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Land Beneath the Water: Narratives of the Keowee-Toxaway Project in Appalachian South Carolina

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Land Beneath the Water: Narratives of the Keowee-Toxaway Project in Appalachian South Carolina

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Appalachian Studies
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Appalachian Studies

by
Austin Gregory
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ABSTRACT

Land Beneath the Water: Narratives of the Keowee-Toxaway Project

in Appalachian South Carolina

by

Austin Gregory

In 1965, Duke Power announced the construction of a series of dams along the Keowee and Little rivers in Oconee County, South Carolina. The dams would create water reservoirs for one of the largest hydro-electric and nuclear power facilities in the nation. The dominant narrative focuses on the recreational activities, power generation, and economic development facilitated by the creation of lakes Jocassee and Keowee. However, residents of the Keowee and Jocassee valleys had to be removed, a process that started years earlier when Duke Power began serious land purchasing efforts. This study focused on discovering diverse narratives from people that were displaced or otherwise affected by the lakes. In doing so, made comparisons with other projects on displaced populations in Appalachia, examined the beneficiaries of the project, the treatment of locals, and how Duke Power and local government presented the project through local media.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my family for their unfailing love and support. To my wife for all of her encouragement and for standing by me through everything life has thrown our way. To my son for always being there to brighten my day. And to my daughter, who was born during my work on this project and who has been by my side (or on my knee) through many days of writing and editing.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am incredibly grateful for the guidance and patience from my committee members in every aspect of writing this thesis. My chair, Dr. Marie Tedesco, has been a tremendous source of wisdom and her advice, feedback, and direction have helped me create a final product that I can be proud of.

I would also like to thank Leslie and Jennifer at the Oconee Heritage Center for letting me borrow materials, their wealth of knowledge about Oconee County, and for maintaining such an incredible cultural and historical resource.

Lastly, I would like to thank each of my participants for inviting me into their homes and taking the time to talk to me. Thank you all for sharing your stories.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Oconee County, located in the northwest corner of South Carolina (see Figure 1), was once the site of many clear-flowing and powerful rivers including the Toxaway, Horsepasture, Thompson, and Whitewater. These four rivers met near the Jocassee Valley to become the Keowee River. Today these rivers flow into Lake Jocassee and the Keowee’s waters no longer wind their way from the mountains on their way to meet the Savannah. Michael Hembree and Dot Jackson write that through human influence, the Keowee River was transformed from “whitewater to deep waters” when in 1965, Duke Power announced its plan to dam the Keowee River, creating two lakes to use as reservoirs for hydro-electric power generation and later to cool three nuclear fission reactors. The lakes displaced residents in the Jocassee Valley and even more along the Keowee River. Some residents were sad to see their homes and the memories they had created there covered with water, but with the promise of tax dollars and tourism opportunities, the dominant narrative conveys the sense of progress that many felt this project would bring to the region. The homes and farms of the displaced as well as churches, cemeteries, and historic sites have lain at the bottoms of lakes Keowee and Jocassee for nearly fifty years. The project redefined the county and the South Carolina Upcountry.

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1 Keowee: The Story of the Keowee River Valley in Upstate South Carolina (Greenville, S.C., 1995), 93.
I used a variety of sources to gather the information necessary to examine the many narratives of the Keowee-Toxaway Project. Books on the history of the Keowee River, the Cherokee in South Carolina, and other works on local history provided me with an understanding of the history of Oconee County, South Carolina, while primary sources such as oral histories and newspapers gave me much of the information used in my analysis. I also used electronic communication such as e-mail and Facebook to reach out to potential interviewees, local government workers, employees of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, current Duke Energy project managers, and the Duke Energy Archives in Charlotte, North Carolina. I tried unsuccessfully to find other oral histories or artifacts associated with the Keowee-Toxaway Project by contacting the Clemson University Library and Special Collections, searching through state databases, and by contacting the Duke Energy archives.

The following questions guided my oral history interviews as well as my exploration of local and regional newspaper coverage of the Keowee-Toxaway Project:

- How did Duke Power and local government present the project to the public?
• How did Duke Power and local government present the project to residents who were to be displaced?
• Were there any opportunities for public input such as public forums?
• Did residents and the local media discuss the project and what did they think of it?
• Who opposed the project and on what basis?
• Was there any input from the Cherokee and did Duke Power give any special considerations to the area’s cultural history?
• What promises did Duke Power and local government make to communities and to the region?
• Did the Keowee-Toxaway Project live up to the promises made by Duke Power and local government?

