CHAPTER 1

Madison’s History and Development

I. Founding of the City

Madison was effectively founded on May 11, 1809, when approximately 100 acres at the center of newly established Morgan County were set aside for a county seat. Under the authority of the State and the direction of the elected county officials, the town was initially divided into 48 lots, each measuring 100 by 200 feet, which in turn were sold to potential settlers and investors. The name chosen by the county officers commemorated James Madison, the fourth President of the U.S.; Madison, in fact, began office the same year. Following a similar patriotic theme, principal streets were eventually named after other presidents: Monroe, Washington, and Jefferson. A fourth street was named after John Hancock, the President of the Second Congress.

The establishment of Madison was part of a much larger process of settlement of the Georgia frontier. Land for the county and town was a result of the Creek cessions of 1802-1805. During this period a vast tract of land west of the Oconee River was acquired as a result of several Indian treaties, beginning with that at Fort Wilkinson of 1802. These treaties recognized the inevitability of western settlement, due to the pressure of the growing population in the east. Morgan was one of ten counties established between 1802 and 1815. The others were Baldwin, Wilkinson, Jones, Laurens, Putnam, Randolph (later Jasper), Twiggs, Pulaski, and Telfair. All required a certain amount of adjustment during the period of their foundation. Morgan County, named after the hero of Cowpens, General Daniel Morgan, eventually absorbed portions of what had once been Greene and Baldwin Counties when it was finally created by an act of the Legislature in 1807. An additional portion of Jasper County was also added in 1815 to better equalize the county areas.

Settlement of the new counties was by the newly devised land lottery system. Prior to 1803, lands in Georgia were awarded by either the headright system or by bounty grants. The latter were rewards for past services, particularly military service or other patriotic support during the Revolutionary War. This process was generally subject to corruption, with wealthy planters using their social and political influence to acquire large holdings of usually the best lands. As a result, less desirable lands went unsettled. There were also a number of major scandals involving conflicting and fraudulent claims. These, of course, had embarrassed the government. Finally, from a strategic point of view, the system of land allocation left large portions of frontier unoccupied, and therefore undefended. The new lottery system was devised to encourage more uniform settlement by homesteaders.

Under the new system all free white males over the age of 21 who had been citizens of the United States for eight years and, most important, who had lived in Georgia for three years, had a right to one chance in the land lottery. Veterans were awarded additional chances, as were men with more than one child. Widows and orphans who were heads of families also received additional chances. The system was less subject to corruption, as Robert Preston Brooks stressed in his History of Georgia: the two wheels, one for lot holders and one for plot numbers, ensured fairness. The system was also efficient. Eventually over 30,000,000 acres would be dispersed by the land lottery system, though the system itself was revised in subsequent lotteries.
other similar claims, some of them earlier restitutions for losses during
Indian raids along the earlier frontier. Following settlements and
adjustments, however, Morgan County would finally include a little over
1,100 separate 202 1/2 acre parcels, all intended as farms for homesteaders.

The new settlers were in many ways a breed apart from those who had
established themselves east of the Oconee. Much of Washington,
Oglethorpe, and Greene Counties (the counties north and east of Morgan)
were settled by relatively wealthy planters from Virginia and the Carolinas,
many of them attracted to the area just before and especially after the
Revolutionary War. As the historian Merton Coulter has explained, these
were generally men and women with considerable capital and often with
social and family connections to coastal South Carolina and Georgia. The
newer land lottery era settlers were essentially yeoman farmers. They would
grow a variety of grain crops and vegetables, as well as keeping stock, but
largely live at a subsistence level.

There appears to have been a certain amount of squatting in several of
the newly organized counties, following precedents set earlier along the
frontiers. The small settlement and trading post of Elberton, for example,
was acquired by the State Commissioners when Elbert County was laid
out in 1790. Similarly, there seems to have been sporadic settlement in the
Morgan County area, including an apparent settlement by members of the
Greene County Fitzpatrick family in the area later known as Buckhead,
possibly in anticipation of later land purchases. Madison itself, according
to tradition, was the site of a small squatter settlement, where trade took
place between the remaining Indians and early white settlers. Both groups,
according to tradition, shared a water source known still as Round Bowl
Spring, near the present Calvary Baptist Church. There is no record,
however, of squatters being bought out at the time of Madison's founding.
Still, prior settlement may have been a factor in selection of the town
location.

Detail from the 1814 Gridley Map of Georgia. Notice that Madison
has been mislabeled as Manticello. Illustration courtesy of the Haggett
Library, the University of Georgia.

One of the first orders of business for the new counties was the election
of officers to oversee the administration of the counties and to ensure that
lands were fairly claimed and recorded. Most important for the history of
Madison, they also oversaw the establishment of the towns. These were
obviously important positions, and one that could ensure the influence of
their holders, particularly when it came to purchasing further lands. Morgan
County's first officers, elected on January 14, 1808, were: Isham B.
Fannin, Clerk of the Inferior Court; Daniel Sessions, Surveyor; Miles Gibbs,
Coroner; Joseph White, Sheriff; and John Nesbit, Clerk of the Superior
Court.

It was the responsibility, in turn, of the justices of the Inferior Court,
working with the other county officers, to provide for convenient locations
to dispense law and justice, and therefore eventually to provide a courthouse
and jails. To pay for these it was left to court and county officials to select
the town site and "to layoff the same or any part thereof into lots of such
size as they deem proper," as set out in the law. On August 13, 1808, Ezekiel
Strickland, apparently representing the Inferior Court, purchased from
Samuel C. rocket of Jackson County, approximately 105 acres to serve as
a site for the new town. It was shortly after this that the town was surveyed
into the 48 lots mentioned above and indicated on the first town map of
1809. Lots for the court and jail and other community purposes, including
churches, were reserved by the court. The rest were sold, at 12 months
credit, to pay for the construction of county buildings as well as roads and
other costs.

Madison's town plan followed one of three typical plan types for the new
counties. A II were rectilinear, ultimately reflecting Georgia's first colony
at Savannah, as well as Renaissance-inspired town planning ideals more
generally. But there were important variations among the plans as well.
Madison's was what has come to be recognized as the Washington-type
plan. This was probably a reflection of the fact that many Madison and
Morgan County settlers came from the Washington area, which of course
constituted the edge of the earlier Georgia frontier. The Washington plan
was characterized by a central square at the center of two sides, or at nearby
Watkinsville where the town was arranged along a single corridor, much
like Augusta. Madison's plan was used also at Manticello, Eatonton,
Lexington, Sandersville, and Crawfordville, and was clearly the most
popular in this section of the newly ceded territories.

II. Early Settlement

Madison was quickly settled after its initial founding in May 1809. By
the time of the city's final incorporation by the Legislature on December
12 the same year, all 48 original lots had been sold for a total of $7,310.
In all, 33 men purchased lots, among them Reuben Rogers, formerly of
Columbia and Warren Counties, and Joseph Morrow from Greene County.
Some of these men actually settled in the town; others held lots speculatively,
selling off their holdings within a few years of further subdividing their lots
for homes and businesses.

