort Gazette* exclaimed joyfully on October 2, 1969. "Plans Announced: \$100 Million Plant to be Built Here." Articles exploring every aspect of the wonderful news peppered the front page. Using figures from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the county anticipated, at minimum, 1000 more jobs, 3590 more people, \$70 million and more in increased personal income, thirty more retail establishments, \$3,310,000 more in retail sales, \$2,290,000 in new bank deposits and 650 more non-manufacturing jobs. The *Gazette* exuberantly pointed out repeatedly that these benefits were just the beginning.⁵³

Did it all seem too good to be true? The stakes were even higher for the less well-to-do citizens of Beaufort County. Senator Ernest F. Hollings

⁵³ "Employees [sic] Impact is Significant for Local Area," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, October 2, 1969; "It's Official! Plans Announced: \$100 Million Plant to be Built Here," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, October 2, 1969; "Local House Members Give Quick Response on Plant," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, October 2, 1969.

had recently visited the area and found appalling poverty. Many poor people suffered from parasitic infections caused by drinking water contaminated with human feces. Third World conditions abutted some of the most lavish lifestyles to be found in one of the most advanced nations on the planet, an appalling disgrace which many believed could be eliminated through industrialization. BASF could be a godsend in the campaign to eradicate disease and despair. For these reasons, Penn Center head John W. Gadsen threw the weight of his support behind the project.⁵⁴ As he explained it

BASF isn't going to mean that much to my people around here, I know that. It's the industry they'll bring in after them which will transform the whole economy of this area. These waters are going to be polluted, no doubt about that. And the people against it are saying now, if BASF doesn't come in, they'll open up other jobs without pollution. Well, one of our girls we sent out the other day on a waitress job was offered twenty-two cents and hour plus tips--if that's the kind of thing they're talking about, forget it.⁵⁵

A week later, a delegation from South Carolina, including State Senator James M. Waddell, Governor Robert McNair, and representatives of the Beaufort County Development Board returned from Ludwigshafen, West Germany, having inspected BASF's facilities there. They pronounced the pollution control program of BASF in West Germany to be "more than adequate. . . . The BASF Corporation is very conscious of pollution control, both air and water."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ "Environment: Fight at Hilton Head," *Newsweek*, April 13, 1970, 71-73.

⁵⁵ Marshall Frady, "A Question of Plastics in Beaufort County," in *Southerners: A Journalist's Odyssey* (New York: Meridian, 1980), 293-294.

⁵⁶ "Group Inspects BASF Facilities," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, October 9, 1969.

BASF president Hans Lautenschlager helpfully organized a meeting at Hilton Head to try to allay concerns of the citizens there, but his assurances failed to hit their mark. Victoria Bluff, where the plant was to be located, was downstream of Beaufort, but just upstream of the little community of Bluffton, which was at the foot of the bridge connecting Hilton Head with the mainland. Bluffton, like Hilton Head, stood right in the path of any pollution emanating from the plant at Victoria Bluff. As a scientific study of the problem later confirmed, people living above the plant were more willing to sacrifice the environment for BASF jobs, and those living below it were less so inclined.⁵⁷ "Establishment of the proposed BASF plant at Victoria Bluff would destroy half of a potential \$1.5 billion tourism and development economy on Hilton Head Island," the Hilton Head Community Association feared. Island resident Emerson Mulford claimed that for every one job created by BASF, 2.5 would be lost at Hilton Head. He also claimed that the aggregate payroll at Hilton Head was greater than BASF would pay.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ The Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology and the Water Resources Research Institute, Clemson University, *Economic Evaluation of the Development of Industrial Facilities in the Port Victoria--Hilton Head Area of Beaufort County, South Carolina* (preliminary draft), (Clemson, South Carolina: January 1971), 95. [Hereafter, BASF report.]

⁵⁸ "BASF Officials Discuss Plans with Local Group," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, November 27, 1969; "Island Economy Fears Expressed: Plant Cited As Reason," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, December 4, 1969. These conclusions--discussed in more detail below--were contested by the findings of an independent panel at Clemson University, which issued a preliminary report in January 1971 arguing that while environmental damage could only be calculated in the most gross fashion, number of jobs and potential wages could be predicted fairly accurately. They concluded the BASF plant would provide more jobs at higher wages than the tourist industry at Hilton Head could; see also BASF report.

The controversy began dividing Beaufort County between those who believed BASF would not present an environmental threat and would cause an economic boost and those who feared that BASF would pollute and in doing so ruin the thriving--and potentially explosive--economic growth at Hilton Head. The *Beaufort Gazette* tried to pour oil on these troubled waters in a editorial published December 11, arguing that South Carolina's anti-pollution laws should be strengthened. Under stricter legislation, the lowcountry would have the opportunity to experience the kind of economic prosperity that the textile industry had brought to South Carolina's upstate.⁵⁹

Beaufort Countians who favored the plant found themselves increasingly pressed as the fight over BASF continued. Sincerely desiring the county's improved economy for the enrichment of both haves and have-nots in the area, they had suffered several "near misses" in the past quest for industrial salvation, and these had often been over pollution concerns. Additionally, by the late sixties, many Beaufort Countians began to worry that cutbacks in military spending would reduce the forces at Parris Island, upon which the county still depended heavily for economic survival. Thus they were even more desperate to hang onto the BASF proposal, especially since this company, unlike past ones, was publicly committed to satisfying environmental concerns.⁶⁰

The strong opposition of Hilton Headers to the BASF plant began to cause doubts in the minds of Beaufort Countians that the plant would ever be built. They wondered what they would do in the absence of such an industry

⁵⁹ "An Editorial," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, December 11, 1969.

⁶⁰ Arthur Simon, "Conservation Collides with the Jobless: Battle of Beaufort," *New Republic*, May 23, 1970, page-page.

to improve the county's economy. Hilton Head developers Charles Fraser and Fred Hack suggested an alternative: a tourist center could be built at the Port Victoria site and would be bought and financed by their companies. The center Fraser and Hack proposed would be modeled after Six Flags over Georgia and would be worth \$50 million. Fraser hypothesized that such a tourist center would create considerable job opportunities and ancillary businesses, as well as attract as many as 5000 visitors to the area. The kind of industry Fraser and Hack proposed developing in Beaufort County was exactly the sort of thing which would directly benefit their preexisting investments by complementing what they'd already begun, as opposed to a competing industry or a neutral industry (something which would have no effect on tourism at Hilton Head as it stood then.)⁶¹

Meanwhile, BASF's lawyers were fighting off a lawsuit filed by three fishing companies, the Hilton Head Fishing Cooperative, the Blue Channel Corporation, and the Ocean, Lake and River Fish Company. These companies claimed that the pollution from the BASF company would so damage the fishing industry in the waters off Beaufort County that there could be no possible legal remedy and therefore demanded an injunction against the plant. BASF responded, claiming that it was not presently operating in South Carolina, and, moreover, there should not be an injunction against them as they would not be violating any laws once they did begin operations.⁶²

⁶¹ "If BASF Pulls Out: Area Developers Announce Plans for Tourist Center," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, April 2, 1970.