The South Carolina Upcountry, sometimes referred to locally as the Upstate, occupies a transitional space that sometimes places it within the South, sometimes the Piedmont, and other times within Appalachia; but usually the region is underrepresented in all three. Recently, however, some historians, such as Timothy P. Grady and Melissa Walker, have seen the value of studying this region and have edited a collection of essays title Recovering the Piedmont Past: Unexplored Moments in Nineteenth-Century Upcountry South Carolina History. In the introduction, they write of the underrepresentation of the region: “In spite of the upcountry’s pivotal role in South Carolina’s history, historians have given far less attention to the history of the region than that of the lowcountry.”2 Historians such as Walker also see the importance of collecting lived experiences as she did in Country Women Cope with Hard Times: A Collection

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of Oral Histories, in which women from East Tennessee and the South Carolina Upcountry talk about their lives on farms and working in textile mills throughout the twentieth century\(^3\).

Douglas Reichert Powell’s Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape has been instrumental in changing the way I look at this corner of South Carolina that I still call home. From the first excerpts I read from this book, I immediately made linkages from his descriptions of Johnson City, Tennessee, to my home back in South Carolina. In looking at the narratives of the Keowee-Toxaway Project, I have kept in mind Reichert Powell’s statement about region: “Instead of asking whether a particular version of region is valid or invalid, authentic or not, this new regional scholarship asks whose interests are served by a given version of region.”\(^4\) Using this statement as a guide, I worked towards discovering whose interests were served and are still being served by the dominant narrative of the Keowee-Toxaway Project and what can be learned about this area through acknowledging the importance of the narratives told by residents of the inundated areas of Keowee and Jocassee. I also sought to expose processes used by Duke Power and local government to displace residents and inundate centuries of history and culture without taking into consideration the local value of the places they were flooding.

**Thesis Structure**

This thesis begins with an introductory chapter that includes background information on the area studied, mid-twentieth century life in Oconee County, a brief history of Duke Energy and its links to Appalachia, my connection to the area, and the status of South Carolina in Appalachian Studies. The second chapter is a literature review of sources that discuss the

\(^3\) (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004).
Keowee-Toxaway Project, including works published by former residents of either the Keowee or Jocassee valleys. Two of these residents, Claudia Whitmire Hembree and Debbie Fletcher, also participated in the oral history portion of my research. This overlap in primary and secondary sources has unintentionally overrepresented their perspectives and is discussed further in the methodology chapter. I also analyze scholarship on displacement narratives including those related to the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia (1928) and Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) projects in East Tennessee in the 1930s and 1940s. Chapter Three covers my research methodology including selection of interview participants, my interview process, use of local newspapers in my data collection, and the system of coding I used for analyzing the data. In Chapter Four, I provide an analysis of the data I gathered from the interviews and newspaper articles. The final chapter contains my conclusions and areas for further research.

The Cherokee in the South Carolina Upcountry

Oconee County takes its name from the Cherokee word meaning, “land beside the water” and the town of Oconee once stood along a trading route established between the British and the Cherokee Lower Towns. The Cherokee towns of the eighteenth century were separated by mountainous terrain and were largely divided with strong town and regional allegiances. However, the Anglo-Cherokee War (1759-1761), which occurred during the Seven Years War (1756-1763), helped to bridge geopolitical divides as the Cherokee banded together to defend their villages from white invaders. Tyler Boulware writes that the Anglo-Cherokee War “shifted a regionally based conflict into a larger struggle for the Cherokee homeland.”

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5 “Effect of the Seven Years War on the Cherokee Nation,” Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal 5, no. 2 (Fall 2007), 422.
6 Boulware, 421.
By 1776, the mountains of the western Carolinas no longer offered protection to the Cherokee as the newly formed southern states conducted large-scale invasions of the Lower, Middle, and Outer towns. Cherokee from every region made a few defensive stands, including one at Seneca, but most fled into unfamiliar territory. The newly elected General Assembly then passed a law in May 1777 that encouraged attacks on Cherokee settlements and offered bounties for prisoners and scalps if a peace treaty was not achieved by the end of that month. On May 20, 1777, the Cherokee surrendered all but a small strip of their territory in South Carolina by terms of the Treaty of DeWitt’s Corner. This attempt to coexist was short-lived as white resettlers drove off the Cherokee and other Native American tribes and forced them to migrate westward.

