

“A Labor of Love”

**A Brief History
of
The Roosevelt Memorial Inter-Denominational Church
Pine Mountain Valley, Harris County, Georgia**

**by
B. J. Baxley
Emily W. Minton**

**Part I
Pine Mountain Valley**

Foreword

The inspiration and desire to write this book was conceived at a prayer meeting of the Roosevelt Memorial Church.

As B. J. Baxley sat in his regular place at a Wednesday night Prayer Meeting, the thought came to him that the history of this famous little church should be recorded before it was

too late to do much research and learning from church members that actually helped build the church. With this thought in mind, he enlisted the help of Emily W. Minton, a Harris County native and who has a keen interest in the history of the county. Enthusiastically interested, research began to highlight the early days of the Pine Mountain Valley community with emphasis on the first church in the community.

These pages represent a labor of love for many different people. The authors have striven to contact anyone whose name was submitted to them and they were overwhelmed with the wonderful enthusiasm and interest they encountered.

They endeavored to write a brief history of Pine Mountain Valley in order to complete a history of the Roosevelt Memorial Church from its beginning in 1935 until the original church was destroyed by fire in April 1967.

The Roosevelt Memorial Church is very much a part of the Pine Mountain Valley community today and is actively supported by an ever-growing congregation.

No one ever completes a history such as this without the encouragement and help of some special people who were always available to contribute to each effort along the way, to read, to criticize, and to share. In this case, these two special people are the authors' spouses, Pat and Charlie.

Every attempt has been made to be as accurate as possible with the details of this work. Errors in fact, are the responsibility of the authors.

Acknowledgements

Without the help of many people this short history of the early Roosevelt Memorial Inter-Denominational Church could never have become a reality.

The authors diligently researched material relating to the early church. Research advertisements were placed in both the Harris County newspapers and verbal requests were made from interested citizens. For the response we received, we are forever grateful.

Special thanks go to the wonderful original “settlers” and their children who so graciously agreed to talk with us and to the many people who furnished photographs or information. We are indebted to the authors of many publications we were privileged to use that were current during the conception of the Pine Mountain Valley community.

Our sincere gratitude goes to Cholly Minton who spent long hours at the computer.

Our Valley of Dreams Come True
Written by Mrs. Pearl G. Riley on the 40th Homecoming of Roosevelt Memorial
Inter-Denominational Church

*Tired and weary of seeking to find
something to give me a lift –
strength to bear the burden that's mine,
that I might not have to drift.*

*No work, no money, a family to keep,
the burdens seemed too hard to bear,
and then, like a dream, a beautiful dream,
this Valley of Dreams should appear.*

*We found this valley of Dreams come true,
the land of beginning again,
where the heartaches and tears,
disappointments and fears,
have faded away like the rain.*

*For clouds that were heavy,
and skies that were gray,
cast shadows that should be blue –
but looking away to the dawn's new day,
we started out lives anew.*

*Not easy the task of building again,
the lives that were burdened and sad,
for the years take their toll while seeking the goal,
and it's hard to find time to be glad.*

*But years have rolled on and heartaches have passed –
and gray skies have turned to blue,
for we've striven and won
Out place in the sun
in our Valley of Dreams come true!*



Mrs. Pearl G. Riley

Written by Mrs. Pearl G. Riley on the 40th
Homecoming of Roosevelt Memorial Inter-
Denominational Church

During the Great Depression of the 1930's Franklin Delano Roosevelt, then President of the United States, maintained his Georgia retreat, the Little White House, in Warm Springs, Georgia. Located at the northwestern point of the Pine Mountain ridge, Roosevelt owned a farm nearby on the slopes of the mountain. A scenic highway crossing the crest of Pine Mountain connects a beautiful state park with the Little White House area. The 9,480 acre park, rightfully named The Franklin Delano Roosevelt State Park, was built by Roosevelt's beloved Civilian Conservation Corps.



President Roosevelt was noted for roaming the countryside alone in his hand controlled Ford convertible. He loved the Georgia hills and valleys and would never be far from the protection of his Secret Service.



The property to the east and south of the Pine Mountain ridge especially appealed to Mr. Roosevelt. This beautiful valley opens toward the southwest and is encircled on three sides by Pine Mountain and Oak Mountain. President Roosevelt's dream was to establish his "Little Garden of Eden" in this valley and hence the name Pine Mountain Valley. Pine Mountain Valley was a pilot community relief project planned to provide an escape from the Great Depression for unemployed urban workers.

The President took a genuine personal interest in the planning and execution of the Pine Mountain Valley Resettlement Project.

In order to write a history of the Roosevelt Memorial Inter-Denomination Church, we find it necessary to include a brief history of the community.

In the mid-forties the Pine Mountain Valley Community Corporation began a long, hard journey to become a reality. It is our hope to present some of the early beginnings of the community. Many books, papers, articles and histories in various forms have been written about Pine Mountain Valley.

Compiling this book has been such a fruitful and interesting time for us as we have had the pleasure of interviewing as many of the remaining "early settlers" of Pine Mountain Valley as we could locate. They have so graciously opened their homes and hearts to us. It was indeed our pleasure to hear each of the people we visited relate the same information with many different versions and insights.

In October 1934 the Georgia Rural Rehabilitation Corporation was chartered. This corporation approved construction of Pine Mountain Valley, the largest of three rural-industrial communities, in November 1934.

The first objective in resettling the people who were victims of abnormal circumstances during the Depression in Pine Mountain Valley was to provide them with a sense of security. They were to be assured that, as long as they cooperated, they would have decent homes, surroundings and opportunities for cultural and educational development.

The second objective was to give them facilities to produce around their homes a maximum of their requirements for self-sustenance. This provision was afforded in the form of a home, gardens, chickens, orchards, and vineyards.

The third objective was to provide opportunities to supplement their incomes through agricultural and industrial activities carried on under expert advice and supervision.

The Pine Mountain Valley community was developed on land which was once a prosperous farming region, but the economy had based on one crop – cotton. The boll-weevil came in and land was gradually abandoned. Much of the land was grown up in small pines.

