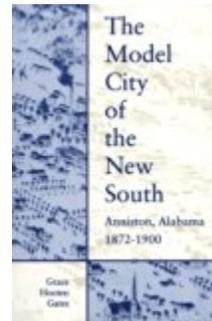


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Grace Hooten Gates. *The Model City of the New South: Anniston Alabama 1872-1900*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996. 320 pp. \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8173-0818-6.

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## A Forgotten New South City: Anniston, Alabama

In the preface to the newly released paperbound edition of Grace Hooten Gates' work, the author criticizes scholars of the New South for neglecting the importance of Anniston in the Southeast's industrialization. Gates, who has recently retired from the University of Alabama at Gadsden, declares that "Although it remains fertile ground for study the town's extraordinary story has been largely ignored in the modern writing of the New South period" (p. 4). Gates corrects this oversight, by providing a detailed examination of Anniston's industrial and social development, from the town's founding in 1872 through 1900, one of its greatest periods of economic and population growth.

Anniston's founders, Samuel Noble and Alfred Tyler, originally planned to maintain the town as a private company community centered around the Woodstock Iron Company. They believed that they could create a "model city," that could serve as an example for other developing areas in the South and to emphasize the importance of employers paying heed to the "physical and spiritual needs of their employees." For eleven years, Noble and Tyler succeeded. Woodstock Iron, which produced a very high grade of charcoal pig iron, brought great wealth to Anniston, and the town's citizens benefited. Workers at the Woodstock Iron Company earned among the highest wages in the South and their town developed along an ordered pattern, allowing for a separation of private residences from areas of industrial development.

The coming of the Georgia Pacific Railroad in 1883 opened Anniston to other industries and people. Dur-

ing this time, the town's economy became increasingly diversified, centering around the railroad and textile industries and, during the Spanish-American War, a military training camp. The town's population also experienced changes, with an increase in the number of blacks and women, but a decrease in the size of its foreign-born population. In addition, by 1900, Anniston was becoming eclipsed by the nearby city of Birmingham, with a larger population and greater access to coal and iron. Anniston never caught up with its neighbor, and the town remained an economic power only in western Alabama, rather than throughout the Southeast.

Gates provides an excellent examination of the various facets of Anniston's development. Although Gates sometimes relies too extensively on newspaper accounts, particularly in her examination of Anniston's black community, she effectively weaves together the social, political, and economic aspects of how and why a strong sense of community developed in the town. Gates also provides a wealth of detail, some of it more important, such as the changing occupations of the townspeople between 1888 and 1900, than others, like the cost of electricity when lights were installed in the town. As with any good book, one wishes that Gates' work would go further, and examine Anniston throughout the twentieth century.

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