As a consequence of displacement by white colonists, the Cherokee have not had a steady presence in Oconee County since the late eighteenth century and it has been almost a century since the last Native Americans lived in Jocassee. However, the western Carolinas still use Cherokee place names, tribal names, and names of legends such as Eastatoee, Nantahala, Jocassee, Keowee, Oconee, Issaquena, Catechee, Chattooga, Seneca, and Tamassee. As Ron Rash writes in his novel One Foot in Eden, the story of the Cherokee in South Carolina is “a story of people living and working land for generations and then vanishing, leaving behind the arrowheads and pieces of pottery I’d turned up while plowing. Leaving behind place names too—Jocassee, Oconee, Chattooga—each pretty, vowel-heavy word an echo of a lost world.” I am uncertain if this is the character’s unfamiliarity with the conflicts that led to the displacement of the Cherokee from the South Carolina Upcounty or Rash’s, but nevertheless, this is a romantic

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7 Boulware, 422.
white narrative of the “vanishing” of the Cherokee from the South Carolina Upcountry. But, like Rash’s character, it was not uncommon for actual Oconee County farmers to turn up arrowheads and shards of pottery with their plows either. Even in recent years there have been two dugout canoes found in the county. In 2004, a thirty-two-and-a-half-foot dugout canoe dated from the late 1700s was found along the bank of the Chattooga River in Oconee County and in 2008 a second canoe was rescued from the Keowee River. Both canoes are on exhibit at the Oconee Heritage Center in Walhalla, South Carolina.\(^\text{10}\)

**Harnessing the Waters of the South Carolina Upcountry**

Harnessing the power of the rivers of the South Carolina Upcountry came long before Duke Power changed the face of Oconee County. Northern textile manufacturers began moving into the South Carolina Upcountry as early as 1814 to set up mills along the area’s many waterways, while also taking advantage of lenient labor laws and wages half that of their New England counterparts.\(^\text{11}\) In the later part of the nineteenth century, the textile industry in South Carolina increased in size from twelve cotton mills in 1870 to ninety-three mills by 1900 with a total worth of almost $100 million.\(^\text{12}\) The state of South Carolina issued the first charter to construct a cotton mill in Oconee County to William Ashmead Courtenay, a Civil War veteran from Charleston, South Carolina, in 1893. The Little River lured Courtenay to Oconee County to build his factory because of the water source needed to power the equipment and for the local labor supply. He named the town Newry after the town in Northern Ireland from which his


family emigrated in the 1790s. All activities in Newry centered around the work schedule of the mill, and the bell, imported from Ireland, told the residents when to wake up, when to eat, and most importantly, when to begin work. The mill, officially named the Courtenay Manufacturing Company after its founder, was already on the decline when Duke Power announced the Keowee-Toxaway Project in 1965. The Little River dam ultimately protected Newry from inundation by the waters of Lake Keowee, but the town lost many adjoining acres, including the town’s textile league baseball field. Although the town was spared from inundated and even survived the closing of the mill in 1975, Michael Hembree writes, “the Duke project left Newry practically in the shadow of the massive Oconee Nuclear Station.” Some of the mill’s abandoned brick structures are visible from the highway that crosses the Little River Dam. Looking down into one of the last remaining portions of the Keowee Valley, it is easy to see how close the town came to being erased by Duke Power.

In another project proposal to harness the waters of the Keowee River, the Army Corps of Engineers drew up plans in the 1940s for a dam at the Newry-Old Pickens site located near the current site of the Oconee Nuclear station. A comprehensive study of the Savannah River Basin conducted in 1943 concluded that the area “offered exceptional opportunities for developing multipurpose projects” with the Newry-Old Pickens Dam near the bottom of a list of twelve possible sites. Shortly before Duke Power began its project in the northern part of Oconee

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13 Hembree, 10.
14 Hembree, 26.
15 Hembree, 41.
16 Hembree, 41.
County, the Army Corps of Engineers completed the Hartwell Dam near the South Carolina-Georgia State line in 1961, creating Lake Hartwell on Oconee County’s southern border.\(^\text{18}\)