⁶² "BASF Officials Answer Pollution Charges," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, March 12, 1970.

The Hilton Head Company, the Island Development Corporation, and the Port Royal Plantation Corporation quickly added their own lawsuits to that of the fishing companies. As with the case of the fishing companies, this second group of lawsuits called for an injunction against BASF, alleging that the island companies would suffer irreparable harm if the chemical company were allowed to locate in Beaufort County.⁶³

These lawsuits asked for the same remedy, based on the same fears that the plant's pollution would damage their businesses. The island's developers were overwhelmingly white, and two of the three fishing companies were white-owned. However, the members of the Hilton Head Fishing Cooperative were black.

The fishing industry had offered employment opportunities for African Americans in the area for decades. The seafood packing industry also provided steady, albeit low-paying, jobs for African Americans.

Most black shrimpers had worked on boats owned by whites until the 1950s. Those African Americans who did have their own boats were not much better off than those who did not, because white fishermen denied black fishermen the use of white-owned docks for boat and net repairs and maintenance, and often white-owned support businesses discriminated against African Americans by charging higher prices for fuel or by paying lower prices for shrimp.⁶⁴

But black fishermen wanted something better for themselves. For many black shrimpers at Hilton Head, Freddie Chisholm had a way out. In

⁶³ "Island Group Files Suit Against BASF," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, March 19, 1970.

⁶⁴ Vernie Singleton, "A Venture into Shrimp," *Southern Exposure*, November/December 1983, 48-49.

1954, he proposed that black shrimpers go in together and form a shrimping cooperative, so that they could be their own bosses and earn more money. To emphasize his point, he built his own 31-foot trawler. With many white fishermen buying bigger boats and heading for deeper waters in the Gulf of Mexico, South Carolina's fishing industry was endangered. The Cooperative put together a \$66,290 Farmers Home Administration loan and, armed with a feasibility study from the office of Economic Opportunity, got to work. "Been fishing for years, but always for somebody else. What I get now is mine, and I'm making more money than I ever made," exulted James Murray, owner of the trawler *Captain Dave*.⁶⁵

Black Hilton Headers had banded together and worked at obtaining a measure of economic prosperity for themselves, and at the generosity of no one. By 1969, they owned acres of marsh, many boats, a packing shed and a grading shed, a retail store, their own office headquarters, and a cold storage room. They employed numerous other African Americans on the island and were making plans to obtain an ice machine and a power boat.⁶⁶

In an effort to attract national attention to the threat the plant posed to their livelihoods, the black fishing cooperative organized a dramatic protest. They had sailed their fleet leader, the *Captain Dave*, up the Atlantic coastline dispensing shrimp and carrying a petition of 35,000 signatures to the Secretary of the Interior, pleading for federal protection from pollution. The *Captain Dave* then sailed up the Potomac to the Washington pier where it was met by

⁶⁵ "Shrimp Co-Op Makes Blacks Their Own Bosses: South Carolinians now Control Fishing Fleet," *Ebony*, November, 1969, 106-08; Vernie Singleton, "A Venture Into Shrimp," *Southern Exposure*, November/December 1983, 48-49.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel as well as a sizeable delegation of the Washington press corps. The shrimpers' protest resulted in federal involvement in the controversy, as Sen. Strom Thurmond requisitioned facts and figures for his perusal and Hickel called for a moratorium on the plant until the pollution issues were worked out.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, South Carolina's governor Robert E. McNair thundered at the Interior Department that the controversy was none of their business. He worried that the entire mess would ruin South Carolina's chances at attracting other industries; fears that the controversy would damage South Carolina's ability to attract industry were already beginning to materialize. Acting director of the State Development Board Alfred DeCicco confirmed McNair's fears: industries proposing to locate in South Carolina were already refusing to consider Beaufort County because of the impact of the BASF controversy.⁶⁸

By July of 1970, BASF indefinitely postponed its plans to build at Victoria Bluff. McNair returned from a visit to West Germany explaining that Port Victoria had lost its place on the company's priority list and would have to work its way back up again, and also that BASF was undergoing an internal reorganization which would lengthen the process. He explained that the company had not abandoned its plans to build in Beaufort County but that the company's goals for the site were changing.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ "Shrimp Boats Are A-Comin,'" *American Forests*, May 1970, 26.

⁶⁸ "Officials Waiting for Requirements," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, April 9, 1970; "BASF Reconfirms Plans to Build Here: Officials Deny Rumor," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, April 16, 1970.

⁶⁹ "McNair: BASF Plans for Plant Delayed," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, July 9, 1970.

By January 1971, a Clemson University committee released a preliminary draft of a report commissioned by McNair on the economic choices for Beaufort County. This report, by a team composed of members of the departments of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology as well as the Water Resources Research Institute, concluded that an industrial facility such as BASF would raise per-capita income seven percent and create many high-paying jobs which would initially employ non-Beaufort residents and over time would employ increasing numbers of natives. Moreover, they expected the plant to create satellite businesses which they felt certain would immediately offer job opportunities to natives.⁷⁰

In the absence of BASF, the committee believed the resort industry would have to double in size in order to compensate for the loss of the plant. They did not see this as an impossible scenario. However, these jobs would be low-paying seasonal work. On the other hand, these would be jobs for which locals would immediately qualify.⁷¹

They found the greatest economic impact difference between the two plans was in tax revenue. During the initial period in which the plant would enjoy state and local tax breaks, the plant would produce \$675,000 more in yearly revenue than an expanded tourist economy could. Of this amount, \$525,000 would go to Beaufort County. After the tax break years, the plant would out-earn tourism by \$950,000 annually.⁷²

⁷⁰ BASF report, 94.

⁷¹ BASF report, 94, 95.

⁷² BASF report, 95.