A crucial regulation of the town was delegated to five commissioners
appointed by the Inferior Court. The first were James Mathews, William
Mitchell, James Mitchell, Abner Fannin, and John Whitely. The
commissioners were responsible for passing laws, securing water rights,
overseeing street improvements and other duties necessary to the town's
existence. The Commissioners also monitored development in the town,
and ensured that surveys for subdivisions were appropriately handled and
recorded by the Court. While a courthouse would shortly be built in the
center of the town square, for a time the Inferior Court's and the
Commissioner's business was conducted from a private home owned by
Abram McCauley and located in the town. Similarly, the Superior Court
held at least its first session in the house of Fields Kennedy, a farmer whose
house was located near the Oconee River, south of Buckhead. Most business
was conducted on the recording of land transactions and wills, as well as legal
squabbles. The town's first marriage was that of James Garrett to Tabatha
Carver in February of 1808.

Records of land transactions suggest that the town was quickly thriving.
From an early period, Madison served as a stop for stagecoaches en route
along the main road from Philadelphia via Charleston to New Orleans. A
number of taverns were established to serve this trade, including, according
to tradition, the old Van House on the present Old Post Road south of
the town center. Other businesses also prospered, mostly serving the
surrounding population but also serving the growing number of travelers.
These included blacksmith shops, carriage shops, leather shops, and so on.
Also, nearby planters began increasingly to purchase in-town lots for
private houses, beginning a tradition that was to increase as the century
progressed.
The town quickly became a center for social life in the county. It was a place to go shopping, attend occasional "soiree musicals" (as one early advertisement stated), enroll children in small private schools—of which apparently at least two were operating by 1815—and talk politics. It was also, apparently, a center for sporting life. In 1829, a 25-acre plot at the edge of town was purchased for $200 by a group of sporting gentlemen for a racetrack. Purchasers included Elijah Wyatt, H.C. Carlton, John Fielder, Ezekiel Park, and James Cunningham.

To accommodate Madison's growth, the city limited were extended by Act of Legislature in 1822 to include "all land within one-half mile of the public square," in keeping with Georgia's tendency to adopt circular town plans during this period. Additional lots were surveyed following the general rectilinear principles of the original town, with increasing variation once these began to intersect with traditional thoroughfares at the city's edges. Still, Madison's growth was controlled and orderly. During the 1820s and 30s the town consisted of large residential lots along uniform streets, with occasional older houses—originally outside the town proper—gradually being absorbed into the newer residential areas.

The original town lots, particularly those near the town square, were especially subject to development pressure. A city map of 1837 provides some idea of development patterns. Most of the newer lots were still individually owned, though there was an increasing number of subdivided lots and, less clear on the map but apparent from other sources, many subleased properties. Streets were maintained at 40 feet in width. But there were numerous smaller alleys transecting the original larger blocks. Sizes of original lots varied as well, though frontages, now at 180 feet, remained uniform. Depths, however, varied from 250 feet to over 300 feet.

Several lots were assigned to schools. The "M" (Methodist), "P" (Presbyterian) and "B" (Baptist) churches, as indicated on the map, also owned adjacent lots to provide revenue for church buildings. Names well-known in the community, including some that remain as street names, such as Burney and Reese, were prominent, as were the holdings of one of the town's first physicians, Dr. William Johnson.

Most of the town's growth occurred south and west of the original core, though increasingly houses were built along the north/south spine of Monroe Street—soon to be called Main Street. Houses at the town center, of which only one prominent example still exists—the two-story Shields-Burney House just east of the County Courthouse on East Jefferson Street—were often pulled down within a few years of their construction to make room for either larger houses or for more commercial buildings.

The record for Lot 24, just south of the town square and the present site of the Bank of Morgan County, which was recently investigated by local archaeologist, Marshall Williams, suggests how varied development was. Lot 24 was one of the original 48 town lots. Originally it measured, as was typical, 100 by 200 feet, with the shorter frontage along Monroe Street (now Main Street) and the longer along what is now known as Burnett Street. On May 26, 1809, or shortly after the town's organization, it was sold to James Mathews for $263. Within a short time, a 25 by 200 foot section was sold by Mathews to James Epps. In 1814, Mathews sold the
the central place of Madison is apparent. Map illustration courtesy of the Georgia State Archives.

remainder to Lancelot Johnston, a prominent local planter. Epps, in turn, sold his portion, including his house to Whitfield Harrell. Johnston then subdivided his lot, which probably already included a leather shop, to a Mr. Barrow, who, together with Wiley Ward, had operated the shop there for a few years, apparently paying rent to the owner. In 1816, or the same year he purchased it, Barrow sold out to Thomas Tanner, who in turn bought out Harrell's portion. During the first part of the 19th century, at least five houses were built on the lot, including, finally, the core of the present house, built around 1830, though much modified after 1885.

One of the earlier houses on the lot, built either by Thomas Tanner or by Reuben Mann, one of his successors, stood on the lot until recently. This simple, two-by-one bay building suggests something of the quality and character of early Madison buildings. It was a frame structure, consisting of heavy timber pieces, joined with wooden pegs. The timbers were all numbered, using Roman numerals, to aid in construction. Exterior walls were covered with clapboards (weatherboards) and apparently the floor consisted of tamped earth; floorboards were only added at a later date. Other early houses probably followed this configuration, consisting mostly of one or two room cottages and occasional two-story frame buildings such as that still standing, though altered, at 179 East Jefferson Street. There may have been occasional log houses, generally covered by weatherboards, though this was probably more of a rural tradition where such large timber pieces were readily available and skills for much preferred frame buildings were not available.

Madison, then, in the 1820s and 30s consisted of an assortment of wooden houses, many of only one or two rooms, a few institutional or religious buildings, and a relatively scattered collection of mostly frame sheds for industrial or commercial use. There were some brick buildings, and we know the brick was manufactured locally from an early period. By 1827, in fact, the town could claim, as Sherwood's Gazetteer points out, an "excellent brick courthouse and jail." There were also, according to Sherwood, both a male and female academy "one a fine building two stories," to which "a good library" was attached, and also a Masonic Hall. A n 1829 Gazetteer noted that a Methodist Chapel had been built and the other groups worshipped in the academy buildings, also that there were numerous stores and offices and at least 60 residences. The town's population was well under 1,000, most of it clustered in houses near the town square.

While Madison would soon be outstripped by other Middle Georgia towns, particularly Milledgeville, which was made the state's capital in 1807, it was clear that its founding had been successful. Its growth, it should be emphasized, had occurred within a 20-year period from the time of initial settlement. This, of course, was a reflection of the overall growth and development of the state, which had increased in population from 162,000 in 1800, or just before Madison's founding, to 340,000 by 1820, with much of its increase taking place in the new western counties like Morgan.