A few residents, along with Clemson University, put up a brief resistance to the Hartwell project. In 1956, seventy-eight-year-old Eliza Brock and her daughter brandished a rifle to keep workers off their property after the Army Corps of Engineers filed a formal “declaration of taking.” After a delay of more than a month, Mrs. Brock settled out of court and accepted the offer to buy her property.\(^\text{19}\) In the second instance, Clemson challenged certain aspects of the Hartwell project that posed a threat to campus property. After several rounds of revisions and negotiations between the Department of the Army and the university, diversion dams sent the Seneca River around the college to protect school assets and facilities.\(^\text{20}\) The diversion of the Seneca River effectively separated Clemson from the rest of Oconee County and later became the basis for annexation of the town and the college by neighboring Pickens County.

Less than a decade after the Army Corps of Engineers created Lake Hartwell, it was Duke Power’s turn to dam the rivers of Oconee County. Farms and homesteads now lay practically undisturbed at the bottom of two lakes created by humans’ desire to control nature. Duke Power harnessed the power of the Keowee River, but at the expense of forever changing the landscape of the South Carolina Upcountry and inundating a large piece of its history and culture.

**Mid-Twentieth Century Life in the Keowee River Valley**

Many Oconee County residents made their livings in the middle of the twentieth century through farming or by working in one of the county’s textile mills located in Newry, Seneca,

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\(^{18}\) Barber and Gann, 437.
\(^{19}\) Barber and Gann, 441.
\(^{20}\) 442.
Walhalla, and Westminster. Conditions in the mills were not much better than the fields as management dramatically increased machinery speeds in the 1930s at the Lonsdale Mill in Seneca.  

21 This mill workers also took part in the General Textile Strike of 1934 along with other Upstate South Carolina mill hands.  

22 David Carlton writes in the *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, “From the late nineteenth century through most of the twentieth century, the textile industry dominated South Carolina manufacturing.”  

23 However, as Duke Power was building the dams and nuclear station of the Keowee-Toxaway Project, the textile industry in South Carolina was feeling increased pressure from countries in Latin American and Southeast Asia that paid their workers low wages, had few safety and environmental regulations, and, as a result, could produce textiles at a much lower cost.  

24 In the 1920s, nearly one sixth of white South Carolinians worked in the mills (black workers were largely barred from work on the factory floor until the 1960s except as custodians), but by 1970 only 4,700 of Oconee’s 41,000 residents were employed in one of the county’s nine mills.  

25 The *Farm Plat Book and Business Guide: Oconee County, S.C.*, provides a wealth of data on Oconee County farms during the decade before Duke Power received its initial licenses to begin construction on the Keowee-Toxaway Project. The book, available online through the Oconee Heritage Center web site, states that there were 3,288 farms in the county in 1953 with the average farm size being about 75.5 acres. A total of 248,309 acres of the county’s 428,800


24 Carlton.  

25 Carlton.
acres, approximately 58%, were considered farmland. The primary crops were cotton, small
grain, corn, aromatic tobacco, pimiento peppers, peaches, and apples. The county then was the
largest apple producer in South Carolina. Oconee County was also the first in the state to import
Brown Swiss Cattle and the first to produce aromatic tobacco. The population of Oconee County
in 1953 was 39,050.26

The population of Oconee County increased considerably in the latter half of the
twentieth and into the twenty-first century, even as total farmland and number of farms
decreased significantly. The county profile available from the South Carolina Association of
Counties estimates the population at 75,713 as of 2015.27 According to the 2012 Census of
Agriculture, Oconee County’s land in farms was down over 70% with only 67,871 acres on 884
total farms. The top crops by acre were forage-land used for hay, soybeans, wheat, and corn with
poultry and eggs leading the county in livestock and commodity sales.28 This decline in total
farms has followed the national trend that has seen a decrease of about 63% in the number farms
in the United States since the beginning of the twentieth century.29 Even though the number of
farms has been in general decline nationally in favor of larger farming operations, family farms
still played a crucial role in the lives of many Oconee County residents through most of the
twentieth century.

