

Striving to Push the Limit: Two Chickens in Every Pot

The July sun was only beginning to peer over the horizon when I opened the door of the Washington, D.C. row house where I had been imposing myself on the sofa of a friend serving an internship in the city. After a metro ride into Maryland, a bleary-eyed bagel, and a transfer to a bus connection, the sun was fully risen. I cast (hopefully) unnoticed glances at the commuters, wondering if they were on a similar mission, if we were going to the same place. Our bus approached an enormous building, stopped, and most of us disembarked. I followed them over a double door threshold, through a security x-ray checkpoint, and entered the National Archives and Records Administration's complex in College Park, Maryland. I felt like a real historian, and this feeling was only lofted up by receiving a researcher card, complete with my photograph.

My visit to the National Archives was just one point in a yearlong, carefully choreographed research endeavor. Beginning with the selection of a research mentor and our initial meeting, Dr. Hamilton oversaw the refinement of my research question. I approached the project with the dual goals of conducting meaningful and original historical research and focusing on some aspect of the history of the food system. These goals, particularly the former, mandated extensive use of primary sources; I very intentionally avoided recreating a synthesis of other arguments. I wanted to simulate the research process of an historian as closely as possible. The decision to focus on the poultry industry was driven by the plenitude of primary sources in Georgia, as the modern poultry industry was devised and implemented in northeast Georgia.

After selecting a topic, I sought to formulate a meaningful research question, which required significant engagement with secondary sources. I contacted Jill Severn at the Special Collections library, and she proved invaluable. In her demonstration of WorldCat Dissertations and Theses, we found a dissertation on the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of Georgia poultry produced by a

Columbia University student, and I contacted interlibrary loan to order it. Studying this key piece, utilizing its bibliography to find other secondary sources in the library's collection, and subsequently using those newfound bibliographies to widen further my search for sources enabled me to develop a tantalizing research question. It was clear that the development of the poultry agribusiness model is well researched and understood; less elucidated are the positions and roles of different types of actors within the industry, especially the power dynamics between them. I wanted to discover who controlled the industry, how that control was gained, and subsequently, how it was utilized.

Further meetings with Jill allowed me to further develop my research skills. I sought to discover everything our university had to offer and to capitalize on every lead in pursuit of my answer. Jill explained how to use the various libraries and the differences between them. She guided me to audio-visual primary sources, namely an interview with Abit Massey conducted by the Richard B. Russell Library as part of its *Reflections on Georgia Politics* series. She also suggested that the University's Cooperative Extension Service would be an interesting line of inquiry and directed me to the University of Georgia Archives in the Hargrett Library. Jill also exposed me to Archive Grid, which allowed me to see a comprehensive list of potentially useful archives, and I limited my searches to a feasibly accessible geographic area.

After my meeting with Jill Severn, through which I acquired a creative set of research methods and tools, I struck out on my own path, determined to prove to myself that I could find sources independently and meet the same successes as a real historian. My goal was to completely exhaust the resources at my disposal. I sought primary sources, economic histories, and social histories, among others. Pursuing these research avenues, I investigated the Science Library's holdings, worked with the Map and Government Information Library to order House

committee reports from the library's repository, examined beautiful folios of *Collier's* magazine from the 1950s, and learned to use microfilm to read editions of the *Gainesville Times* and other periodicals. I found new material in the D.W. Brooks Collection at the Russell library and worked with Jill to get authorization to view damaged, moldy, and burnt primary source documents that were not yet released. I sought transcripts from the Smithsonian Institute's Southern Agriculture Oral History Project but was thwarted by the government shutdown. I also digitally accessed the Cooperative Extension Service's website and the New Georgia Encyclopedia. This frenzy of independent research is also what prompted my visit to the National Archives. While the bibliography does reference all of the archives and textual, digital, and audio-visual sources employed, it is, at first glance, not representative of my extensive reliance on primary sources; the half-page listing of archival collections is shorthand for the over eighty distinct primary sources cited in footnotes that do not receive a direct, bibliographic entry, including internal office memoranda, press releases, company pamphlets, conference speeches, telegrams, letters, and transcripts.

These sources perfectly illustrate my goal to examine different actors' experiences; they were produced by different types of individuals who performed different functions in the poultry industry, and these individuals disagreed about whether the emerging agribusiness model was positive or negative. Furthermore, the documents were produced for different purposes, some were intended for private, personal use only, as evidenced by the D.W. Brooks Collection's stipulation that all material be pre-approved with sensitive information removed before being released.

What began as the fulfillment of a curriculum requirement resulted in a 73-page thesis and substantial personal growth. Through the research process, I learned as much about myself

as I did about my research question. I had never taken on a project of such seeming impossibility because of its complexity and enormity. Further, the knowledge that the work was completely self-produced, creative, and original has significantly strengthened my sense of intellectual and professional confidence. The process has also substantially informed the course that my post-graduate pursuits will take. I am proud of what I consider to be my greatest intellectual achievement thus far.

Abstract: Power Dynamics in Georgia's Poultry Industry, 1950-1965

The emergence of industrial-style poultry production, poultry agribusiness, between 1950 and 1965 in Georgia was a watershed period and encompassed a wide range of actors. Among the cast are government policy makers, government agents, national companies, individual farmers, agricultural specialists, technological innovators, and furnishing merchants. This project examines the relationships among these different actors with particular attention paid to the social power dynamics between government actors, small producers, and integrators. A significant portion of the historiography covering this period describes the economic establishment of the poultry industry as an agribusiness model. This project will build on the framework developed by studies of the development of the agribusiness model by focusing directly on the power dynamics between the actors within that emerging model, giving more attention to the relationships between different groups rather than retelling an account of the rise of agribusiness. To develop sound historical results, this project makes extensive use of primary source documents produced by government officials, businessmen, small producers, and others. The agribusiness poultry production which emerged in this period had ramifications beyond business model. The results of the study elaborate upon a generalized and often impersonal economic history, revealing sharp disparities of power and self-determination across different types of actors in the industrialization of poultry production. The preponderance of evidence illustrates that small producers were disempowered and government actors were sidelined while integrators rose in prominence, concentrated decision-making power within their hands, and led the development of the new style of poultry production.

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D.W. Brooks Papers

Herman E. Talmadge Collection

Richard B. Russell, Jr. Collection