This area consisted of farms aggregating approximately 10,500 acres, about 2 ½ miles in width, and seven miles in length, of which about seven thousand acres were in timber and mountain ridge. The beautiful valley below the north boundary of Harris County, Georgia is twenty-three miles from Columbus and eleven miles from Warm Springs. The land was inherently fertile and had sufficient variety of soil types to produce all the major requirements for man and his livestock. It readily responded to fertilizing and rebuilding. It was also far less liable to drought and frost than the adjacent country, as it had mountain protection, constant streams, and much bottom land.

The contemplated units for the Pine Mountain Valley Project were:

1. A Dairy Farm, 800 acres, to be developed up to a capacity of 150 milk cows. All of the grain and some surplus would be produced on this unit. A sizable cotton acreage with the Dairy Unit was also recommended.
2. A Hog Farm, 200 acres, to be developed up to a capacity of 180 hogs and necessary feeds except animal proteins were to be produced.
3. A Hatchery and Poultry Farm, 100 acres, to be developed up to a capacity of 4,000 layers.
4. Central Mule Sheds, with 420 acres, to produce enough feed for mules as well and cows kept on small homesteads.
5. Fruit Farm, to develop 50 acres of peaches and other fruit and any part of the thousand acres of scuppernong grapes not produced on individual tracts.
6. Cotton and Grain Farm, to produce 300 acres of cotton and up to 500 acres of grain for poultry farm and poultry raised on subsistence homesteads.

It was learned that there were alterations in the Proposed Plans for the Pine Mountain Valley Project, but basically these contemplated units became a reality.

In the proposed plans of the Georgia Emergency Administration for the Pine Mountain Valley Community the RELIGIOUS PROGRAM AND FACILITIES were as follows:

“Since religion does not enter as a factor into the selection of families to any degree, it is being assumed that any religious activities established as a part of the educational program of the community would be inter-denomination. It is highly important that the religious guidance should come through an exceptionally well educated person, who is genuinely interested in rural communities. It is believed that support of a religious leader should be maintained by contributions from the family budget rather than through any income from the corporation. The facilities of the community house will be used as an assembly place for church, possibly later building one church for the community if found desirable.”

On November 20, 1934, a party of six engineers was sent to Pine Mountain Valley detailed to proceed with the layout of roads, water lines and power transmission lines. Two weeks later, this number was increased to twelve and work of this nature began to go forward rapidly. Plans for temporary housing quarters were also under way. The construction of these buildings began February 17, 1935, at which time some of the future settlers arrived. The husbands would precede their families to work on the project. They were initially housed in tents, but after a very short time, seven temporary barracks were bought and moved from Fort Benning to be used by the workers. Survey teams slowly laid out future home sites in small lettered sections (A through X) with six to forty-six lots each. One section was opened at a time. Each homesteader was numbered chronologically at the time of his arrival. Incidentally, the streets in Pine Mountain Valley still follow the lettering system assigned in 1935.

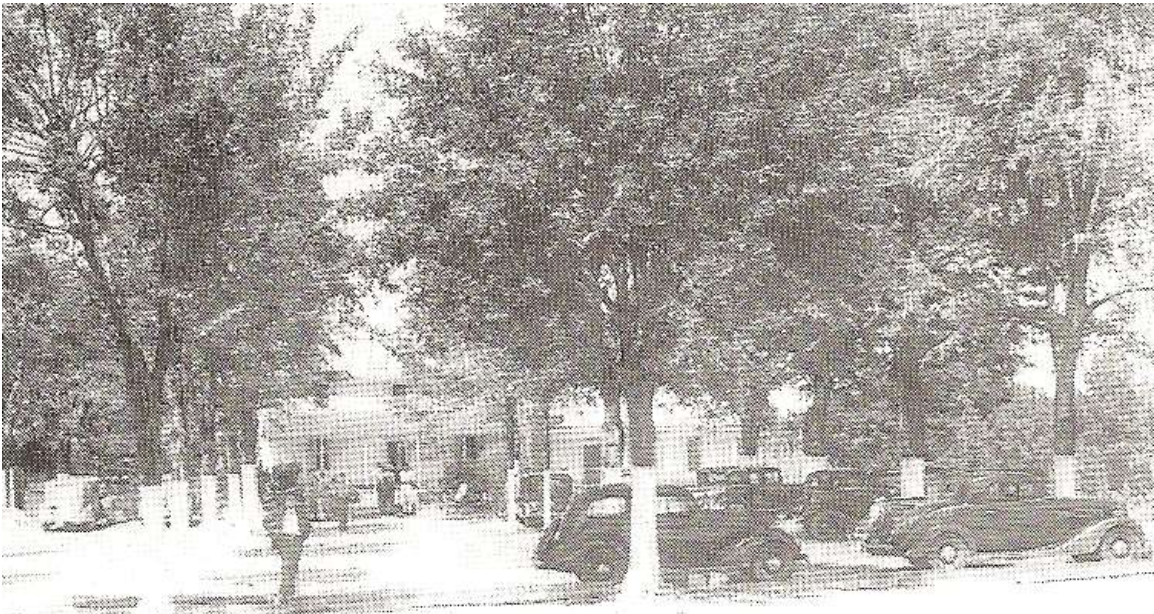
It must be remembered that the community of Pine Mountain Valley was begun from vast acreage that had only a few old houses and tenant shacks standing. The early arrivals had their work cut out for them. Living in temporary barracks, eating in a mess hall and separated from families was not an easy life. They had a real stake in the success of the colony. Of course, other workers commuted to the area daily to help.



The seven temporary barracks used by workers until housing could be provided.