The period between 1800 and 1830 had seen shifts in the state's economy as well, particularly its agricultural economy. Prior to western expansion, the economy of the southeastern area of the state had consisted of large, mostly rice, cotton, and indigo plantations along the coast, with trade and some manufacturing in older urban centers. It was to avoid the latter type of economy that newer counties like Morgan had been founded, with their small holdings for subsistence farmers, serving also as the foundation for a stable yeoman class. Unfortunately for the state's democratic visionaries, the system began to change almost at the time of settlement. While lottery winners were largely limited to single 202 1/2 acre plots, (widows or veterans, for example, could be exceptions), they were not required to settle their holdings and in fact could sell as soon as ownership was recorded. A t an early date a number of better-financed planters and investors began to consolidate holdings to establish larger plantations.

The main incentive for consolidation was, of course, the rising new cash crop-cotton. While cotton had been grown successfully at least since the 1780s, it was only after 1793 with Eli Whitney's introduction of the cotton gin at Mulberry Grove on the Savannah River, that large-scale cotton plantations proved practical and profitable. Plantations were converted to cotton in the coastal area shortly afterward. But it was the Piedmont, with its dark, fertile soil, that many looked upon as the ideal cotton growing land. Coupled with improved cotton gins of the early 1800s, cotton production by 1820 had begun to supplant earlier subsistence crops in the region. High prices, beginning in fact in 1807, the year Morgan County was established, and booming during the period of the War of 1812, ensured cotton's success in the region. The agricultural historian F.N. Boney estimates that by the 1820s, 60 percent of the upland farmers were growing cotton, a trend that was to continue as other former Indian lands were opened up.

The shift to cotton was to have a great impact upon both Morgan County and its seat. While originally a trading and governmental center for a pioneering group of yeoman farmers, Madison was quickly becoming the county town for a new class of cotton planters. Wheat, oats, corn, vegetables, and livestock were all supereceded by the new and immensely profitable monoculture. The cotton plantations, of course, were larger and depended increasingly on slave labor, quickly altering population ratios in the county. By 1838, Morgan County's total population of over 9,000 consisted of 3,820 whites and 5,908 colored. It was really this new, slave-based economy that could support the large, in-town second homes that were coming to predominate in Madison and also, that could fuel the sustained development and redevelopment of in-town lots, such as that outlined above for lot 24. Increasingly, Madison's leadership would be drawn from the new cotton aristocracy, and it was no coincidence that one of its most famous citizens, Lancelot Johnston, would secure his fortune with a new cottonseed huller, which he patented in 1830 and operated at his plantation near town.
Madison’s status as a town of refinement was a reflection of the general economic growth of the county. First there was cotton, which continued, with minor fluctuations, to fulfill earlier, often grandiose expectations. Cotton production had spawned other industries as well, particularly cotton oil manufacture and cotton gin companies, the most important of which was probably Winship’s located near town. In 1853, the Madison Steam Mill Company was founded with a working capital of $69,280. This company, which included 26 looms and 2,016 spindles, manufactured tacking, ribbons, and cloth. During peak production periods 75 operators produced up to 1,040 yards a day. Other similar companies would follow, providing employment for a growing in-town population. In 1854, for example, White’s Collections, following census records, would list over 31 “manufacturing establishments” in the town and nearby countryside. These included nine grist mills, three cotton mills, seven saw mills, as well as special industries such as soapstone milling.

Most of the population, however, remained outside the town proper. Census figures for 1850 list 621 families, owning 621 houses throughout the county. The county population figures were: 1,862 white males; 1,772 white females; 11 “free-colored” males and five “free-colored” females, for a total free population of 3,650. The slave population, reflective of the growing cotton industry, had increased at a greater rate and stood at 7,094, nearly twice the white population. In all there were 236 farms, from an original potential, in terms of lots, of about 1,145. Personal property for the county was valued at $3,930,583; real estate at $1,648,414. State taxes paid for the year 1848 were $4,859.04.

The economic growth of the town and county provided the foundation for a growing bourgeoisie, with less immediate connection to the land. This group included doctors, lawyers, merchants, artisans, and some whose professions straddled agriculture and other fields. Well-known doctors included William Johnson mentioned previously, and Seaborn J. Saffold. Dr. Saffold’s practice, according to tradition, extended from A thens to M onticello. Johnson and Saffold were followed by E. E. Jones and other physicians who could count on a steady business from an increasingly wealthy clientele. Similarly, lawyers’ offices sprouted up around the courthouse to handle wills and deeds and an inevitably growing number of legal disputes. These were what F. N. Boney has called the “materialistic provincials,” new to prosperity, but eager to assume the trappings of urban sophistication.

Madison’s new population entered wholeheartedly into civic affairs. Literary and philosophical societies sprang up. There were dramatic performances and other entertainments at Fosters Hall (or the Fosters Hall’s successor) off the town square. A Masonic Lodge was founded, as was a division of the “Sons of Temperance.” There was also, according to White, “dancing, hunting, fishing, etc.”

Entertainment was matched, understandably in this rich Protestant environment, by philanthropy. In 1817, Benjamin Braswell established a special fund for the children of destitute widows, with a bequest of $20,000. This was later augmented by a gift from Mrs. Ann Kolb. The town also maintained a fund for poor children. According to town records, in 1849 Madison helped pay for the education of 210 children.

By 1850, Madison had established itself more generally as an important educational center in the region. In addition to several small primary and secondary schools, dating from the 1810s, two new institutions were established within a few weeks of each other for the higher education of young ladies. These were essentially finishing schools, incorporating both the last years of secondary education and the equivalent of the first year or two of college.

The first of the schools was the Madison Collegiate Institution, founded in 1849 and incorporated by an act of the Georgia Legislature in 1850. This was the Baptist school, and it followed in the tradition of the Baptist schools such as LaGrange and Mercer, founded in the 1830s. Principal support came from John Byne Walker, a local wealthy planter and devoted Baptist layman. Classes were held in a building at what is presently 472 South Main Street, advertised in the school prospectus as “large and commodious, containing an assembly room of 40 feet square, besides four large reception rooms, and a smaller house, containing two rooms.” Shortly afterward, a new brick building, measuring 50 by 108 feet, was constructed next door, and later in 1850, the school’s name was changed to the Georgia Female College, suggestive of its grander expectations. Capitalizing on Madison’s reputation—“The name of Madison,” the prospectus claimed, “is synonymous with wealth, refinement and morality”—the college attracted...
a growing number of students during the 1850s. Most were from nearby Georgia towns, though there were some students, presumably with family connections, from as far away as Texas and South America. Courses included foreign languages, philosophy, history, botany, geography, geology, and also - as a reflection of the students’ future positions in society - music, painting, and work with “wax fruits and flowers.” There was also need for professional training as teachers, and a Normal School course was instituted in 1855. By 1866, the college could claim 62 graduates and 102 students in residence. Most of the students boarded in the homes of teachers or other upstanding Madisonians at a rate of $10 to $12 per month.