In early 1971 BASF announced plans to pull out of Beaufort County completely. Just as the Clemson committee's conclusions on the profitability of the plant were being reached, Governor McNair was blaming "anti-pollution frenzy and individual selfishness" for BASF's decision to abandon the project completely, thus robbing the state of the "fattest industrial prize" ever. BASF proposed selling the land back on a no profit, no loss basis.⁷³

During the fight over the proposed plant, the Hilton Head Company had commissioned a study by the Washington D.C. firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill to examine possibilities for industrial development which would complement or not affect the environment of the area while providing jobs. Released in June 1972, the report concluded that full development of the island (exclusive of mainland Beaufort County) could mean the creation of 10,000 to 20,000 new jobs through a combination of tourism, agriculture (including seafood industries such as crab farming) and light industry, as well as some heavy industry. Zoning laws would confine heavy industry inland along I-95, and light industry between I-95 and the coast, leaving the coast unindustrialized. Still, employment increases in this study were expected to be mostly in the services sector: such jobs made up sixty percent of all jobs at the time of the study (which was released in June 1972) and that number was expected to go higher. So the conclusions of the Hilton Head report coincided with the findings of the Clemson committee, with this difference: by 1972, having successfully defeated BASF, Hilton Headers were in a position to get

⁷³ "BASF Will Not Locate in County; Returns the Site," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, January 21, 1971.

their way. The question was no longer what was best for Beaufort County, but what was best for Hilton Head.⁷⁴

Later industrial proposals failed as well, due to opposition posed by Hilton Headers. In 1973 the Chicago Bridge and Iron Company proposed to build liquefied gas containers at Victoria Bluff. As was the case three years before, extremes of poverty and wealth clashed in Beaufort County. Proposed industrialization would benefit the poor, but the comparatively affluent worried about their lifestyles. And, as the Palm Beach (Florida) *Post-Times* pointed out, many of Hilton Head's retirees were former executives who were experienced in similar environment vs. industry fights--from the other side. Hilton Head's power in such fights was increasing.⁷⁵

Saving a \$26 million a year resort business and forestry, agriculture and fishing at \$18 million annually at the expense of Chicago Bridge and Iron's potential \$6 million payroll seemed to make sense to many Hilton Headers, although as Hilton Head NAACP executive secretary Perry White observed "...[W]e're for a change in the economic situation here that will give our young people an opportunity to be something besides waiters."⁷⁶

Victoria Bluff remains unindustrialized. The tourism/leisure lifestyle lingers at Hilton Head and now spills onto the mainland and creeps up

⁷⁴ "Alternative to BASF: Natural Development," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, September 10, 1970, 7; Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, Inc., *Master Plan for Hilton Head Island*, (Washington, D.C.: Hilton Head Company, June 1972), 1-2, 21. Compare to BASF report results, 93-95.

⁷⁵ "Hilton Head: A Contest of Cultures," *Palm Beach (FL) Post-Times*, December 30, 1973.

⁷⁶ Gladwin Hill, "Ecology Dispute Over S.C. Plant Nears End," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, March 4, 1975.

Highway 278, with golf clubs, shopping malls, and residential "plantations." Casualties of the BASF fight included the Hilton Head Health Project (a campaign to eradicate intestinal parasites) which folded due to lack of funds. Apparently, prospective donors supported the BASF fight, diverting donations previously earmarked for the poor to preservation of "the good life."⁷⁷

So what does all this mean? The BASF controversy is a microcosm of interlocked issues which have plagued Southerners for a long time. One is the desire to industrialize, thus diversifying an economy poor from over-reliance on agriculture or dependent on the whims of federal policy, as exemplified by the efforts of Beaufort Countians who tried to attract industry to the area. Another is the genuine desire of many to help the poor, usually African Americans. A third is the civil rights movement, in which African Americans take direct political action to secure or protect a reasonable opportunity toward self-sufficiency, as illustrated by the Fishing Cooperative. We also see the willingness of influential whites (such as those at Hilton Head) to sacrifice black welfare to their own well-being, trading high-paying year-round industrial jobs, such as those BASF offered, for low paying seasonal menial work.

Hilton Head Island was the part of Beaufort County where the economy was growing most rapidly and successfully; therefore, in the contest against the rest of the county, Hilton Head held the advantage. Hilton Headers were more organized and active in their opposition to the plant than the plant's proponents were, so they won by winning the publicity battle. In a rapidly growing community, residents of Hilton Head, both white and black,

⁷⁷ "Conservation Collides with the Jobless," 14.

became extremely involved in the controversy over BASF. White residents were committed to the agenda of controlling industrial development so that it would not interfere with their own plans for development of the island, and many had skills and abilities which made it possible for them to do so, such as the former petrochemical company executive who helped lead the fight against BASF, or the shrimpers who led the demonstration to Washington D.C. Therefore, the residents of Hilton Head enjoyed the greatest portion of the payoff when BASF pulled out and gained the most positive aspects of the tradeoffs. Concomitantly, those who lived upstream from Victoria Bluff lost the most: Beaufortonians, white and black, who would have enjoyed the high wages and job training they could have obtained at the plant.

The BASF controversy also damaged black political empowerment in the county, by dividing the black community. African Americans, except those at Hilton Head and those who depended on fishing, stood to gain much from the BASF plant: relatively high-paying year round jobs rather than the low paying seasonal jobs offered in the tourist industry at Hilton Head. African Americans in Beaufort County lived in a relatively mild racial climate, they were a significant portion of the population, they had strong leaders and resources independent of local white control (federal protection of jobs at military bases, work in their own jobs like the shrimp co-op,) and they were able to see a very clear material benefit to unity in the effort to secure a better economy in Beaufort County. But BASF's defeat led to the entrenchment of African Americans in low paying seasonal jobs, as defeat for BASF equalled reinforcement of the tourist industry at Hilton Head.

Chapter Four

Growing Pains

The dramatic growth the island experienced in the 1970s caused problems which raised the issue of island self-government. Increasing population put greater and greater strain on the island's water supply, roadways, police and fire protection. High-density construction led to increasing visual blight. Waste clogged both sewage plants and landfills. Poor drainage led to flooding problems, which were further complicated by the lack of an evacuation plan. These concerns forced a struggle between natives and newcomers over control of the island's destiny. In 1973 black islanders actually proposed incorporation, but in 1983 they actively opposed it. Similarly, in 1973 whites opposed incorporation but favored it ten years later. Both times, whites got their way.⁷⁸

The story of Hilton Head's rocky road to incorporation is a means of viewing how African Americans struggled for political power despite increasing dilution of their numbers, and in an environment of increasing economic development that consigned them to a marginal role. Hilton Head's black residents did everything they could to gain political power and

⁷⁸ For a discussion of the problems wrought by increasing development, see R. Michael Easterwood, *Incorporation as an Option for Hilton Head Island, South Carolina: A Preliminary Analysis* (Columbia, South Carolina: Bureau of Governmental Research and Service, 1982), 4, 8-9.

participate in the island's political processes, but in the end they were just outvoted.⁷⁹

As demonstrated in Chapter One, the 1970s was a period of tremendous growth at Hilton Head. The population soared dramatically, as did construction and tourism. During the 1970s Hilton Head acquired the image it has today, of a sun-soaked leisured isle of beautiful people and relaxed living. The Heritage Golf Classic arrived at Hilton Head in 1969, and the first Family Circle Tennis Cup tournament was held in 1973. By 1975, the island grew large enough to support its own hospital, and by the late 1970s its first public housing project was built.