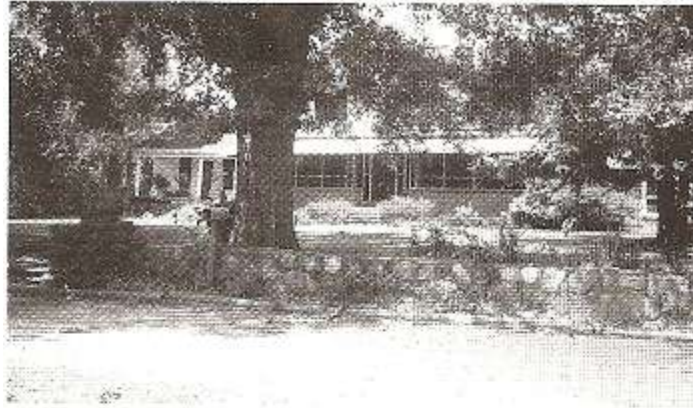
The first three model houses were begun by March 1935. Slowly, during this first summer, the early policy of preventing homesteaders from bringing their families until new homes were completed broke down almost completely. By the Fall of 1935, at least 68 families were living in the old houses and tenant shacks that remained in the area and twenty new houses that had been completed. A total of 210 homestead units were completed. Some of these were occupied by supervisory personnel.

In our quest for knowledge, we were very fortunate to have Mrs. Julia Callahan to share early Pine Mountain Valley Project pictures with us. The following pictorial review of some of the buildings and working businesses in the Pine Mountain Valley community will afford a glimpse of the working activities from the initial preparation of building a community.



The administration building, where the entire Pine Mountain Valley Project was coordinated, was located in an old dwelling that was built in the 1830's. It was in this building that these pictures of the beginnings of the Pine Mountain Valley Project were found by the present owner, Mrs. Julia Callahan.

The administration building today – the home of Mrs. Julia Callahan.

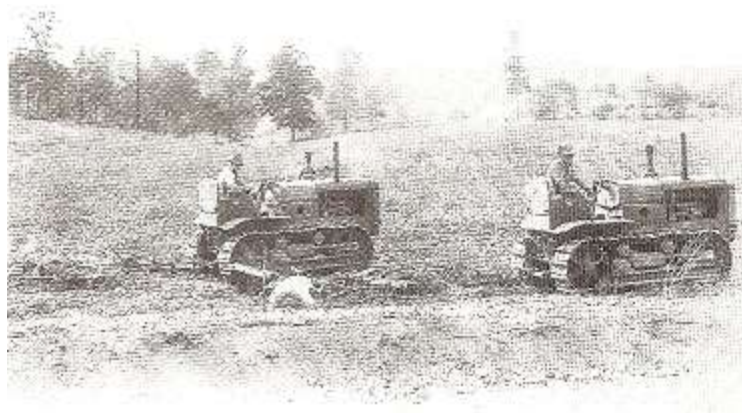




Shown above is a rock quarry on Pine Mountain where workers are digging rock to be used for construction in the Valley Project.



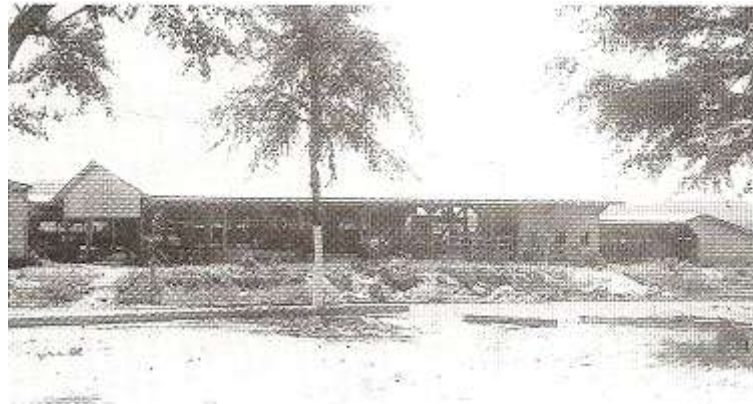
This is a road under construction on "D" Street with a bridge being built over the Palmetto Creek. The building is a canning plant which was called the "little" canning plant, as a larger plant was built on "E" Street.



Pictured above are two of the tractors with harrows preparing land for cultivation.



This is an interior picture of the mess hall in one of the old barracks. The workers who preceded their families lived in the barracks and their food was served here.



Exterior of the Woodworking Shop that was located on the corner of “K” Street and Georgia Highway 116 or “F” Street.



This is the Woodworking Shop interior. It was in this shop that all material for the houses was cut and loaded on big Liberty trucks with wide, solid, chain driven tires, to be delivered to the building sites. Furniture for the homes was also built in this shop. Several people we interviewed still have and treasure pieces of the furniture built in this shop in the 1930's.