The Georgia Female College was joined by the Methodist College, also founded in 1850. Run for several years by James G. Price, the Methodist College - known as Madison Female College - offered a similar course of instruction in its building on present-day Academy Street, near the site of the present Episcopal Church. Madison Female College again following the precedent set by another college, the Georgia Female College of Macon (now Wesleyan College), provided an education for young ladies, presumably destined to serve as wives of Georgia’s businessmen and planters. A son of a commemorative speaker pointed out, “The true nobility of woman is to keep her own sphere.” Both schools continued until the 1860s, when their operations were interrupted by the War Between the States. The Baptist-operated Georgia Female College would be revived for a few years afterward, but never again succeeded to the degree it had during the 1850s.

The Georgia Female College and the Madison Female College were important cultural markers in the town. Both included libraries, which were used by the public, and hosted events important to town life. Several boys’ academies were also founded during this period, including one in which Alexander Hamilton Stephens, later Vice President of the Confederacy, taught for a short period. One school was located on Academy Street, the site later of the Newton House, and another in the Walker House, called Thurlston Hall. The latter was headed by Rev. David Butler, a leading clergyman in town.

The growth of educational institutions was matched by churches and church-related societies. By the 1850s, there were four major denominations in town: the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and the Episcopalians. There was also a small Roman Catholic congregation. Most had their own meetinghouse. In fact, the Methodists had occupied at least three buildings by this period. Their most recent church was an 1841 brick structure on Academy Street (now in apparently altered form, the Episcopal Church). The Baptists built their first meeting house as early as 1833, exchanging it for their present grand, neoclassical brick building on South Main Street, also the gift of John B. Walker, in 1858. The Presbyterians, who had worshipped in assembly rooms at one of the male academies since 1821, built a new sanctuary, also on South Main Street, in 1842. The Episcopalians worshipped in a small frame building, which has since been destroyed. Records are less clear for black congregations, though balconies were provided for blacks in both the Presbyterian and Baptist churches. Also, an earlier white Methodist Church became the property of a black congregation, now Clark’s Chapel Baptist Church, which moved to its present site near the railroad. Other black congregations, including Calvary Baptist on Academy Street and the A M E Church in the black residential area called Canaan, also date from the second half of the 19th century. The Calvary church was built in 1878, on the site of the earlier white Baptist Church; the A M E Church dates to 1882.

Educational and religious institutions tended to promote literary interests in the town. A suggested, there were a number of literary societies. Also, Bible groups and Sunday schools flourished, particularly after the 1840s in the wake of the Revival movement. There were growing secular interests as well. The city’s first newspaper, The Southern Miscellany, was founded by Col. C. R. Hanleiter in 1840. Hanleiter recruited William Tappan Thompson, later famous as the author of M.ajor Jones’ Courtship, to edit and write for the paper. Thompson stayed in Madison for nearly two years before returning to Augusta and then moving to Savannah to begin a new paper there. Other local publications included The A mateur Magazine, which was begun in 1847, and the Madison Family Visitors, from the same period. The weekly Southern Miscellany, which moved to Atlanta in 1846, was eventually succeeded by The A dvertiser, edited by E. A. Rice and Millard George, and later by The Madisonian, which first began production in 1868 under the direction of Benjamin Blackmon, later editor of The A tlanta Constitution.

The cultural life of Madison obviously made it an increasingly desirable place to live. Also, though once considered an unhealthy town, by the 1840s Madison’s state of health was proclaimed much improved. White’s Statistics of 1849, which put great stock on climate and health, called bilious fever and pneumonia the most common serious diseases, but listed at least four “cases of longevity” among the white population. There were also, W hite mentioned, at least two or three black residents over 100 years old.

The Antebellum era was also the great boom period in the residential development of the town. Undeveloped lots were finally developed and some larger lots were subdivided. In 1849 the town’s circular boundaries were extended to one mile from the town square. Increasingly, single and double room cottages had been expanded or replaced by two-story frame dwellings, now arranged formally around a central hallway or, in some cases, around an enclosed open passageway or “dog trot.” Many homes were two rooms rather than one room deep, and houses with four side chimneys instead of two became more common. "High-style" features, derived from pattern books or built by itinerant and resident carpenters,
gradually entered into the building vocabulary. Federal style transoms and mantles, derived from examples built 20 to 30 years before in coastal areas, enhanced “Plain Style” cottages.

In the 1840s and 50s, the newly fashionable Greek Revival began to predominate both among institutional and commercial buildings and for residences. Called by the architectural historian Talbot Hamlin, the first truly American style, the Greek Revival was especially well-suited to the wood construction of America’s hinterlands. Characterized by simple lines and square or rectangular features, the classical Greek-inspired style was easily replicated in wood by local carpenters, who could now ignore the complicated logarithmic tables of Federal style or Adam architecture. The Greek Revival style also allowed for easy adaptations. Older buildings, such as the Samuel Shields House (“Hilltop”), built in the 1830’s, were dressed up (possibly?) with Greek Revival gabled porticos. Other houses, such as the Vason House of c. 1810, would receive temple fronts of giant order columns stretching across their front. A result, Madison would be blessed with an outstanding assortment of Greek Revival architecture. The Greek Revival style also allowed for easy adaptations. Older buildings, such as the Samuel Shields House (“Hilltop”), built in the 1830’s, were dressed up (possibly?) with Greek Revival gabled porticos. Other houses, such as the Vason House of c. 1810, would receive temple fronts of giant order columns stretching across their front. As a result, Madison would be blessed with an outstanding assortment of Greek Revival architecture, including buildings such as the Joel Abbot Billups House (c. 1853) and the Jeptha Vining Harris House (c. 1853-54), the Carter-Newton House (c. 1850), and the Martin-Baldwin-Weaver House (c. 1850-52), all now viewed as outstanding examples of their type. There were also masonry, Greek Revival commercial buildings, nearly all destroyed during later fires, and the impressive Presbyterian Church, still Greek Revival in character, built in 1842 on South Main Street.

The new, stylish houses added to Madison’s reputation as a progressive and cultured town. But it was really the economic conditions of the county that made the city’s transformation possible. By the 1840s subsistence farming had been nearly altogether supplanted by cotton production. Early experiments with orchards and stock had been more or less abandoned, though some corn, wheat, and other grains were still grown for local consumption. Long recognized for the fertility of its soil, Morgan County was also at the forefront of the agricultural improvement movement, with many farmers adding fertilizer and lime to their soil to extend its productivity. Good cotton land, noted for its “mulatto color” in gazetteers, sold for $6 an acre, “gray land,” prior to improvement, sold for $3. Production in Morgan County was high, averaging 12,000 to 14,000 bales a year.