By 1973, the island's explosive growth and developing tourist trade already showed signs of uncontrolled expansion. This proved worrisome to the residents of the plantations, who were concerned about preserving the island's esthetics as well as controlling growth, but also wanted to preserve both profits from the tourists and high property values. Sentiment grew in favor of some sort of self-government to control the area's growth and provide for infrastructure improvements. Therefore, in 1973 the Hilton Head Community Association hired Clemson political scientist Horace Fleming Jr. to advise them on their options.⁸⁰

Fleming's report, released in 1974, outlined three possible ways Hilton Head residents could gain some self-determination and therefore gain some control over the island economy. Hilton Head could secede from Beaufort

⁷⁹ Such a point would be reached in the successful early 1980's drive, when such problems as roads on the island were projected to be inadequate by the mid-1980s, only a few years away; see Easterwood, 4; Hanks, *passim*.

⁸⁰ Horace W. Fleming Jr., et al., *Hilton Head Island Government: Analysis and Alternatives* (Hilton Head Island, South Carolina: Hilton Head Community Association, Inc. and Harold W. Fleming, Jr., 1974), ii-iii.

County, forming its own county; it could secede and join Jasper County (a poorer county Hilton Headers might more easily dominate politically), or Hilton Head could form a municipality. Rejecting Fleming's suggestions, in 1974 the Community Association proposed a Hilton Head Island Commission, a quasi-governmental body which would represent Hilton Head's interests to the Beaufort County Council. A referendum on the proposal passed, but the County Council left the measure unresolved by refusing to act on it.⁸¹

In 1978, facing ever-increasing tourism and growth on the island, the Community Association recalled Fleming for another study. This second report outlined three options for self-determination. Hilton Head could form a special purpose tax district, it could try again for the Hilton Head Island Commission, or it could incorporate as a municipality. Again, the Community Association chose an advisory commission to the County Council as its means of controlling Hilton Head's development. This time the County Council accepted the Commission, which served unsatisfyingly as Hilton Head's voice in Beaufort County politics until the 1983 incorporation drive.

Hilton Head's eventual incorporation sprang out of a belief by many residents that Beaufort County government was ignoring Hilton Head's needs. In particular, those residents of Hilton Head wanted the island's

⁸¹ Fleming, et al., 210-314; Fran Smith, "Unique Proposal Going to Referendum," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, October 17, 1974; "Racusin Hopes for Approval of Island Commission Proposal," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, November 12, 1974; Fran Smith, "Council Senses 'Opposition' to Commission," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, November 18, 1975; Fran Smith, "Grant Calls for 'Happy Medium' On Island Commission Proposal," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, December 30, 1975.

economic development to follow a sensible plan intertwining development with aesthetically pleasing standards which would withstand future growth. They worried that latecoming developers were building without these long-range concerns in mind. Pro-incorporation forces succeeded in a 1983 referendum--62 percent of voters favored the measure, and 38 percent opposed it.⁸²

Beaufort County government was not necessarily ignoring Hilton Head on purpose. Beaufort County leaders were just not equipped to deal with Hilton Head's dramatic change. For example, as the BASF controversy illustrates, the county and the island had very different goals for the future, and these goals were in conflict. Furthermore, Beaufort County depended on Hilton Head's wealth to produce a large portion of its tax revenue; Hilton Head's share amounted to a full fifty percent of the tax revenue collected by Beaufort County. Many Hilton Headers believed, therefore, that Beaufort County should be more willing to provide the island with what it wanted in the way of services.⁸³

Complicating Hilton Head's relationship with county government, development fragmented Hilton Head between haves and have nots; thus the island did not speak with one voice politically.⁸⁴ The gated, lavish

⁸² Benjamin M. Racusin, "Preface" in *Organizing Local Government: The Hilton Head Island Experience*, eds. Michael L. M. Jordan and Horace W. Fleming Jr., Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, unpublished draft dated August 1984, at the Caroliniana Library of the University of South Carolina, Columbia, Carolina, 2. A note on pagination of this source; it is a first draft, and each chapter's pages are enumerated independently of one another.

⁸³ Easterwood, 7.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

residential neighborhoods, which comprised over fifty percent of the island, symbolized the community's fragmentation. Unless one were a resident of that particular plantation or could prove one were a guest or employee of a resident, entrance to the plantations was forbidden and blocked by guards. Behind these gates lay manicured lawns, gracious houses, rolling golf courses, private beaches and winding lanes. Outside the gates were most of the resorts, businesses, and the island's black neighborhoods. These last often had poor roads and minimal water, sewage and garbage pickup, while inside the plantations, the level of services provided was much higher and included neighborhood pools and garbage pickup by quiet miniature electric garbage trucks. With different demands emerging from Hilton Head, the county did not know to whom to respond, or how.⁸⁵

Under South Carolina law, incorporation was the only way for a community to gain control over public services such as water and sewage. With a steadily and dramatically increasing population on the island, these were critical issues for Hilton Head.

In 1973, the Hilton Head Community Association proposed the creation of a Public Service Commission, but most islanders saw it as an inadequate solution. In general, the white community regarded it as a positive effort to address the island's needs, and the black community feared it as too powerful. At a meeting of the Hilton Head Community Association, Joe Brown, NAACP leader and director of the Hilton Head Health Project, successfully tabled a move to endorse a proposed public service commission. He pointed out that the proposed district would exclude black Hilton Headers, since the commission would only include four areas, and would not

⁸⁵ Easterwood, p. 1; Jordan and Fleming, "Chapter One," 16.

encompass the entire island. Three of those areas corresponded to plantations, and the fourth was the island's principal business district, Forest Beach. He argued that the island's black population preferred an island-wide municipal government, reasoning that districts could be drawn which would ensure African Americans would be represented. Elected officials and an elected government would be more responsive to African American concerns. He also complained that as the mostly white members of the Community Association drafted the proposal, they never consulted island's black residents. According to the *Island Packet*, Brown's concerns were at heart a belief that the wealthy people were pursuing their selfish desires at the expense of the island's black residents, and that African Americans would deliberately block actions they were not consulted about. Brown's motion passed, 102-97. So the Hilton Head Community Association postponed its endorsement of the proposed Public Service Commission, and renewed calls for incorporation.⁸⁶

Then the Hilton Head Community Association formed a committee and charged it with studying the issue of incorporation, and planned to seek information about funds an incorporated Hilton Head might receive from state or federal sources. They also focused on creating a council of public service districts, with the intent of presenting their findings at a March 20 meeting. The idea was to find out what solution would best suit Hilton Head's needs. As proposed, the Public Service districts would not comprise the entire island, and areas outside the four main districts would only be

⁸⁶ Jordan and Fleming, "Chapter Two," 1-3; "Joe Brown Declares Council Concept is Unsound, Undemocratic, Selfish," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, March 1, 1973.