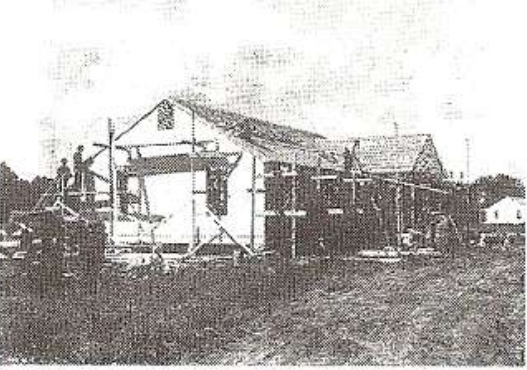
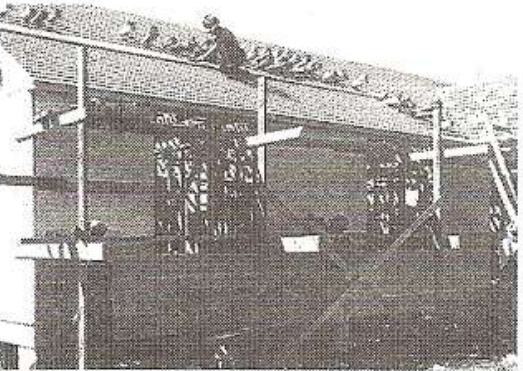
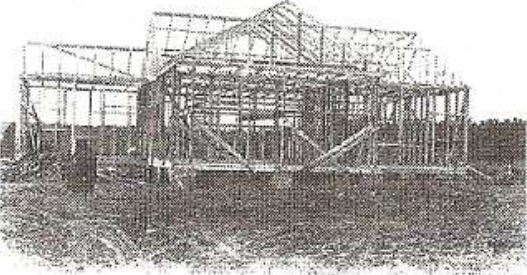
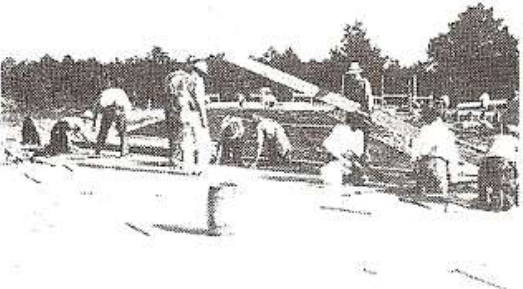
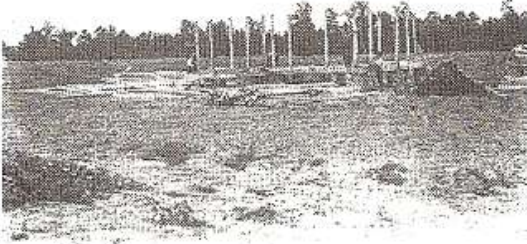
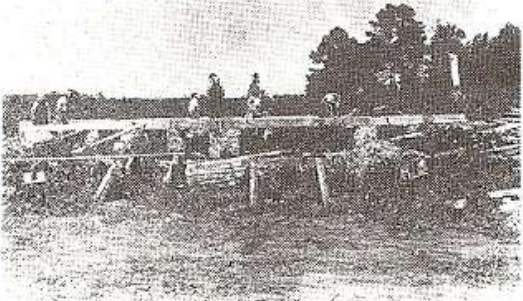
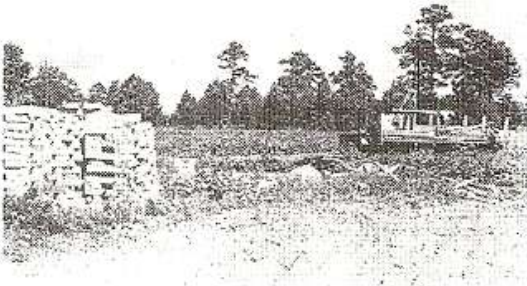
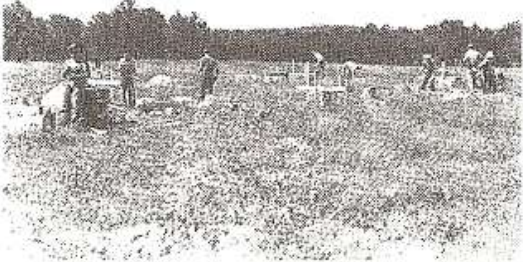


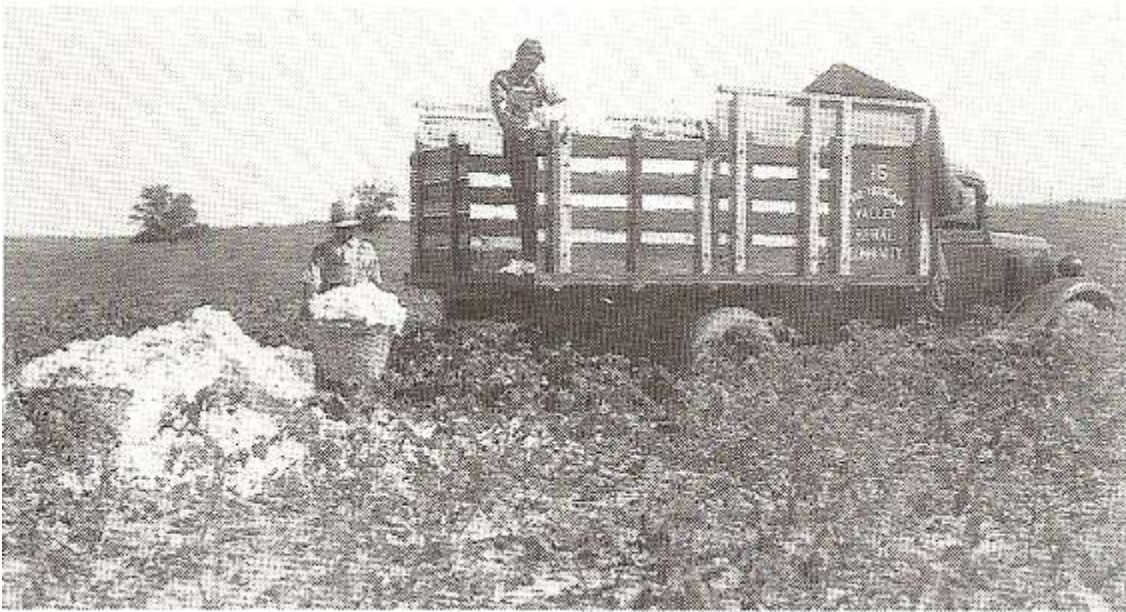
Loading a truck with material to complete an entire house.