The key to cotton profits, however, lay in transportation. And here too, Madison was in an advantageous position during the 1840s and 50s. As early as 1837 it was announced that a branch of the Georgia Railroad was to pass through Madison. Originally to be routed through Athens, with a spur line to Madison, by 1839 Madison was to be directly on the line from Augusta to what later became Atlanta. There was apparently some resistance on the part of some townspeople to the idea of the railroad, but several influential local businessmen and planters prevailed. Elizur Newton, a Madison resident and also a shareholder and founder of the Georgia Railroad, was instrumental in placing Madison on the route.
Judge A dam Saffold donated a right-of-way through his lands west of the town center and also donated land for a station. The railroad reached Madison in 1840, and for four years Madison was the terminus for the Georgia Railroad. In the 1880s the Covington and Macon (later the Central of Georgia) Railroad also established a station in Madison.

The railroad's presence contributed greatly to Madison's growth. The railroad connected Madison to Augusta, 102 miles east, and via Augusta to Savannah, the main shipping center for cotton in the southeast. The railroad handled all of the locally produced cotton, excluding a relatively small amount diverted to the local manufacturers, as well as cotton for many surrounding counties. During the 1840s as many as 20,000 bales annually were shipped directly from Madison. All of this contributed to Madison's wealth and to its reputation. A sof 1860, the town was well on the way to becoming a major metropolis, at least in the eyes of many of its more enterprising citizens.

IV. The War Between the States and Reconstruction

Madison's economic prosperity was interrupted, like that of every other town and city in the South, by the Civil War, best known locally as the War Between the States. Support for secession was strong in Madison, understandably given Madison's strong cotton base. But there was notable opposition as well, particularly within the Presbyterian Church. Madison also had several well-known anti-secessionists, including the influential Joshua Hill, all of whom were tolerated in the town.

Still, on July 31, 1861, Madison sent its first military contingent the local militia known as the Panola Guards, off to Richmond to join the war. A flag was presented by the students of the Georgia Female College as the Guards marched to the station. A result of the war, schools were closed down. (Rev. T. R. Kendrick attempted to continue teaching girls from the Georgia Female College in the basement of the new Baptist Church but this effort was short-lived.) Following the lead of the Georgia Baptist Convention, church-inspired schools were made officially available for hospital purposes. Madison women, through organizations such as the Aid Society, contributed their share of bandages and clothes for Confederate hospital purposes. Madison's wealth and to its reputation.

Other businesses in town redirected their efforts towards the war as well. R. M. Robertson, who owned a carriage factory on the square, gave it to the manufacture of tents, harnesses, and leather goods for the war effort. John B. Walker, who had earlier provided funds for the Baptist College and the Baptist Church, planted over 700 acres of sorghum for the troops. In all, about 500 people left for the war, leaving the town businesses in the hands of older men and those unfit for service. Toward the end of the war Madison, like nearby Athens, became a refuge for the war injured.

In early 1864, the war was brought home to Madison when Stoneman's Raiders passed through the town, killing, according to record, one town resident. Shortly afterwards, in November of the same year, General Slocum's detachment, under Sherman approached the outskirts of town along the railroad from the west, threatening, according to tradition, to destroy the town. An advance party set fire to the warehouse area, and, according to contemporary accounts, carried out some pillaging of private houses. A delegation of citizens, including Hill, met with Slocum to ask him to attempt to control the troops. Slocum, in turn, complied, but only after a number of homes had been burned into and ransacked. While a systematic destruction of the town was probably never contemplated by Slocum - few Georgians were actually burned entirely during Sherman's march - a number of warehouses, as well as the Georgia Railroad Depot and many tons of raw cotton were destroyed. Aiding with traditional accounts, General Sherman later restored some stolen goods, including the silver plate from the Presbyterian Church, which had been taken by federal soldiers.

Madison's legacy from the war included a number of war graves in the city cemetery and a much deflated economy. However, several new businesses, including the Madison Petroleum and Madison Mining Company, were begun just after the war. An by the late 1860s Madison had begun to return to normal. In 1868, the local anti-secessionist, Joshua Hill, was elected to the U.S. Senate, representing the state's interests there and helping to work toward recovery. As in other southern towns, northern businessmen, despite their now infamous "carpetbagging" reputations, brought new skills and financial backing to the town. Commerce became the key to success for many young Madisonians, who entered the new businesses as clerks and other workers.

Madison's short-lived economic resurgence was interrupted in 1869, when much of the town's commercial center, as well as the Masonic Temple - 42 buildings in all - was destroyed in a fire. However, many owners rebuilt immediately, beginning with the reestablishment of M. A. Mustin's business. By the early 1870s a number of other businesses, including the stores of the Bearden Brothers, Sebastian Shaw, and the...
The Atkinson Brick House, a typical (though) brick Georgian cottage, given a Gothic Revival treatment in the 1860s, just after the war. Atkinson, who was originally from New Hampshire, was in the marble business. Photograph, Georgia State Archives.

The Atkinson Family, 1892, in front of their home on the Wellington Road. The Atkinsons were in many ways representative of Madison’s prosperous merchant class during this period. Photograph, Georgia State Archives.

Cotton c. 1900 – the basis of Morgan County wealth until the 1920s. Photograph, Georgia State Archives.

Cotton in the downtown, c. 1900. Storefronts differ little from those today. Photograph, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, the University of Georgia.

Richter Brothers, were back in operation, as were several law offices, including M atheny and Sons, and Billups and Brobson. Most of the new buildings were now brick and “fireproof.”

The town’s population began to recover as well. In 1870, the first year that census figures for the town were separated out from county statistics, the population was 1,389. By 1880, the figure would top 2,000.

The 1870s and 80s, then, were a period of returning prosperity. A state commercial directory for 1876 listed 17 general and dry goods stores, seven manufacturers, six physicians, six lawyers, two dentists, three saloons, two banks, one watch and jewelry shop, three flour and grist mills, four blacksmiths, one barber shop, and one stable. M. L. Richter was listed as the town’s one photographer. Figures for 1879 and 1881 were similar, showing a slow and steady growth in both retail and manufacturing.

Commercial improvements were matched by a gradual return to agricultural prosperity. A certain amount of reconsolidating took place after the war, but many of the leading planter families had recovered and were once again major figures in the community by the 1880s. Now dependent on free labor, local planters turned increasingly to sharecropping as that system became generally established everywhere in the South during the 1870s. There was also a greater move toward modern agricultural improvements, particularly the use of commercial fertilizers. Madison had a large Peruvian guano warehouse near the railroad station.

Cotton production in Madison, as well as other counties in the Piedmont, increased greatly during the 1870s and 80s. In 1880, 7,358 bales were produced; by 1890 the figure had jumped to 19,300. The cotton was shipped on the Georgia Railroad, or the new line of the Covington & Macon (later the Central of Georgia), which had been established in Madison in the late 1880s.

