



Life On the Sunny Slopes of Old Cliffside

Alfred Reno Bailey

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Cliffside, North Carolina was a model little village for its time, over a span of about 90 years. It was a one-company town, an example--a good one--of the paternal mill ownership that was the practice of the day. A man named Raleigh Haynes had the vision, ambition and skills to transform part of lower Rutherford County, an area called High Shoals, from a wilderness of forests and brambles to a thriving, productive place, making use of the two most prevalent local resources--cotton and water power. In 1900 he built a dam on the Second Broad River, on the banks of which he erected a giant mill that would turn raw cotton into gingham, the favored cloth for the fashions of the time. And he built a railroad to send his mill's product to the world. This book, through articles, essays, news stories, memoirs, anecdotes and images traces the arc of the area's cultural history, from the 18th century until the early 21st, in which the textile industry (and the town) arrives, thrives, and then, over the past several decades, slowly and sadly declines. Cliffside and its mill provided generations with jobs, housing and opportunity, in a small-town culture of belonging, happiness and friendship. In the 1960s the paternal nature of the industry changed; the old mill hill houses were vacated and razed. Without a customer base the center of commerce withered and its buildings were abandoned. Finally globalization took its devastating toll, the textile industry collapsed, and bankruptcies ensued, leaving little towns like Cliffside with few reasons to exist.

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