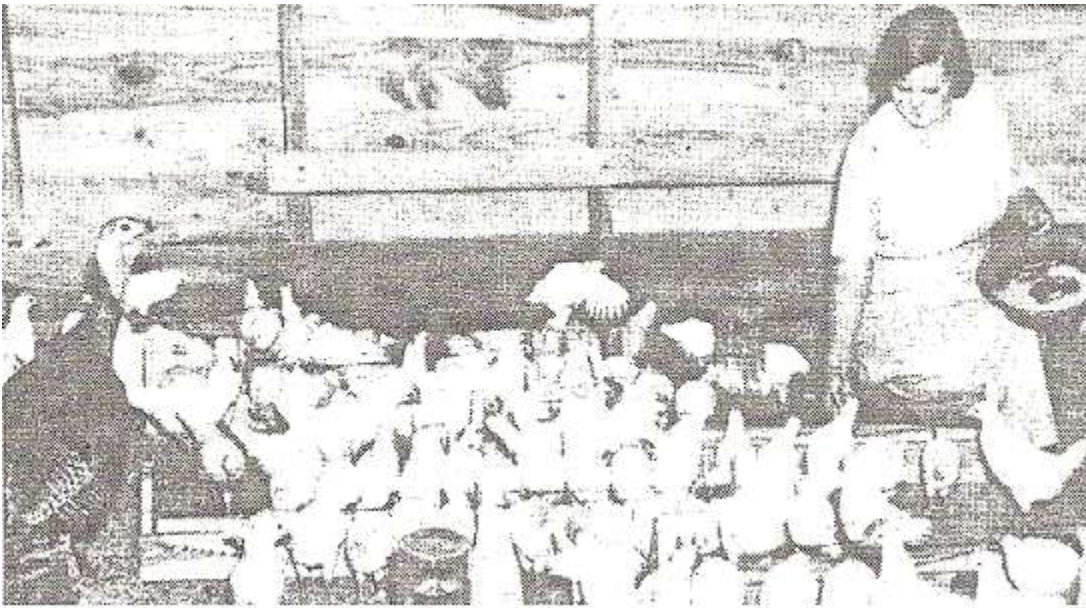
The houses were constructed very quickly once the material was dressed and cut in the woodshop and delivered to the site. Note the number of workers erecting this house.

Several stages of the house construction are pictured below.

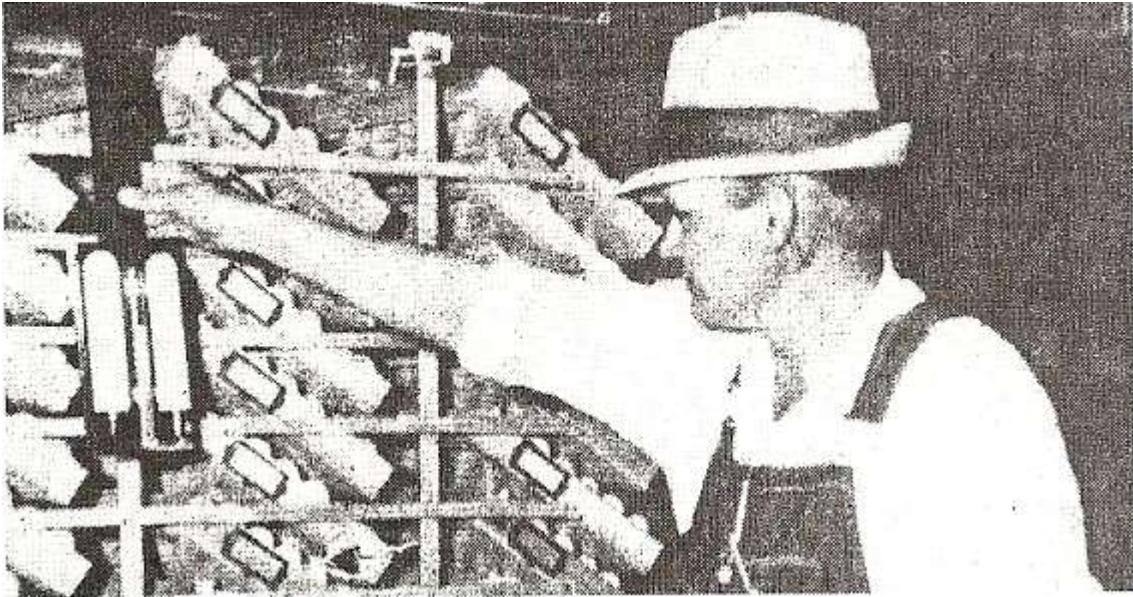




Cotton grown in fields in the community was picked by hand. Above is one of the Pine Mountain Valley Rural Community trucks being loaded with cotton to be transported to gins. Note the handmade cotton baskets which were made from white oak strips.



Feeding the broilers in Pine Mountain Valley. In the early days, 15,000 broilers were sold weekly.



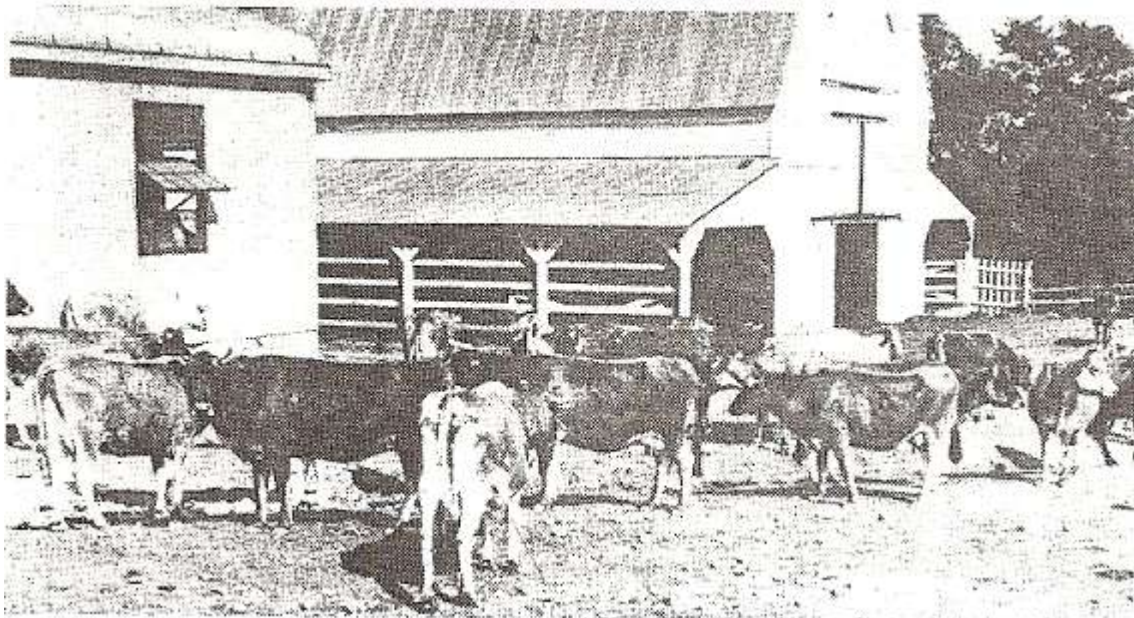
A settler turning eggs in a 16,000-egg capacity incubator in Pine Mountain Valley.



