

Georgia after WWII – changes both good and bad

I. Changes in economy

- A. Factories began manufacturing consumer goods again – **tools, trucks, clothing**
- B. Item everybody wanted – **car**. Gas was no longer rationed and people were able to travel easier and longer distances. Led to the beginning of a number of drive-in businesses: **movies, banks, restaurants**. **Suburbs** began springing up, especially around Atlanta

II. Changes in life for returning GI's

- A. Congress passed **GI Bill of Rights**
- B. GI Bill provided tuition for **college** and **low-interest loans** for homes and businesses
- C. GIs received **\$20 a week** in unemployment benefits for up to a year
- D. Resulted in major growth at colleges and universities. UGA student pop. rose from 1,836 students in 1944 to more than **6,634** in 1946. **60%** of the student body was vets.

III. Changes for farmers

- A. by 1950, **28,000** Georgian had left farming and the state had lost **100,000** farms – farming as a whole was on the decline for many reasons.
- B. Many young men who had **fought** during the war were eligible for GI benefits and took advantage of them and left the farm.
- C. Farming practices were changing. There were new developments in **seed technology, fertilizers, and pesticides**. Farmers were practicing **crop rotation and terracing** and learning of these developments through their local **agricultural extension agent** from the University of Georgia. Farmers were able to afford **tractors and harvesters**.
- D. B/C of technology, **crop yield increased** and fewer **farmers** could work **more** land. Farmers began growing too much of their crops and the gov't began paying them **not to produce crops**.
- E. The decline continued with the development of **synthetic fibers**. Cotton production fell from its peak of almost 3 million bales in 1911 to 490,000 in 1950. Farmers had to turn to other crops – **peanuts, soybeans, etc.** as well as non-food crops such as **timber**. Forestry would become a new industry in GA, with demand for **pulp** for paper, as well as **lumber and plywood**.

IV. Changes in population

- A. Some shifts in population came as people left Georgia. With the loss of many tenant farmers, **91** of the 159 counties in our state lost population. All of those counties were **rural**. Some military personnel from Georgia did not return home after the war. Many African-Americans continued moving **north** for better opportunities.
- B. Much of the shift came as people left rural areas for **urban** and suburban areas around the state. Henry W. Grady's dream from the late 1800s was coming true as business and industrial growth accounted for much of that growth.
- C. Much of this growth came around the city of **Atlanta**. GM built a plant in **Doraville**, **Ford** built a plant in Hapeville. The Atlanta area became home to 800 new industries and 1,200 regional offices for companies.
- D. Older cities such as **Atlanta, Macon, and Savannah** also grew during the late 1940s and 1950s. However, they could in no way compare to Atlanta's population explosion. Even

though the city of Atlanta grew by only 10% in the 1940s suburbs experienced the greatest growth. College Park grew by 77%, **Marietta** grew by **139 percent**, and **Forest Park** by **360%**.

D. This growth was b/c of a number of reasons. Atlanta was the transportation hub of the Southeast. The weather was favorable year round – growth of air conditioning helped ease the summer heat. Workers were not unionized so could be paid lower wages. Low taxes meant higher profits for businesses.

V. Changes in leisure/everyday life

A. besides using the car for driving to work, Americans were hitting the open road to explore our country. Weekend trips were easier to arrange and “riding around” became a popular pastime for young people.

B. Inventions made life easier. Polio vaccine ended one of the country’s most feared diseases. Johnson and Johnson made no-tears shampoo, McDonald’s sold its first hamburger, super glue, Saran Wrap and Velcro were invented during this time

C. Rock and Roll became the newest style of music. Elvis Presley shook up the music scene with his style and gyrating hips. Other groups included Bill Haley, Chubby Checker and Chuck Berry.

D. Television became another “must have” for the country’s consumer-driven economy. By 1955, 65 percent of American homes had a TV. Families would gather together to watch the one small black and white set in the family room or living room. Shows such as I Love Lucy, The Honeymooners and the Ed Sullivan Show highlighted the few hours of daily programming that was available at the time.