28 United States Department of Agriculture, https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/South_Ca
rolina/cp45073.pdf, access July 2, 2018.
Farming in Oconee County was a difficult way to make a living in the decades leading up to Duke Power’s Keowee-Toxaway Project. Johnny V. Hester provides detailed insight into the life of his sharecropping family in the Keowee River Valley. His parents married in 1933 when his mother was fourteen years old and his father twenty-one. When Johnny was born in 1939 the family was living in a tenant house along the banks of the Keowee River.\(^{30}\) He calls their three-room home “an average house for tenants with rough painted clap weather boarding on the outside nailed to rickety studs” and no “finished interior walls nor an overhead ceiling, just sheets of tin tacked to exposed rafters.”\(^{31}\) The family gathered water from a spring located approximately forty yards from the house and that flowed from the earth into a bowl likely chiseled from the rock by Native Americans.\(^{32}\) The Hesters kept to themselves and did their best to “dig out a meager subsistence from the soil,” while remaining “oblivious to events happening outside this remote rural area of Oconee County, South Carolina.”\(^{33}\)

Debbie Fletcher credits Jerry Vickery’s book for giving her insight into the side of the valley with which she was unfamiliar.\(^{34}\) Fletcher related to me that the Keowee Valley had been “farmed to death” and consisted of “ugly red hills, scars.” Her grandparents, full-time residents of the Jocassee Valley, were, she said “probably much better off than a lot of people there” while “most of the people that lived there were little farmers [who] struggled” and “lived hand-to-mouth.”\(^{35}\)


\(^{31}\) Vickery, 22.

\(^{32}\) Vickery, 23.

\(^{33}\) Vickery, 26.

\(^{34}\) Debbie Fletcher, interview by author, Columbia, South Carolina, March 10, 2018.

\(^{35}\) Fletcher interview.
Claudia Whitmire Hembree maintains that her family, the Whitmires, were “the first there and the last to leave” the Jocassee Valley. According to her, they were also the first white residents to farm the Jocassee Valley in 1812 and on November 16, 1967, Claudia Whitmire Hembree’s brother Dan and his wife Sybil were the last to leave their home in the valley.\(^\text{36}\) Her book *Jocassee Valley* details dozens of families who lived in the Jocassee Valley, but by the time Duke Power made the announcement in 1965 that it planned to flood the banks of the Keowee River, only a few families remained there fulltime.

The remainder of the homes in the Jocassee Valley, including the home maintained by the McCall family from Charleston, South Carolina, became summer residences for families living outside the South Carolina Upcountry. One of the interviewees for this project, Harry McCall, told of the hardships endured by the full-time residents that the summer residents never fully experienced. The Jocassee Valley peaked in the 1920s because its remote location made the manufacture of moonshine very profitable, but as McCall states, “after prohibition and everything left, the valley kind of died… but you still had a lot of the old people.”\(^\text{37}\) McCall also remembers that the area was a “summer home place” and “in the wintertime it was cold, dead, and the way it was when the sun went down, it was like those mining towns in West Virginia.”\(^\text{38}\) The Jocassee Valley lacked many of the modern conveniences that people were growing accustomed to. No one could pick up local television stations and folks would have to travel to Gladys Littleton’s store or to Talley’s store in Salem to make a phone call. Even the AM radio stations would pop and crackle if there was a thunderstorm within twenty miles of the valley.\(^\text{39}\)

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\(^{36}\) E-mail message to author, June 23, 2018.  
\(^{37}\) Harry McCall, interview by author, Salem, South Carolina, June 2, 2018.  
\(^{38}\) McCall interview.  
\(^{39}\) McCall interview.
For all the harshness involved with living in such a remote area, Claudia Whitmire Hembree recalled her family being remarkably well-connected to the rest of the world. The influx of summer residents into the Jocassee Valley influenced the full-time residents greatly. She remembers that her grandfather A.L. Whitmire subscribed to four newspapers including the *Atlanta Journal* and the *Greenville News* and was an extremely well-read man with a home full of books.\(^{40}\) Henry Shapiro writes that the isolation attributed to Appalachian people “became itself an explanation for the occurrence of other characteristics which set Appalachia off from America” and the basis for many stereotypes of Appalachian people.\(^{41}\) Many from the mountains are quick to dispel the stereotypes assumed by where they live. “We were poor,” Claudia said, and “we were self-sustainable and we bought a few things from the store, but we grew a lot of good food too. I don’t think that Jocassee people were the stereotypical Appalachian people.”\(^{42}\) Whitmire’s well-read and well-informed family in this remote corner of South Carolina is yet another example that can be used to refute the idea that the people of Appalachia were isolated from the “main currents of American life” as popularized by Berea College President William Goodell Frost and the local color writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\(^{43}\)