This is a settler with sheep raised on one of the farms in Pine Mountain Valley.



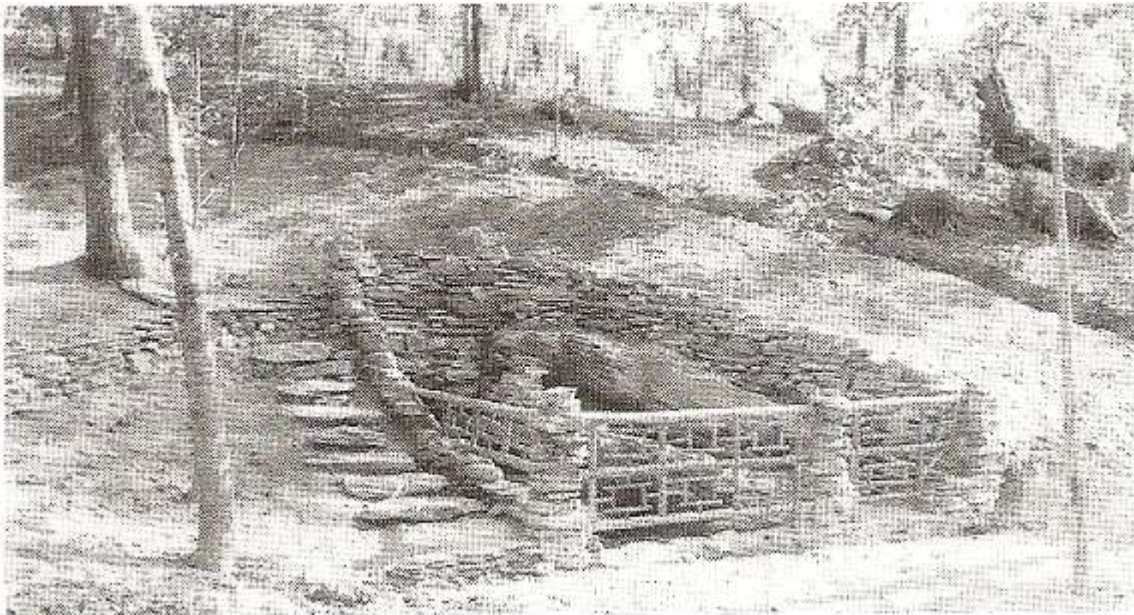
Three barns of the same looks and dimensions were built in Pine Mountain Valley. All three barns were destroyed by fire caused by highly combustible green, moist hay that was stored in the buildings. The barn pictured above is an exact replica of the first barn as it stands today. It is located behind the Callahan house which was the Administration building in the 1930's. It was the corral used for the animals brought in to supply the farmers. The motor pool and garage were also in this vicinity.



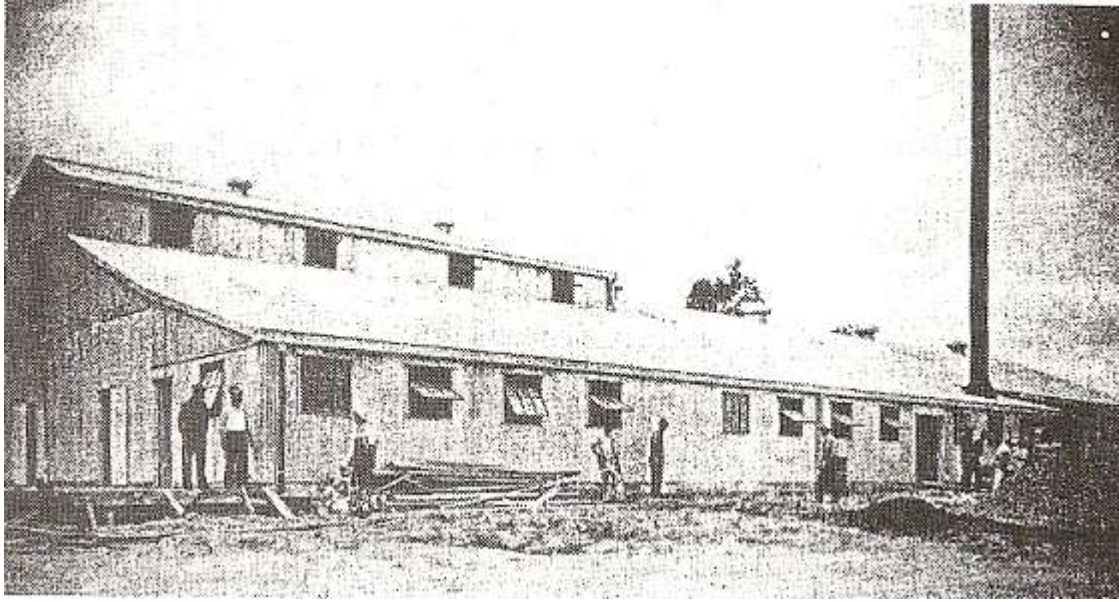
The other two barns were the dairy barn (pictured above), later known as the Sivell Barn and the "O" Street Barn, the beef cattle barn. These two barns were never rebuilt. W. A. Lundy was the farm supervisor.



The swimming pool on "G" Street was a favorite spot for young and old. It had a pavilion and recreation area surrounding it, and in later years, an American Legion Hall was built on adjoining property. The pool has been abandoned, but the American Legion Hall is still in use.