taxed a small amount to support water and sewer planning. At this meeting, the organization finally endorsed a Public Service Commission plan.⁸⁷

Subsequently, the island NAACP renewed its calls for incorporation, this time proposing a specific form for the new government to take. The municipality would include the entire island, and would have boroughs which would elect aldermen who would sit on a city council. Under this plan, two seats would be elected at-large, and one member of this council would be elected at-large to serve as mayor. The new island government would provide everything from police services to zoning laws, would have the power to raise funds through taxes as well as state and federal loans and grants. Sam Bolden, president of the island NAACP, acknowledged that in this form of government there were hardships (primarily taxes) which would likely fall on minorities, but believed the benefits of this type of government outweighed the cost. "Minorities and the poor will have a 'say-so' as to the government and its administration and will be assured a place in its operation," he argued.⁸⁸

Finally, in July of 1973 the Public Service Commission of Hilton Head became a reality, as the Beaufort County state legislative delegation proposed a bill to create it and the governor signed the commission bill into existence. The Public Service Commission finally began work in November 1973. Its

⁸⁷ Jack Bowie, "Community Undecided as March 20 Meeting Nears," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, March 15, 1973; "Harvey Postpones Bill Vote to Hear NAACP Comment," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, April 12, 1973; Jack Bowie, "'Fruitful' Meeting Does Not Relieve NAACP Opposition to Council Plan," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, April 19, 1973.

⁸⁸ "NAACP Opts for Municipal Government," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, March 22, 1973.

final form was an island-wide commission composed of six districts with members appointed by the county council.⁸⁹

Despite high hopes, the new Public Service Commission quickly proved inadequate; the island's economic development continued to strain the island's infrastructure, and visual blight resulting from the construction of high-density housing persisted. Therefore, in late 1974, many white Hilton Headers backed a referendum measure, which if passed, would create a unique governmental body to study Hilton Head's needs and report to the Beaufort County Council and to the county Joint Planning Commission. It would represent Hilton Head's interests and hopefully enable the island to speak to the county with one voice, overcoming the county's earlier confusion as to who spoke for Hilton Head.⁹⁰

Since the new body would be funded by additional taxes, the NAACP opposed the referendum as too burdensome on the poor community:

The people on the Options Committee are obviously out of touch with those who have the responsibilities of rearing and educating children, making mortgage payments and paying taxes from weekly wages. They have obviously forgotten the elderly citizens whose fixed incomes cannot meet their most basic needs.... Then there are the poor residents of the island who simply cannot make ends meet on their present incomes. It is not moral to ask them to pay more in any form of taxes.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Jordan and Fleming, "Chapter One," 12; Nancy Butler, "Comm. Ass.-NAACP Blast New P.S. Council Bill," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, June 28, 1973; Nancy Butler, "Black Public Service District Proposed by NAACP," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, September 27, 1973; "Island-Wide PSC Set for Business," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, November 8, 1973.

⁹⁰ Fran Smith, "Unique Proposal Going to Referendum," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, October 17, 1974.

⁹¹ "Island NAACP Issues Statement vs. Planning Referendum," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, October 31, 1974.

The referendum on the Hilton Head Commission passed, but by such a slim margin that supporters wondered how much success the commission would have. This concern focused particularly on the new organization's future, as any such body required approval by the county to come into existence, and the county council composition had recently changed so much that no one was sure what the new members would do. Moreover, with such a slim margin of victory, many worried the county council might reject the commission as lacking a mandate.

A few weeks after the defeat of black interests in the referendum, the county council appointed Perry White (executive secretary of the Hilton Head NAACP) to the Beaufort County Joint Planning Commission. He joined Peter Hyzer, a white Hilton Header who was appointed in the days after the referendum. Hilton Head was gaining a voice in county government after all, and African Americans would obtain some representation of their concerns as well.⁹²

While the Beaufort County Council met to discuss the commission referendum and to decide whether to grant it or not, the Hilton Head NAACP continued to fight the commission proposal. The NAACP feared that "the council [would] be controlled by residents of the resort areas whose needs [were] different from the native residents of [the] island." Later, the Hilton Head NAACP made their point even more explicit. In a position paper

⁹² "Unique Proposal Going to Referendum;" "Island NAACP Issues Statement vs. Planning Referendum," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, October 31, 1974; "Racusin Hopes for Approval of Island Commission Proposal," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, November 12, 1974; "Perry White Appointed to JPC," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, January 14, 1975; "Ecology Dispute Over S.C. Plant Nears End," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, March 4, 1975.

submitted to the Beaufort County Council, they pointed out that the "plantations" on Hilton Head comprised sixty percent of the land area, asking rhetorically "Who will the commission plan for?"⁹³

That the African Americans on Hilton Head preferred county representation was becoming increasingly apparent. As Hilton Head's white population in the "plantations" grew, the black community was growing proportionately smaller. Thus their voice in Hilton Head politics was becoming increasingly weak. However, in county-wide government, African Americans had been able to gain positions. As noted above, Perry White gained a seat on the Beaufort County Joint Planning Commission. Because of dilution of their numbers at Hilton Head, black islanders turned to county government for assurance their interests would be respected. In 1973, three African Americans held county council positions. By 1982, just before the successful incorporation drive, that number had increased to seven.⁹⁴

Economic development on Hilton Head Island affected blacks and whites differently. While some wanted, for example, a widening of US Highway 278 to accommodate increasing resort traffic and increasing residential populations, blacks saw a widening of the road as divisive: according to NAACP president Emory Campbell, some people would have to drive a car "just to visit relatives on the other side of the highway." Also,

⁹³ Fran Smith, "NAACP to Fight Commission Proposal," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, November 13, 1975; Fran Smith, "Grant Calls for 'Happy Medium' on Island Commission Proposal," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, December 30, 1975.

⁹⁴ George Cathcart, "Abe Grant, Buck Smith Win Races," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, June 10, 1976; Joint Center for Political Studies, *National Roster of Black Elected Officials, 1973-1982*, (Joint Center for Political Studies: Washington DC), 1973-1982.

because private developments on the island had preexisting agreements with the county, when the county decided to try to develop a public beach at Hilton Head, African Americans felt exploited because the only available land was largely black-owned.⁹⁵

Much of African Americans' concern about the island's political status and their position for or against incorporation seems to have been based on the relative proportion of blacks to whites at Hilton Head. In 1970, there were a total of 2456 people living on the island, and by 1980 that figure had increased by 74.2 percent to 11,344 residents. In 1975, there were 5212 whites and 1299 blacks. By 1980, the population of whites had increased 85.3 percent to 9659, while the black population had increased only by 29.7 percent to 1685.⁹⁶ In the first effort at island government, when African Americans were proportionately more numerous, incorporation would have permitted greater minority participation and voice in local affairs. However, in the wake of the demographic changes of the 1970s, African Americans opposed incorporation as their numbers had dwindled proportionately and they feared their needs would be ignored and their power would be weak. In both cases, African Americans were concerned about preserving their own political power on the island, and it was just the means of doing so that changed between the 1973 effort and the 1983 effort.