Still, certain aspects of community life never recovered from the war. While a gazeteer of 1879 lists five schools in the town, including the Georgia Female College, the Madison Male High School, and the Forest Home Academy, few families in the post-war period could afford private education for their children. George Y. Browne returned to the Baptist-run Georgia Female College after the war, attempting to revive it. Students began to return in small numbers after 1873, but enrollment never reached pre-war figures. Dr. Browne died in 1878, and his wife was not able to keep the school going. The last student, in a class of one, delivered a farewell address in 1881. Shortly afterward the large brick building on South Main Street burned. In 1883 the property was auctioned off. The Methodist College, similarly, was never successfully revived.

Churches in Madison fared better than the schools. In fact, all of the major denominations survived the war. In 1880, six congregations were listed in the gazeteer: the original white Baptist church, the Methodists, the Presbyterians and Episcopalians; and also at least one black Baptist
church, Calvary Baptist, which had been founded in 1873. Soon this church would be joined by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the bedrock of the slowly growing black middle class community. The Madison County Courthouse was built in one of the black residential areas just west of the railroad, now known as the Canean district. All of the other church buildings were refurbished in part. The Methodist Church was subsequently rebuilt after a fire in the 1870s. The early Methodist Church (now the Episcopal Church), St. Paul's AME, built by E.P. Neal in 1882, and the Calvary Baptist Church, dating to the 1870s, have much in common stylistically and suggest the hands of the same builder or designer.

Concentrating on the town center, where most of the insured properties were located, the Sanborn sheets show a town square dominated by the hip-roofed 1845 courthouse. There was a well in the southwest corner, which was recently removed, and also a well in the middle of the street at the southeast corner. A market was located at the northern edge. The Madison Hotel, a large two-story wood building with an eight-column colonnade, stretched along the eastern edge of the square. A one-story dining room was located at the rear. The rest of the east side was taken up by a public meeting hall. The north side of the square consisted of a grocery store, hardware store, and barber shop. Private houses were still located on the site of the present county courthouse. The south and west sides of the square were filled with dry goods and grocery stores, a locksmith (on the south), a furniture store, and a post office. The jail was located north of the square, at the rear of the present Wellington Puritan Outlet Building. Further dry goods and hardware stores were located along West Washington and West Jefferson Streets, then simply called Bridge and Railroad Streets, respectively, before the revival of the historic street names a few years later. (Similarly Hancock was called Campbell Street; East Washington was Eatonton Road; First Street was Warehouse; and Second Street was Saffold.) There were several blacksmith shops and warehouses; a single bank was shown south of the square on Main Street; nearby was a photographic gallery. Private residences began just north of the square and after the first block south of the square on Main Street.

The second Sanborn map of 1890, and the next of 1895, show few changes. The north side of a square was now dominated by a firehouse and town office. More banks began to fill in along the square. There was also a growing number of drug stores. Both the Georgia Railroad and Central of Georgia freight and passenger buildings show up clearly, as do a growing number of manufacturers - now insured - mostly west of the town center. Among the larger businesses were the C. F. Bishop Livery Stables, now the site of the Madison Hardware Store, the Enterprise Mills, the Gate City Oil Company, and the Madison Variety Company on Second Street. A few private residences were located at the fringes of the business district, though they were slowly being replaced by commercial properties. Black residential areas are clearly marked on the maps. Most black residents lived along alleys southwest of the town square, especially on Black Crook Street (now Reese Street) north of Calvary Baptist Church, and in the area northeast of the square near the site of the present County Sheriff's office. The modern areas of Peastown (Burney Street east of the rail) and Canean, (west of the rail), do not show up until the 20th century. There was, however, a Brothers & Sisters of Love ("colored") Lodge on West Washington Street.

The Sanborn insurance map of 1885 provides the first detailed view of the town as it appeared during this period of economic recovery. Concentrating on the town center, where most of the insured properties were located, the Sanborn sheets show a town square dominated by the hip-roofed 1845 courthouse. There was a well in the southwest corner, later marked by a well house which was recently removed, and also a well in the middle of the street at the southeast corner. A market was located at the northern edge. The Madison Hotel, a large two-story wood building with an eight-column colonnade, stretched along the eastern edge of the square. A one-story dining room was located at the rear. The rest of the east side was taken up by a public meeting hall. The north side of the town square, c. 1885. Detail from the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Notice the street names – “Railroad” and “Bridge” Streets and Jefferson and Washington. The old courthouse and the Madison Hotel – at the northeast corner of the square – are still intact. Original in the University of Georgia Map Collection.

The Sanborn insurance map of 1885 provides the first detailed view of the town as it appeared during this period of economic recovery. Concentrating on the town center, where most of the insured properties were located, the Sanborn sheets show a town square dominated by the hip-roofed 1845 courthouse. There was a well in the southwest corner, later marked by a well house which was recently removed, and also a well in the middle of the street at the southeast corner. A market was located at the northern edge. The Madison Hotel, a large two-story wood building with an eight-column colonnade, stretched along the eastern edge of the square. A one-story dining room was located at the rear. The rest of the east side was taken up by a public meeting hall. The north side of the town square, c. 1885. Detail from the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Notice the street names – “Railroad” and “Bridge” Streets and Jefferson and Washington. The old courthouse and the Madison Hotel – at the northeast corner of the square – are still intact. Original in the University of Georgia Map Collection.
a new jail, one block north, built of brick and stone to replace the earlier stone jail farther up the street. Most other commercial buildings by this period were also brick, generally two or three stories in height. Upper stories were used for offices and storage, just as they are today.

Destruction of the old Madison Hotel, 1891. Photograph, Georgia State Archives.

The Morgan Hotel, built c. 1895 on the site of the old Madison Hotel. This photograph was probably taken around 1909, when the hotel's name was changed from the Turnell-Butler to the Morgan. This building helped set the theme for the Queen Anne style in town—including the plaster decorative panels. Photograph, Hargrett Library, The University of Georgia.

Madison was, by the 1890s, a progressive and forward-looking city. Basing its new identity on commercial development, the city had recovered significantly since the war. Commerce and manufacturing were thriving, and, apparently, given the amount of construction, were only slightly affected by the nationwide financial panic of 1893. Local drugstores, such as the Vason Brothers, were popular meeting places, as the fashion of soda fountains spread to Madison. There were drama societies, a bicycle club—the rage of the 1890s throughout the country—and a local amateur baseball club called the Dixies. A band sponsored by the Wray Brothers played on special occasions in the town square. Madison had two newspapers, the Advertiser and the better-known Madisonian, managed during this period by W.T. Bacon, both of them strong advocates of the New South. The Madisonian's slogan was “red hot in politics and democratic to the core.”

Increasingly, Madison began to invest in its future, particularly the education of its children. Following the initiation of the new state school law of 1870, Madison began to replace its private schools with new, publicly financed schools. A new and impressive graded school was finally built on South Main Street in 1895, around the same time as the new hotel. Designed in a Romanesque Revival style, popularized by the architect Henry Hobson Richardson and repeated in numerous schools and libraries throughout the county, the new school represented the most advanced facility of its type. School rooms were well-equipped and the staff carefully recruited. Again, following state laws, the school term was extended to a full six months by the time of the building's construction, and soon
afterwards to nine months. A second city school for "colored" children, known as the Burney Street School, was provided in the Canaan area at the same time.