**The Duke Power Company**

James B. Duke (1856-1925) from Durham, North Carolina, grew up in the tobacco business and acquired extensive knowledge in every step of the process from planting to packaging.\(^{44}\) By the age of twenty-two, Duke became a full partner in his father’s tobacco

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\(^{40}\) Claudia Whitmire Hembree, interview by author, Taylors, South Carolina, May 7, 2018.


\(^{42}\) Claudia Whitmire Hembree interview.

\(^{43}\) Shapiro, 118.

business, W. Duke and Sons, and his investment in machine-made cigarettes in the mid-1880s made the company the leading manufacturer of cigarettes in the nation. It was during this time that James B. Duke moved permanently to New York City to manage his family’s factory there. He also played a key role in bringing together the nation’s largest cigarette manufacturers to form the American Tobacco Company in 1884.

By the time United States Supreme Court dissolved the American Tobacco Company in 1911 because of its violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, James B. Duke and his older brother Benjamin had already begun investing in the textile manufacturing industry in their hometown of Durham and across North Carolina. As a result, the Duke brothers became interested in hydroelectric power as a means for development of the textile industry in the South and its potential for increased productivity. In 1905, the Duke brothers, together with engineer William S. Lee, started the Southern Power Company and based their new enterprise in Charlotte, North Carolina, to service the Piedmont region of both North and South Carolina.

The Southern Power Company’s first endeavor in 1905, was acquiring Catawba Electric Power, which the Dukes had invested in since 1902, and its newly completed hydroelectric plant at India Hook Shoals, near Rock Hill, South Carolina. The company then constructed a powerhouse thirty-three miles south of India Hook Shoals in Great Falls, South Carolina, along the Catawba River. The Great Falls plant began power generation in 1907 with approximately

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46 Durden, 294.
47 Maynor, 14.
48 Durden, 294.
forty thousand horsepower being supplied by the combined Catawba (the new name for the India Hook Shoals plant) and Great Falls plants.\textsuperscript{49}

The foundation for these projects was laid in 1899 when Benjamin Duke became president of the newly-formed American Development Company. Benjamin Duke used this company to purchase land and gain water rights along the Catawba River.\textsuperscript{50} Sixty years later, Duke Power used a similar land purchasing tactic in Oconee and Pickens counties when it created South Carolina Land and Timber Company as an instrument to purchase land under a name not associated with Duke Power.

Before completion of the Great Falls project, Lee and the Duke brothers were already busy with plans for another dam on the Catawba River at Rocky Creek and another on the Broad River.\textsuperscript{51} Joe Maynor writes that after a slow start, the Dukes and Lee convinced mill operators across the piedmont to bring electricity into their operations by a combination of “salesmanship, example and, most of all, the promise of financial backing.”\textsuperscript{52} Maynor also writes that by 1916, “everything was right on schedule for the Southern Power Company. The plants were coming on line in time to meet the increasing demands for electricity in a wide-awake Piedmont.”\textsuperscript{53} In 1924, the Southern Power Company was renamed Duke Power Company after its founder.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{50} Maynor, 32.
\textsuperscript{51} Maynor, 32-33.
\textsuperscript{52} 34.
\textsuperscript{53} 37.
A new era in the history of Duke Power began in 1958 when William B. McGuire became president of the company.\textsuperscript{55} In the years that he controlled Duke Power, the company faced off against the federal government and he oversaw the company’s entering a new era of power generation when the Keowee-Toxaway Project became its first project to include nuclear power.\textsuperscript{56}

In \textit{Duke Power: The First 75 Years}, Joe Maynor remarks, “With a continuously growing, wider spreading concept such as TVA, McGuire and other officials of private power companies, could see the hand of big government moving in to take over all power generation, unless existing companies stood their ground.” In 1959, before the United States Seneca Committee on Public Works, McGuire refuted claims that the TVA produced lower rates through greater efficiency. McGuire said, “The difference in our company’s electric rates and those of TVA is due to the difference in privileges afforded by the federal government. … TVA is granted by the government special privileges including interest-free money, no federal income taxes, lower state and local taxes and lower freight rates on coal.” McGuire also claimed that because TVA generated seventy-four percent of its power through steam generation, that made it a business enterprise in direct competition with private industry.\textsuperscript{57}