Moreover, the boundaries of the municipal precincts or wards, as they existed in 1980 and were preserved in the 1983 election and formation of the

⁹⁵ Terry Plumb, "'Get Involved,' Blacks Told," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, February 5, 1979; Terry Plumb, "JPC Hearing Draws Variety of Comments," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, July 25, 1978.

⁹⁶ Jordan and Fleming, 5.

town, contributed to black fears of dilution of their political power. Ward boundaries in general corresponded to the outlines of the plantations. Whites dominated all of the wards. The greatest concentration of African Americans was in Ward 5 on the north end of the island, and this had only 39 percent black population. The next greatest was Ward 4 with 30.2 percent black. The other three wards all had thirteen percent black or less. So African Americans could easily be outvoted in elections held either by ward or at-large. A majority African American district could have assured black Hilton Headers a voice in municipal matters, but despite repeated calls for such by the island NAACP, it was never seriously considered.⁹⁷

In a successful February 1982 referendum, the island finally got its unique governmental body, the Hilton Head Island Commission. Of 7177 registered voters, only 2457 actually voted. The vote was overwhelmingly in favor of the commission, with only 46 no votes, thus overcoming earlier

⁹⁷ Jordan and Fleming, 6, 7. This concern about their dwindling proportion was manifested in other ways, as well. For example, during the years that Hilton Head was just a sleepy rural island, education was kept alive on the island by its black residents. But as more whites moved to the area, black prominence in education declined. After 1970, when legal school segregation ended in Beaufort County, blacks dominated the school systems as teachers and administrators. Since then, however, coinciding with the growth of the white population at Hilton Head, a trend of replacing retiring or departing black teachers with whites began to be apparent, sparking controversies. Should hiring decisions be made to favor blacks, thus committing reverse discrimination? An example is the hiring of Steve Gottfried, a white man, as assistant principal of Hilton Head Elementary School. "Vast development on Hilton Head has overrun everything public there. The black native population is lagging. Public schools are the hope of the blacks," NAACP president Perry White observed, echoing the feeling of many black Hilton Headers that they were being overwhelmed, and their concern for black role models for the children ignored by whites with stronger numbers; see "Gottfried's Hiring Shows Trend," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, July 30, 1981.

concerns that the idea lacked a mandate. Initially, county council appointed a black man, Tom Barnwell, to the commission, but he declined to serve, leaving the commission all-white. Therefore, councilman Morris Campbell proposed an amendment to the county's Advisory Commission Ordinance, which had provided that members of any special commission be chosen by county council. Campbell's amendment provided that commissions be created "according to demographics in order to guarantee the fairest representation of all the people." Implicit in Campbell's words was the ominous assumption that black and white interests would never coincide. As with the plan to draw voting districts along racial lines, Campbell's proposal never gained sincere attention.⁹⁸

By 1982, some island services, particularly fire and medical services, looked as though they would serve adequately despite the anticipated growth of the island through the 1980s. However, the increasing population and increasing influx of tourists caused worry about the adequacy of police protection, maintenance of recreation areas, "control of island growth and development (planning, zoning and land use), transportation and traffic control, water and sewer service, and environmental protection services." Moreover, deed covenants were proving inadequate to protect the island from visual blight, as new investors built on land not subject to deed covenants and ignored old gentlemen's agreements with respect to types of construction and density requirements.⁹⁹ Incorporation seemed to offer white Hilton Head a better chance to control its own destiny.

⁹⁸ Fran Smith, "Islanders Approve Commission," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, February 25, 1982; Chris Porter, "Commission Makeup Change Proposed," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, May 11, 1982.

⁹⁹ Easterwood, 4, 5, 7, 8.

In a new study for the Hilton Head Island Community Association, Fleming and Jordan acknowledged one of the biggest problems in the incorporation debates: the island's black population, who, after all, had been there first, were afraid they would be driven out. They had already been pushed outside the gates of the plantations, to which they gained access only as gardeners or maids.¹⁰⁰

Cognizant of the island's needs as well as African Americans' concerns, Fleming developed a new plan in which he would conduct field research analyzing islander's needs and sentiments regarding government reorganization.¹⁰¹

Fleming found that black Hilton Headers were not always cooperative with his efforts and were very suspicious of whites' motives behind incorporation. Black residents stated their views on the issue to Fleming at a meeting at the First African Baptist Church on Valentine's Day, 1983. The island's Committee on Self-Government Options, which felt it had to "sell" the idea of incorporation, called the gathering, where Fleming logged African Americans' views:

People who live behind gates have got sewer and water...police protection. . . . If you have all that you need behind the gates, why so concerned about what's outside the gates?

What good is city government for Black people except more taxation?

¹⁰⁰ Jordan and Fleming, "Chapter One," 11.

¹⁰¹ Jordan and Fleming, "Chapter One," 5-6.

Forcing poor Black homeowners to abide by the same sort of regulations applied within the plantations would be equivalent to a fascist government where you oppress and rule but you don't serve.

I feel like I am being asked to buy a pig in a bag.

Black views are never picked up in anything that is finalized.¹⁰²

Reaching the end of his study, Fleming identified several alternatives for the island's political reorganization. One alternative was retention of the Public Service Commission; another was an effort to force the County to provide more and better levels of services, with variable taxation to reflect quantity and quality of services provided. Another alternative proposition was secession of Hilton Head from Beaufort County. Other possibilities included incorporation of the most densely populated part or parts of the island (under South Carolina law, the island as a whole was insufficiently dense in population to incorporate, although subsections of the island were sufficiently dense), or a fanciful suggestion of county-wide metro government.¹⁰³

Fleming and Jordan's study revealed many of the concerns behind the debate. Some of the most basic conflicts revolved around the question of what a municipality should do? The community was so heterogenous-- African Americans, southern whites, northern whites, newcomers and natives, developers and retirees, rich and poor, farmers, fishermen and

¹⁰²Jordan and Fleming, "Chapter One," 8; Jordan and Fleming, appendix entitled "Committee on Self-Government Options," Section no. 36. no page number.

¹⁰³ Jordan and Fleming, "Chapter One," 20-21.

businessmen--that getting a consensus was nearly impossible.¹⁰⁴ As Fleming and Jordan put it,

. . .so while black residents can empathize with those of their white neighbors who demand more of local government, they are not as willing to pay the price for a more responsive, island-based general government. Too, blacks sit on the county council and have been responsive to black residents of Hilton Head.