Madison's growth during the 1880s and 90s caused a relative boom in housing construction. Many of the larger lots, particularly along the main north-south corridor of Main Street, were subdivided for new construction. Also, the properties along the old Eatonton Road (East Washington Street) and the new streets of Pine, Plum, Poplar, and Foster were developed. The Greek Revival fashion had long fallen out of favor by this period. By the late 1850s when the Kolb-Pue-Newton House, better known as "Boxwood," was built, the more romantic, Italianate style had begun to gain acceptance. Houses of the 1880s and 90s, in turn, tended toward the Queen Anne style, or Folk Victorian, with some remaining Greek Revival or Gothic Revival influences continuing from earlier in the century. Many earlier houses also were remodeled to keep up with changing fashions, including the Atkinson Brick House on West Washington Street (Wellington Road) with its Gothic wall dormers of the late 1860s, and the "Magnolias," Dr. Burr's House, on South Main Street, changed from a rectangular Italianate style frame house to a curvilinear and plaster-decorated Queen Anne style building in the 1880s.

Most of the newer buildings in the town, however, were distinctly vernacular in character. Overall, there was little emphasis on style other than for decorative embellishments. The most common house type was the T- or L-plan cottage, usually with a side wing and prominent, front-facing gable. This building type became a standard model for the new, often more modest housing constructed during the era. They could, in fact, be considered the period equivalent of modern ranch houses or manufactured houses. Many were decorated with components manufactured at the Madison Variety Works. Identical turned posts, balustrades, brackets, and decorative vents can be seen still throughout the town. While the older Greek Revival homes still stand out for many as somehow typical of Madison, the more eclectic styles, such as the

South Main Street, c. 1900. Note the mature canopy trees, but unpaved street.

V. The Early 20th Century

The early 20th century offered every hope for Madison of continuing the prosperity of the 1880s and 90s. Cotton prices rose steadily from 7 1/2 cents a pound in 1898 to a peak of 35 cents in 1919, just after the First World War. Production was high; in 1910, the agricultural Census shows, Morgan's production reached 30,000 bales. Banks continued to increase in numbers throughout the state. By 1909, Madison would claim three commercial banks, all of which contributed to Madison's commercial growth.
Because of cotton's success, there was little to induce diversification in farm production. Some efforts, however, were made to grow peaches and, particularly, pecans, beginning around the turn of the century. A special edition of the Atlanta Journal in 1904 mentioned corn, oats, wheat, rye, barley, sweet and Irish potatoes, "crab grass hay," "Bermuda grass hay," sorghum and sugar cane, in addition to cotton, as the county's agricultural products. Morgan County's population had risen, according to the U.S. Census of 1900, to 15,813 people, of whom nearly 2,500 lived in Madison City. The total value of property in the county was placed at $3,400,000.

The town underwent a number of improvements during this period. Roads, which had been notoriously badly maintained, were improved through new efforts by the Mayor and City Council. In 1906, the City also was granted the power by the State Legislature to build a water and sewage system. Around the same time, the city assumed control of the old county courthouse, following construction of the new Beaux Arts style County Courthouse facing the northeast corner of the square in 1905-07.

Further civic improvements followed in the early 1920s. A newspaper article of 1920 claimed that the city was expanding with "new residences, new garages, paved streets, and other improvements galore." The main street itself, also by this period a state automobile route, was paved in 1920. And shortly afterward, the paving of ten miles of concrete road was completed between Madison and Rutledge. Instigated by the progressive Mayor T.J. Bethea, a "White Way," suggestive of the Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the subsequent City Beautiful Movement, led from the depot eastward along West Jefferson Street to the square. Streetlights consisting of "a dozen artistic posts ...with the necessary globes," were paid for by private subscription, with the hope of leading travelers from the station to the town center.

Another major change to the town was the demolition, following a fire in 1917, of the old courthouse and the creation of a city park on the square. There was some speculation at the time that the land would be sold as commercial lots. But voices of civic responsibility prevailed, and the land became a park under city authority instead. In 1914, however, the old courthouse and its site had been sold to the federal government to be used as a site for a new post office; the old office was in rented space on the
south side facing the square. For many years, however, it remained a park, and it was labeled as such in the Sanborn map of 1921. The city's own administrative operations were shifted at this time to the old jail on High and Hancock Streets and to their 1887 combined city office building and firehall facing the square on the north side.

A number of new businesses prospered during the 1910s and 20s. These included, reflective of Madison's new civic pride, a growing hotel trade. A second hotel called the Monroe and competing with Turnell-Butler on the square was established at the southwest corner of First Street and Washington Street. The Turnell-Butler also continued a brisk trade with tourists and commercial travelers. In 1909 it was renamed the Morgan, and in 1921 the New Morgan. For several years the hotel had been managed by Oliver Hardy, Senior, the father of the later movie star, who himself spent his early years in Madison.

Other businesses prospered during this period as well. The Thompson Wagon Works, an impressive brick, manufacturing complex, was built on South Hancock Street. A number of new businesses grew up around the depot area. These included the Madison Fertilizer Company, the Godfrey Cotton Warehouse, the Penick Warehouse Company and Georgia Farmers Oil and Fertilizer Company. Other companies, such as Gate City Oil Company and the Madison Oll Company and Gin Company also thrived. The Madison Variety Works continued and to some degree, expanded operations. Many buildings from this period remain around the depot area as a legacy of Madison's early 20th century prosperity. There was some diversification of industries as well, which helped provide a firmer foundation for Madison's relative commercial success. An increasing amount of mill work (specialized cutting) was carried out in Madison, especially at the Variety Works, but also in other manufacturing companies such as the Keystone Handle Company. There was also further
growth and diversification in agriculture and agriculturally related industries. Indicative of the county’s stature as a leading agricultural producer, the Georgia Legislature selected Madison for a branch of the state agricultural school system. An impressive brick school was built in 1905 on the site of the present Morgan County High School.

One of the most striking features of life in Madison during the late 1910s and early 1920s was the impact of the automobile. The 1921 Sanborn map shows several garages and car sales show rooms. Buried fuel tanks are indicated at the northeast corner of the square for W.H. Adams’s Buick Service Station. In addition, there was Ben S. Thompson’s Ford Garage and Service Station, Foster and Coggins’ Garage on Main Street, and H.K. Fitzpatrick’s “Automobile Sales-rooms” on West Washington. Representative of the change in transportation was the building presently housing the Wellington Puritan Outlet Store on High Street. Begun as an undertaker’s shop, the property shifted to carriages in the 1890s and then to auto sales, for which, apparently, the present building was constructed, or at least much adapted, just prior to 1920. Further indicative of Madison’s modernization, a “moving picture theater” was built on the south side of the square, adjacent to the Beaux Arts style Morgan County Bank, itself built in 1904.