When Duke Power announced the Keowee-Toxaway Project, the company still relied heavily on coal-fired steam plants for much of its electricity production. On March 1, 1965, Duke Power opened the first unit of the Marshall Steam Station in Catawba County, approximately thirty miles north of Charlotte, North Carolina. Project construction cost seventy-

\textsuperscript{55} Maynor, 128.
\textsuperscript{57} Maynor, 128-129.
eight million dollars and was the first of an estimated one-billion-dollar investment in steam-powered facilities on Lake Norman. The Marshall Steam Station’s first unit burned over two thousand eight hundred tons of coal a day and the Duke Energy maintains that the plant is one the most efficient plant of its kind.\(^58\) The station currently has four coal-fired units and is one of Duke Power’s largest coal facilities.\(^59\)

Duke Energy currently operates most of its power facilities in the Carolinas with sixty-six located in either North or South Carolina. These include six nuclear, thirty-one hydroelectric, seven coal fired, thirteen gas fired, two pumped-storage hydro, one fuel oil, and six solar facilities. The company also operates a total of thirty-seven facilities in Florida and the midwestern states of Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky.\(^60\) Between 2003 and 2016, Duke Energy retired thirteen facilities with the majority being coal-fired plants built between 1926 and 1960, including Buck Steam Station in Rowan County, North Carolina which was named for co-founder James “Buck” Duke.\(^61\) Duke Energy has retired only one nuclear station, the Crystal River Nuclear Plant located in Crystal River, Florida. Duke Power decommissioned this plant, which began producing electricity in 1977, after delamination of the concrete reactor containment building was discovered during regular maintenance in 2009.\(^62\)

The Keowee-Toxaway Project

On January 2, 1965, Duke Power Company president W.B. McGuire met with more than four hundred civic and political leaders from Oconee and Pickens counties at the Clemson House

\(^{58}\) Maynor, 136.
in Clemson, South Carolina. There he announced Duke Power’s plans for a $700 million energy complex along the waterways between Pickens and Oconee counties. The project would consist of two dams on the lower portion, one between Pickens and Oconee and the other just above the town of Newry, to form the water reservoir that later would be called Lake Keowee. A third dam, much higher than the others, would create Lake Jocassee in the northern portion of Oconee County.63 Once completed, McGuire projected that Lake Keowee would have a surface area of approximately 17,700 acres with 388 miles of shoreline, and the smaller Lake Jocassee would have a surface area of nearly 8,000 acres with 92 miles of shoreline.64 A headline from the Seneca Journal and Tribune proclaimed that “Lake Jocassee will be deepest in the state!” and second deepest in the Carolinas behind the reservoir created by Fontana Dam in western North Carolina.65 At present, not only do the lakes provide energy for the Keowee Hydro Station and the Jocassee Pumped Storage Facility, but Lake Keowee is also home to the Oconee Nuclear Station and provides the water necessary to cool the three nuclear reactors. See figure 2 for the location of the lakes, dams, and nuclear station. Interestingly, the nuclear station was not a part of Duke Power’s initial plan, although McGuire did mention the possibility of steam plants in the area if the company’s plans for coal-fired steam plants along the Savannah River were denied by the federal government.66

64 Mauldin.
65 January 20, 1965.
66 Johnson.
The Duke Power Company had its eye on the Keowee River for nearly fifty years before the company announced that it would flood the Keowee River Valley. The Oconee Heritage Center web site notes that as early as 1916, Duke Power (then called Southern Power Company) started preliminary designs and actual land purchases at the dam sites. An article in the *Greenville News* from February 5, 1965, claims that Duke purchased the first tracts of land in 1940. Then in 1963, Duke Power formed the South Carolina Land and Timber Corporation to make land purchases for the future projects without drawing too much attention to their efforts. The Oconee Heritage Center web site says “for eighteen months,… SC Land & Timber, very

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67 Note the misspelling of Sumter National Forest.
unobtrusively, acquired property throughout the project area, still without public knowledge of what was coming.” After Duke announced the project to the public, South Carolina Land and Timber Company changed its name to Crescent Land and Timber Corporation and revealed itself publically as a subsidiary of Duke Power.69 A timeline for the project can be found in Appendix A.