African Americans seem to have feared that, in contrast to their earlier favoring of incorporation as a means of preserving their voice, this time and in this format, incorporation would mean paying more and getting less, trading good representation for an uncertain future. Blacks on the island had many more concerns for the future than whites did, and whites seemed to not notice this. For example, in the *Islander* magazine, a kind of local *Southern Living* extolling wealth, beauty, the good life, a January 1979 article titled "A General Air of Optimism" contained photographs of local businessmen and their predictions for the future. All quoted who were identifiable as white were very optimistic about the future, seeing increasing profits and opportunities in the year ahead. Two quoted were identifiable as blacks, Isaac Wilborn (principal of the Hilton Head Elementary School and Morris Campbell (owner of The Island Shop, and County Councilmember.)

¹⁰⁴ Jordan and Fleming, "Chapter One," 9, *Household Characteristics*, 1980. For example, native South Carolinians composed only 23.7 percent of Hilton Head's population, and while 93.4 percent of the island's population was over the poverty line, the split was 95 percent for whites and 83.7 for blacks, with median incomes of \$38,488 for whites and \$18,129 for blacks, a difference of more than \$20,000. Whites had greater school enrollments, also, with 74.9 percent of white children 3 or older attending school, and only 25.1 percent of black.

Both Wilborn and Campbell worried about the lack of opportunity for blacks to move out of dead-end minimum wage jobs on the island.¹⁰⁵

The issue of incorporation finally went to the voters on May 10, 1983. With only 51.6 percent of the eligible voting population participating, the final tally was 2405 in favor and 1638 against incorporation. According to observers, the African American turnout was high; precincts four and five held the greatest concentration of black voters. In precinct four incorporation failed and the vote was close in precinct five.¹⁰⁶

After the successful vote for incorporation, in response to the incorporation of the Town of Hilton Head Island, the NAACP filed a lawsuit with the NAACP as plaintiff, asking for the incorporation to be set aside. As Bill Gibson, president of the South Carolina chapter of the NAACP explained, the lawsuit's main concern was taxation and equitable black representation in government. An earlier plea in state court for an injunction against August 2 elections to create the Town of Hilton Head Island had been denied. Meanwhile, the NAACP filed a companion suit in federal court arguing that the incorporation of the town violated the Voting Rights Act of 1965. When they lost this case, the NAACP appealed to the Federal Supreme Court. In the end, both suits failed because the courts ruled that while blacks did suffer loss of political power, incorporation was legal and therefore not something the court had power to overturn.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Jordan and Fleming, "Chapter Four: Home Rule," 10-11; Joe Gray, "A General Air of Optimism," *Islander* 13 (January 1979): 5-13.

¹⁰⁶ "Voters say 'yes' to Town," *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, May 12, 1983.

¹⁰⁷ Jordan and Fleming, appendix entitled "NAACP Lawsuit," sections 1-7, 10, 23.

However, an African American, Henry Driessen, was elected to serve on the new town council. His seat was an at-large seat, contradicting concerns that the council would not include black interests. Driessen, a successful liquor-store owner and general-store owner who had been a longtime resident of the island, admitted that he had opposed incorporation, but said that given the fact of it, he wanted to make the best of the situation, and urged cooperation. He won by appealing to voters' desire to heal the breach caused by the dispute over incorporation, and in doing so gained strong white support as well as black. Forty-seven percent of Driessen's support came from two nearly all-white precincts (comprised of Sea Pines Plantation, South Forest Beach, Point Comfort, and Palmetto Dunes Plantation) at the southern end of the island.¹⁰⁸

With the arrival of major sports tournaments, the increase in single-family dwellings and the growth of the tourist industry, during the 1970s, residents of Hilton Head began struggling for a means of controlling growth. Abhorring the prospect of becoming another Myrtle Beach, white Hilton Headers strove to control construction and limit visual blight. Increasing tourism and residence on the island put increasing pressure on roads, fire protection and water and sewer services. The island also needed increased police protection. Furthermore, these changes awakened Hilton Headers to the need for long-range planning to control future growth.

¹⁰⁸ Jordan and Fleming, appendix entitled "NAACP Lawsuit" sections 1-7, 10, 23; David Stacks, "Candidate Calls for Cooperation," Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet, June 14, 1983; "NAACP Renews Efforts in Federal Court," Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet, August 2, 1983; David Stacks, "New Town Government Won by Majority Votes," Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet, August 9, 1983.

Each time whites sought some measure of political autonomy for Hilton Head, black islanders raised the same two issues: representation and taxation. Would the costs be too high? Would black voices in island politics be stifled? Thus, the NAACP's lawsuits challenging incorporation charged that incorporation violated the Voting Rights Acts of 1965 inasmuch as that law required districts not be drawn to dilute black votes, and the net effect of the 1973 Public Service Commission and the 1983 incorporation was to do just that. Similarly, the Hilton Head's native black residents proposed incorporation in 1973 and opposed it in 1983 in order to preserve black political power and protect African Americans from taxes for services they did not want and could not afford.

But white residents' goals conflicted with blacks' goals. Behind the gates, what some called privacy looked a lot like exclusion to others. When whites wanted more and better services, and voiced a willingness to pay, blacks worried about increased tax bills for what they considered unaffordable luxuries, and as whites spearheaded a move to develop governmental autonomy from what they considered an unresponsive Beaufort County, blacks worried about losing their voice in matters that would have a direct impact on their lives. So African Americans spent much of the 1970s and early 1980s struggling to gain and keep their political voice. There were some successes, as described above. Morris Campbell sat on county council, and Henry Driessen served on the new city council. Throughout the period, African Americans united and delayed or stopped some proposed measures, such as the delay in the creation of the Hilton Head Island Commission. In the end, however, they lost their bid to prevent incorporation. As the success of Campbell and Driessen attests, white Hilton Headers supported black

candidates, when political positions coincided. However, demographic change ensured white dominance of island politics.

Chapter Five

Washing Out to Sea

Between Charles Fraser's 1950 visit to Hilton Head Island and the successful incorporation of the town of Hilton Head in 1983, the island underwent an almost total transformation. Whereas the population had once been almost totally poor, black, and small in number, by the early eighties, the island was mostly white, well-to-do, and quite densely populated. In 1950, parts of the island served as a hunting preserve, while others were in farmland. By 1983, the island was a well-established wildlife sanctuary, and small garden plots replaced farms. Contact between island and mainland was infrequent in 1950, but in the years following the construction of the James F. Byrnes Bridge in 1956, intercourse between island and mainland increased enormously. Because in the early days the island's population was primarily black, most black Hilton Headers were unused to racial segregation in their day-to-day lives. However, the coming of development and growth meant that Hilton Head's African Americans experienced segregation for the first time.¹⁰⁹

Developers and newcomers such as Charles Fraser and Fred Hack dominated the agenda for economic change at Hilton Head Island. The

¹⁰⁹ I have argued that much of the change at Hilton Head can be attributed to the construction of the James F. Byrnes Bridge in 1956. Two years prior, the bridge's namesake defended the South Carolina portion of the four related cases argued before the United States Supreme Court as *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. So, ironically, although Byrnes failed to preserve racial segregation in the nation, his namesake succeeded in creating segregation where none had previously existed.

amenities they valued--manicured golf courses, restricted access, zoned development, minimal (if any) industrialization--impinged on the economic goals held by other residents of the county.