Madison’s prosperity would be short-lived and, in fact, would abruptly end during the mid-20s as a result of suddenly decreasing cotton prices. Like many other Georgia towns, despite some agricultural diversification, Madison remained largely dependent on cotton. High prices, in turn, helped to discourage experimentation with other crops. The first indications of a change came as early as 1920, when cotton prices dropped from a high of 35 cents to just 17 cents a pound. In the early 1920s, also, the boll weevil—described as “a cross between a termite and a tank”—had begun to have an impact on Morgan County crops. The local paper announced as early as July of 1920 that the “Boll Weevil Situation is Critical.” By 1923, the results were truly disastrous. In 1919, 76,041 acres of cotton in Morgan County produced 36,197 bales of picked cotton. By 1924, cotton was down to 13,715 acres, producing only 5,712 bales. While many local farmers were optimistic that higher cotton prices would return—acreage planted, for example, would increase in the late 1920s to over 30,000 again—actual prices remained low. Between 1929 and 1932, prices would fall a further 60 percent to an all-time low of five cents a pound.

Agricultural failures were soon coupled with business failures. During the 1920s, 368 commercial banks failed in the state, including, apparently, two in Madison. Numerous Madison businesses were vacated as residents were forced to move elsewhere for work. Between 1920 and 1930 the population of the city fell from 2,348 to 1,966. Many Morgan County farms were also up for sale, contributing to a loss of the rural population as well. From a high of 20,143 in 1920, Morgan County could only claim 12,488 in the Census of 1930. Smaller county communities, such as Swords and Bostwick, lost nearly all their populations—circumstances further aggravated by the Great Depression of the 1930s.
Understandably, little was built during this period. A few private homes were completed or remodeled in the early 1920s before the crisis set in. There was a similar pattern among commercial buildings. Beginning in 1931, the federal government constructed its "colonial" looking Post Office, an early example of the kind of post offices later constructed by the Works Progress Administration after its creation in 1935. Most commercial buildings in the town center were vacant. Many were allowed to deteriorate. The New Morgan Hotel burned in 1930 and was never rebuilt. Private houses fared little better. Maintenance was generally neglected, and few improvements were made.

Increasingly, Morgan County residents came to rely on locally-produced crops and on smaller gardens, as elsewhere in the country. Several new cash crops, also, were looked upon more favorably by local farmers. Hay production for livestock increased appreciably, as did the number of peach orchards and pecan groves. Many of the present mature groves in Madison, in fact, date from the Depression period. Dairy production gradually supplanted cotton as the main agricultural activity. There was also an increase in eggs and broiler production. Cotton remained an important crop, nonetheless, especially as more insect resistant strains were introduced during the 1930s. In 1939, there were still over 22,000 acres in cotton, producing 10,650 pounds of raw cotton.

VI. Madison Since the 1940s

Madison really only began its full economic recovery after World War II. Similarly, the county's population only recently has come to approach its 1920 high of 20,143. In fact, as late as 1960 Morgan County’s population was only 10,280. Of this, the farm population remained even smaller. From 9,168 total rural population in 1930, there were only 3,727 people living on farms in 1960. The black county population over the same period had been reduced by over 70 percent, with many of Morgan County's black residents moving to the north or other urban areas.

The major economic change of the 1940s and 50s was the shift from cotton and other labor-intensive crops to dairy farming, increasingly the county's main agricultural industry. The Madisonian in 1949 declared that "Dairy Incomes Rival Cotton's Profit as Morgan County Farmers Grow More Grass." Over a period of four years, ending in 1949, there had been an increase from 63 to 92 dairy farms. By 1959, dairy products would account for 41.4 percent of the agricultural income of the county, followed by livestock at 12.3 percent; poultry at 6.8 percent; and fruits and nuts at 5.0 percent. As of 1960 only 9,590 acres were still in cotton. At present there is little or no cotton grown commercially in the county, and only one commercial gin still operates in Bostwick.

The town's fortunes began to recover gradually during the 1950s and 60s. In 1950, the population stood at 2,500, and there were signs of increasing economic growth. A number of older businesses had survived the hard times of the 1930s and 40s. New businesses, such as the International Furniture Company and the Thurman Manufacturing Company, were also established. The Morgan County Creamery, begun in the mid-1940s, took over the Penick Warehouse site on South Hancock Street.

Madison throughout this period came increasingly to value its historic heritage. Older houses, some of the larger of which were converted to boarding houses and tourist hotels during the 1930s, were reclaimed as private homes. There was some new construction, including the new nearly 50-house subdivision called Beacon Heights begun in the early 1950s. But much attention centered on older houses, many of which were restored both by long-time residents and by newcomers to the area. A promotional pamphlet of 1953 declared that "Madison is mingling the new with the old" and that the town was hoping to retain the "culture, courtesy and charm" of its earlier period. Organizations such as the Morgan County Historical Society, chartered in 1968, promoted appreciation of the older buildings through walking tours and open houses. Restoration and general repairs were promoted by traditional small-town values, residents wishing to do the right thing by their neighbors. In 1974, a large portion of the city was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of its historic character and particularly because of its valuable collection of Antebellum and later homes. (The Register listing was expanded in 1990 in further recognition of Madison's value.)
The First National Bank, c. 1965, now the Trust Company Bank. Newer development has tended to be “traditional” in character, but is probably not truly reflective of the town’s real architectural history which is rooted more firmly in the 19th century. Photograph from the postcard collection, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, the University of Georgia.

In the past few years, Madisonians have come to appreciate just how fragile their historic town is. New development pressures, particularly at the edges of the historic core, and the construction of Interstate 20, have brought the 20th century to Madison, with both good and bad results. The Morgan County Landmarks Society was founded in 1970, in part, as a response to these changes. By the early 1980s an Architectural Review Board had been established and research was begun on the possibility of a local historic district. A Main Street program was also introduced, which further encouraged appreciation of historic resources. In 1987, the Mayor and City Council passed a local ordinance, based on State enabling legislation, to help protect the historic town center. The ordinance called for the creation of a Historic Preservation Commission to review new construction in Madison and significant changes to historic structures. By this means the City of Madison hopes to preserve what is best of its past and ensure that changes or newer additions will fit comfortably into the historic context of the city.

The Madison National Register Historic District, as amended. Entered in the National Register January 8, 1990. The local historic district roughly corresponds to the National Register District with some minor differences. Boundaries for the local district (also illustrated in the manual), should be referred to when considering changes to historic and non-historic properties in Madison. This map is prepared by Jaeger and Associates, the firm responsible for the survey and preparation of expanded National Register nomination.

State Highway Department Map, 1926. Madison's small section of paved road is evident. Illustration courtesy of the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, the University of Georgia.