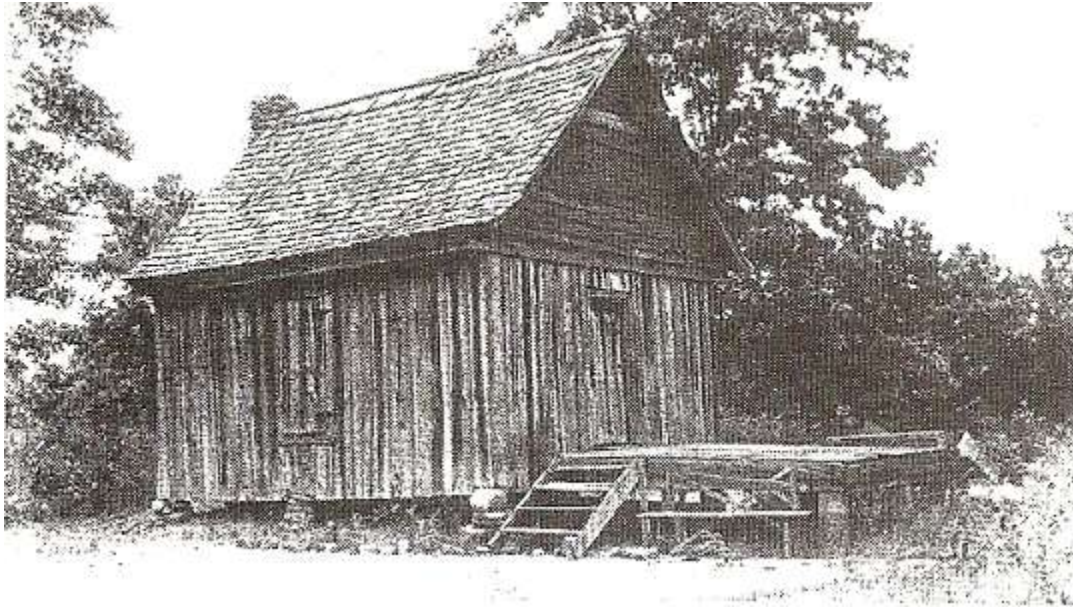
A beautiful spring is located on "G" Street. In the 1930's it was cleaned, rocked and beautified by people in the community. It was a popular site for barbecues and picnics. It is located across the street from the old swimming pool and recreation area.



There were two canning plants in Pine Mountain Valley. Pictured here is the big canning plant. The first canning plant was labeled the little canning plant.



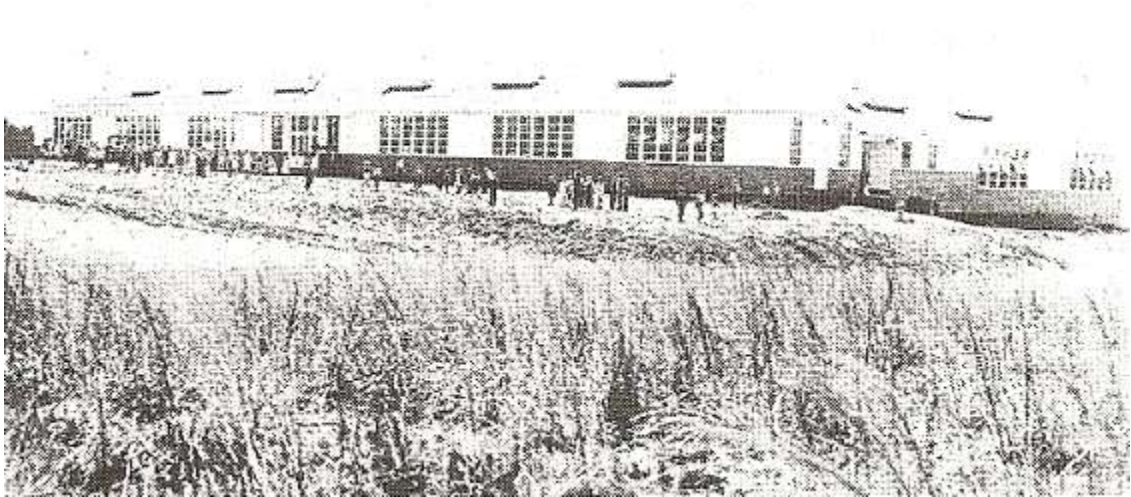
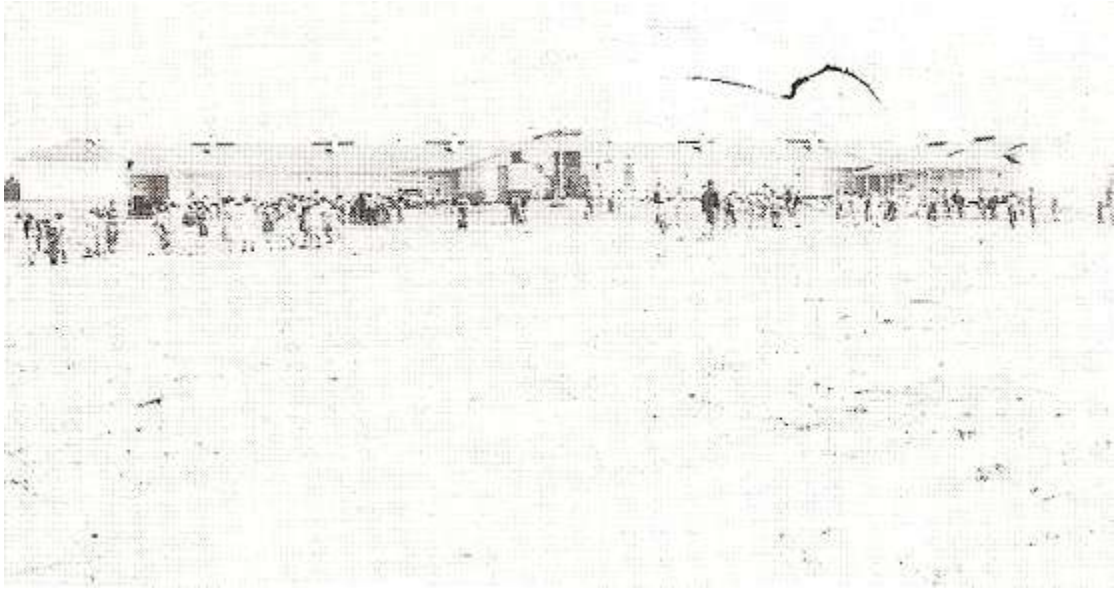
Pictured above is one of the Pine Mountain Valley School buses used to transport students to school. High school students attended school in nearby Hamilton. It was also used to take people to church and recreation activities. One of the first school bus drivers was Roy Swinney who owned and operated this bus.