Beaufort County had struggled for years to attract heavy industry to the area. For most of Beaufort County's residents, high wages, satellite industries and services and an industrial economic base were desirable enough to sacrifice the county's ecology. Downstream industrial development was seen as all boon because for those people, a pristine environment had no economic value. Only fishermen and Hilton Head's resort industry viewed a clean environment as having significant monetary value.

"Plantation" residents and resort visitors valued Hilton Head's appearance and favored limitations on the kinds of economic development which could take place on the island itself. This put most of the island's original landowners in a box: unable to obtain clear titles to their land, their opportunities to obtain mortgages to develop their own land were severely hampered. Low-capital investments, such as the creation of an auto parts yard, were impossible given zoning laws imposed by politically and demographically dominant plantation dwellers and resort business owners.

Fundamentally, the efforts made by resort developers to seek economic betterment at Hilton Head served to constrain others' choices efforts to seek their own place in the economic sun. Because of Hilton Head's success as a resort and residential community, Beaufort County's plans for industrial development failed. Today, Beaufort County leaders have adopted an "if you can't beat them, join them" philosophy; Beaufort markets itself as a tourist destination in its own right, and resorts, residential communities, golf courses and outlet malls now spill off the island and march inland along US

278. Adding to the glamorous image of the area is the county's budding movie industry--films such as *The Big Chill*, *The Prince of Tides*, and *Forrest Gump* include location sequences in Beaufort County.

Similarly, black residents of Hilton Head have seen their choices constrained. Rising land values have increased their tax burden, forcing many to sell and move away from their ancestral homes. Others have lost their land through fraud. Many have benefitted from Hilton Head's growing economy by obtaining high-paying jobs in the resort industry, but these frequently are dead-end jobs. They have also suffered from the social sting of racial segregation, some for the first time. Their response has been to struggle to maintain some voice in the island's development, and in this respect they have enjoyed some success, Henry Driessen's election to the new town council is a prime example.

The tourist economy's quick success rapidly made Hilton Head a dominant political force in Beaufort County. Moreover, with the skillful protest over BASF, Hilton Head established itself as the economic model for the rest of the county, dictating what types of opportunities were available to others.

While many of the issues arising through Hilton Head's transformation divided along racial lines, not all did. Underlying the coalitions forming around such questions as land use, industrial development and self-determination is each individual's analysis of his own economic needs. The island's economic transformation sometimes created divisions between the island's population and it sometimes created cohesion. In each instance--land use, industrial development elsewhere in the county, and the incorporation of the town of Hilton Head--many residents showed

that their political affiliations reflected their economic interests. If change threatened the island's economic prosperity, these residents would oppose it vociferously.

Hilton Head's residents were aware of the impact of the growing tourist industry and were well-informed on the political/economic issues arising because of it. They strove to protect the island's fragile ecology, and in so doing, sought to protect the value of their property and investments. The island's black residents agreed that the environment needed care, and they wanted to take advantage of the developing tourist economy, but also saw *themselves* as an endangered species requiring protection.

For newcomers, the benefits of incorporation clearly outweighed its costs. For the island's native black families, the benefits of incorporation accrued primarily to everybody else, while they faced higher taxes and loss of control over their own land. In the face of opposing cost-benefit analyses, the side with more votes won. In the end, those with the prevailing agenda were not compelled to make concessions other than permitting easily outvoted members to be elected to the new island town government.¹¹⁰

The racial climate of Beaufort County was not openly repressive and encouraged a significant level of black activism. African Americans were active politically and they voted in large numbers; often, blacks who ran for public office won on the strength of the black vote. Black political activism was an educated activism, and the community boasted strong black leadership. However, the more numerous whites controlled the benefits of

¹¹⁰ For a fuller discussion of the theoretical framework for this application, see Juanita C. Liu, Pauline J. Sheldon and Turgat Var, "Resident Perception of the Environmental Impacts of Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 14 (1987): 17-37.

tourism development at Hilton Head and therefore controlled the island's economic destiny. Blacks at Hilton Head were simply outvoted.¹¹¹

Mirroring the economic transformation of the South from an economy based on agriculture and extraction to an industrial economy, the controversies at Hilton Head show that while coalitions frequently follow racial lines, this can be due to common economic concerns rather than pure racial solidarity. Each step of the way, blacks and whites worked intelligently to further their own dreams. Sometimes these conflicted, and other times, less frequently, they coincided. The conclusion this story of Hilton Head encourages is that while African Americans utilized every advantage available, their lack of numerical strength led ultimately to their failure. The democratic political system and free-market economy functioned as expected, and yet the system failed to serve the needs of all the island's residents.

When Charles Fraser first visited Hilton Head Island in 1951, he envisioned a community where people could enjoy all of the benefits of "the good life" in a lovely setting of quiet, tree-shaded lanes and a pristine environment. The construction of the James F. Byrnes Bridge in 1956 was one of the most important factors in making Fraser's dream a reality. Ironically, the bridge is contributing to the destruction of the island itself. Immediately upon construction, the bridge, which made the island accessible to those who would purchase shares of Fraser's vision, began to cause the eventual destruction of the island and everything on it. Waves breaking against the bridge are causing erosion. Moreover, the unsupportable strain of the growing population on the island's subterranean water supply is causing

¹¹¹ For a discussion of some of the theory underpinnings, see Peck and Lepie, as well as Hanks, 152-3 and *passim*.

the island to sink lower. Beaches are shrinking and Hilton Head, a place famed for its natural beauty, is dependent on artificial beach restocking programs. The bridge, which made Hilton Head's transformation possible, has led to the island's subsidence, and this, combined with erosion, means that the island itself is gradually washing out to sea.¹¹²

¹¹² W. D. Workman, "Traffic to Hilton Head Increasing as Additional Homes are Constructed," *Beaufort (SC) Gazette*, January 24, 1957; Greg Smith, "Hilton Head Island's Beaches Being Restocked: Island Hotel Owners Say Inconvenience Worth It," *Columbia (SC) State*, June 17, 1990; Doris Bowers, "Do You Take Water for Granted?" *Hilton Head (SC) Island Packet*, July 8, 1971; Mike Livingston, "Report says Island Faces Water Shortage," *Columbia (SC) State*, May 17, 1990.

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