A Case Study of a North Carolina Mill Community: Using Archival Collections to Understand Economic Decline and Renewal

Jesse Akman & Betty Garrison
Elon University
Geographic Diversity

Students come from:

42 states and the District of Columbia
26 countries

Top ten represented states:

NC (18%)  CT (6%)
MA (10%)  MD (6%)
NJ (9%)  PA (6%)
NY (8%)  FL (5%)
VA (7%)  GA (3%)

“2025 At A Glance”
Alamance County Today

Population: 174,000

Median Income: $53,000 (U.S. $67,340)

Education: 88% high school, 25% college/post-graduate

Race: 62% Caucasian
20% African-American 14% Latino

Major Industry: Labcorp of America, Honda Power Equipment, Wal-Mart, Glen Raven
Alamance County History

A Microcosm of North Carolina:

- Occaneechi & Sissapahaw Land
- European Settlement: 1750’s: Land, Lumber & Water
- Historic Mill & Textile Industries: Diminished, but not Extinct
The May Family Papers: One Dataset, Two Stories

Using Qualitative Data to Teach a Cultural History of Alamance County

Using Quantitative Data to Understand Alamance County’s Political Economy
State of North Carolina,
Guilford County.

Know all men by these presents, that we
Mary Gray and Margaret Gray, of the
aforesaid county and State, for and in
consideration of the sum of eight hundred
dollars to hard paid by
Philease Gray, of the said county and State,
for

said Thibe, her heirs and assigns, one
slave, a negro boy named Robert,
and aged about fourteen years.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto
set our hands and seals, this April 2nd, 1860.

her

Mary Gray

her mark

George McPhee

Margaret G Gray

Enslavement & Alamance County
Alamance Textile Mills 1830-1900
W. H. May & Family - Aristocracy in Alamance
William H. May
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<th>Interest</th>
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<td>Mar 2</td>
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<td>Jun 30</td>
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<td>Jul 31</td>
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May Family
Children
May College Students

4th, 30th, 1926,

Mr. W. H. May, Jr.,
Hampton-Sidney College,
Hampton-Sidney, Va.

My dear May:

On our return home from Hampton-Sidney Sunday evening,
between Indian and the River we saw two cars turn all
around and then we heard about the wrong road
and they told us one boy was killed and two or three
toys were badly injured. Though we never found
it was a lot of boys were killed and jumped off vehicles.
Some of them have holes in their heads and shoulders,
bad cuts on their face and the teeth torn from one of his
eyes. They don't seem to be going to get well but they
are sent to New York to get well. It is hard to
live with their history will be used
for life.

It was the most horrible automobile accident in Hampton
County since some families were involved little girl
just beyond our River.

It seems that Eugene Alcott and Garland Rondageon were killed
in a car. They were riding home and had no lights on so two poor
and the University boys were coming from Green-
and they had no lights at all except a lantern and
the two cars ran head long into each other. I am sending you
photo of the accident.

I want to impress on you how very careful to
be when you go over to Providence about riding on these old run
down roads. I would very much rather you would pay that
fare on a good car than to take any chance in saving
money. Of course I want you to be economical and
spend as little money on your clothes and necessities, but at the same
time you want to go to Providence do not take any chances on getting
killed or broken up for life.

Can you imagine anything more awful than to have nothing
happen to you like what has just happened to Eugene Alcott
in that fine looking boy and last reports of riding good
by6000 and applying himself right, but now he will be
handicapped in that he will have this awful fear to carry
with him for the rest of his life.

Of course I heard about the Texas boy from Durban getting
killed in automobile accident just two weeks ago. It was

Nov. 16, 1926.

To Mr. May:

Your letter of Nov. 14
has been received.

I knew you would be troubled
by the X. K. report. I was too. I am
particularly anxious for him to
well on an account of his friendship
for him and for your and Mrs.
May.

I try to keep in touch with
much a boy in appearance.

I am sure of his love in
the world, there are so many
in America, I feel that I know the
quite well, and I think that his

trouble is that he is not very well.
May Hosiery c.1930
A Tale of Two Counties
### Employment + Salaries

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Salary</th>
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<td>L. D. Oliver</td>
<td>$4,300.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. E. Holt</td>
<td>$4,300.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. D. Hills</td>
<td>$4,300.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>M. E. Langley</td>
<td>$4,300.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. S. Smith</td>
<td>$4,300.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. F. Baker</td>
<td>$4,300.00</td>
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<td>E. E. Jackson</td>
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<td>H. E. Smith</td>
<td>$4,300.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. L. Taylor</td>
<td>$4,300.00</td>
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### Additional Information
- Includes a note for your rating: $4,300.00
- Total: $4,300.00
Growth, Apogee, Signs of Decline
Growth, Apogee, Signs of Decline

SEVENTEEN YEAR STATISTICAL REVIEW

(Expressed in Millions of Dollars)

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<tr>
<td>Net Sales</td>
<td>$506,8</td>
<td>$510,3</td>
<td>$518,1</td>
<td>$570,7</td>
<td>$565.4</td>
<td>$582.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earnings Before Taxes on Income</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>65.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taxes on Income</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>39.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Earnings</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>26.2</td>
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<td>Working Capital</td>
<td>124.8</td>
<td>120.9</td>
<td>133.3</td>
<td>166.6</td>
<td>104.3</td>
<td>91.8</td>
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<td>Long-Term Debt</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>25.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stockholders’ Equity</td>
<td>184.9</td>
<td>174.6</td>
<td>171.0</td>
<td>151.7</td>
<td>131.9</td>
<td>127.5</td>
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<td>Fixed Assets, at Cost</td>
<td>169.6</td>
<td>147.2</td>
<td>134.7</td>
<td>108.5</td>
<td>84.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed Assets, Less Depreciation and Amortization</td>
<td>122.1</td>
<td>106.4</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>52.6</td>
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Per Share of Common Stock (Expressed in Dollars)

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<tbody>
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<td>Earnings Before Taxes on Income</td>
<td>$1.7</td>
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<td>$2.0</td>
<td>$2.7</td>
<td>$3.4</td>
<td>$6.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taxes on Income</td>
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<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preferred Dividends</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>0.8</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
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Note: The figures for Burlington Mills pre-date the statistics with a production volume of $1,000,000. In 1937 is shown a more comprehensive basis. The common shares issued before December 31, 1940, were combined with shares for four months ended December 31, 1940, for the purpose of adjusting the shares for four months ended December 31, 1940, for the purpose of adjusting the shares for four months ended December 31, 1940, for the purpose of adjusting the shares for four months ended December 31, 1940, for the purpose of adjusting the shares for four months ended December 31, 1940.
Mill Closures
Repurposing Mills and Mill Villages
What About Your Institution?

- Every Archive Tells this Story
  - Story of Your Region - Its Industries, People, Histories, Possible Futures
  - Make In-Person Visits!

- Students Are Now Community Members
  - Meet Your Neighbors
  - You’re a Stakeholder → This is Your Responsibility
References


Thanks!

Contact Us:

Jesse Akman
jakman2@elon.edu

Betty Garrison
bgarrison@elon.edu