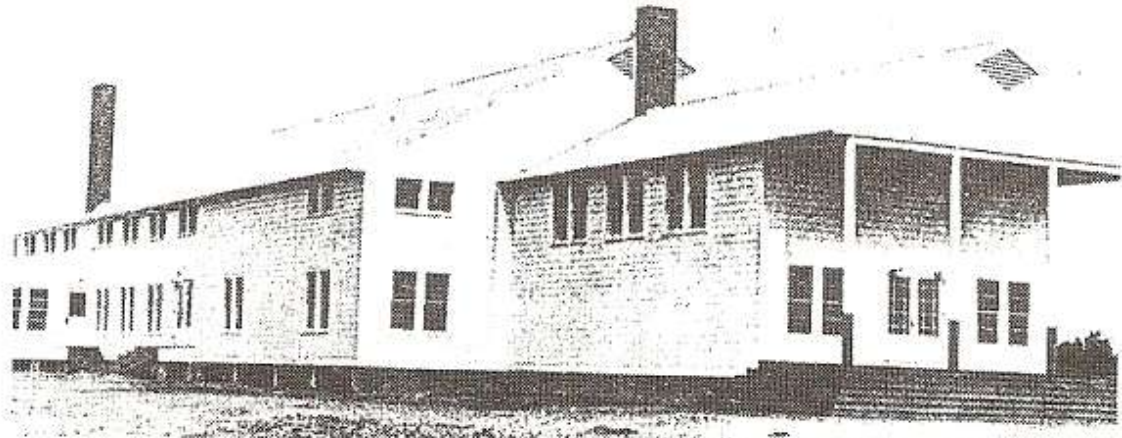


The above little one-room school was one of the first schools in the area. It was standing in 1935 near the site of the new Pine Mountain Valley School.



The Pine Mountain Valley School was an ultra-modern building ahead of its time. It was constructed with open corridors. It was shaped like an eagle with an auditorium in the center. There was a beautiful rock fireplace in the auditorium which could be used inside or outside. The rocks used to build the fireplace were quarried on Pine Mountain.





The Pine Mountain Valley Community Building was second to none in the area. It was noted for its suspended ceiling, projection studio and large stage and library. It was located adjacent to the school building. This building was used by school basketball teams from Hamilton High School to have indoor basketball games with neighboring teams. It was also used for many other recreational activities. The library had an outstanding collection of books and materials and had a librarian on duty.

As workers arrived in Pine Mountain Valley with a fresh feeling of “starting over”, it immediately became apparent that a place of worship was needed.

Through our research, we have learned that in 1935 the very first gathering to assess the religious interest among the early settlers was in the pine thicket directly behind the barracks that housed these men. The barracks were located near the present site of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Prior to the barracks, the tents were temporary, and prayers, songs and scriptures were conducted in what was called “tent city”. The first formal meeting in a congregational setting was held in two of the old barracks that were used for mess halls.



“Tent City”

Attending the first gathering were:

Mrs. George (Naomi) Huggins
Mr. R. P. Broome
Mr. Willard Hahn
Mr. M. L. Daughtry
Mr. T. L. Mosley

It is believed that after lunch on a Sunday in 1935, Reverend Alexander Copeland of Hamilton preached the first sermon in the barracks. Reverend Laskin Earnest and Reverend M. L. Daughtry, settlers in the community, also preached in the barracks.

The Sunday School organization that began in the pines was the only spiritual organization that was working in Pine Mountain Valley for several years, hence it was left to the Sunday School to see that someone came to preach from Sunday to Sunday. The first organized body was the Christian Council which was composed of one representative from each denomination living in the Valley. It was primarily the duty of

the Council to see that each denomination was represented by a preacher to come preach. It was soon thought best to have a regular preacher, so Reverend Wilson of LaGrange was asked to come over to preach on Sunday afternoons. He was followed by Reverend Charles Gray of the Atlanta Bible Institute who was elected to preach for two Sundays per month.

In order to have a fully organized church, the congregation felt the need to have a preacher who would live in the community and preach every Sunday. Reverend N. S. Hardin, a graduate of Howard College, Birmingham, Alabama and Southwestern Baptist Seminary, of Fort Worth, Texas was called on the third Sunday of April 1938. He began his work on the first Sunday in May 1938.



Many of the early settlers recalled that prior to the building of the school, prayer meetings were held under “the old oak tree” that is still standing in Pine Mountain Valley Park.

The Pine Mountain Valley School was begun in 1935 and completed in 1936. Mr. M. L. Dickerson, a teacher in the school, was the first preacher at services held in school. Mr. Claude Boggs was the first Sunday School Superintendent and Mrs. Claude Boggs taught a teenage Sunday School class. Mr. Dickerson preached until 1938. The first Board of Directors for the church consisted of Mr. E. W. Brannon, Mr. W. T. Coleman and Mr. H.L. Riley. One of the first Deacons of the church was Mr. T. L. Mosley, father of one of the present Deacons and long time Sunday School teacher and lay speaker, James Russell Mosley.



Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Coleman, both deceased, were charter members of the Roosevelt Memorial Church. Mr. Coleman was a member of the first Board of Directors and was church treasurer many years. Their daughter, Carolyn Coleman Moyer of Buena Vista, was very helpful in furnishing information for this book.

The community held worship services in the school auditorium and used classrooms for Sunday School. This very active worship was well attended in the school setting. The congregation had been organized in 1935 under the pines and had moved to several locations during a three year period. The church family had long awaited building a community church. The plans for an organized church were completed with seventy-five charter members which had grown to 250 members by November 1938.