The “Visit Oconee South Carolina” web site, a tourism and marketing organization located in Walhalla, South Carolina (the county seat of Oconee County), proclaims that “Oconee County is known as the ‘Mountain Lakes Region’ because of the climate, beautiful lakes, and the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains.”70 Lakes Keowee and Jocassee attract thousands of visitors each year and have drawn many people from outside the county to make the area their home. Almost as soon as the lakes were at full pond, private retirement communities such as Keowee Key sprang up around Lake Keowee, along with hundreds of expensive private residences. Piper Peters Aheron expressed her discontent, as well as acknowledgement of the economic contributions the lakes have made to Oconee County, in Images of America: Oconee County, when she wrote, “these independent communities presently restrict county resident access as a whole, but doubtlessly, Duke Energy has added much to the overall economy of the upcountry.”71 The area surrounding Lake Jocassee has been protected from development by various state parks and habitat preservation sites created through land donated to the state of South Carolina by Duke Power after the project was completed.

Duke Power, Appalachian Coal, and Controversy

In 1970, Duke Power created the Eastover Mining Company and Eastover Land Company and shortly thereafter began purchasing small coal mines throughout Appalachia. Joe Maynor writes that Duke Power’s venture into coal mining came from the company’s decision to “protect itself against the possibility of fuel shortages and a disrupted energy market.”72 A labor dispute and strike by the mine workers soon followed when Duke Power refused to negotiate with newly elected union representation.

In “The Company Owns the Mine but They Don’t Own Us: Feminist Critiques of Capitalism in the Coalfields of Kentucky in the 1970s,” Jessica Wilkerson writes that by the time Duke Power purchased the mine in 1970, Brookside was one of the last remaining coal camps in the region. Brookside, located in Harlan County, Kentucky, was modest with its uninsulated four-room homes, no indoor plumbing, and a lack of many modern amenities, but it had a very strong sense of community.73 Wilkerson writes that “community ties were also staked on the individual and collective memories of miners’ labour struggles.”74 Some members of the Brookside community could recall when the United Mine Workers of American (UMWA) faced off against local law enforcement in the famous Bloody Harlan battle. While wages for miners at Brookside were relatively good at around $45 per day, Wilkerson writes that the company-installed Southern Labor Union “failed to secure medical benefits and pensions, and it made no effort to address dangerous working conditions.” Wilkerson also writes, “because the union’s leadership had been hand-picked by the company, workers did not believe that they could report their problems in good faith.” In 1973, the Brookside miners overwhelmingly voted in favor of

72 143.
73 Gender and History 28, no. 1 (April 2016), 203.
74 203.
having the UMWA become their representative. The Eastover Mining Company refused to recognize the newly elected union and in July of that year, all one hundred and eighty miners walked-out.\textsuperscript{75}

Duke Power and Eastover Mining Company believed that the United Mine Workers Union plotted a strategic campaign to ruin the reputation of these newcomers to the coal mines of Appalachia. Former Duke Power employee and free-lance writer Joe Maynor wrote that after the Brookside miners elected the UMWA to represent them, “what followed was a new experience for a company that had enjoyed a peaceful relationship with its employees for the more than 65 years of its existence.”\textsuperscript{76} Maynor quotes Eastover Mining Company president Norman Yarborough when he said “The United Mine Workers Union had shown little interest in the small mining operations in Harlan County until they learned that Eastover Mining Company was owned by Duke Power.”\textsuperscript{77} The truth of Yarborough’s statement is certainly debatable. The UMWA may have seen the deep pockets of Duke Power as a way to secure better wages and living conditions for the workers which the previous owners simply could not afford. The strike also might have been an issue of timing as company-installed unions, which were tools of the company and not true labor unions, were being removed by workers in favor of unions that fought for workers’ needs such as better wages, safer working conditions, and adequate health care.

The Brookside mine strike was not Duke Power’s first confrontation with a union, nor was it the first time the company refused to bargain with local unions. In the summer of 1968, workers for Clement-Blythe, a sub-contractor for Duke Power, walked off their jobs working on

\textsuperscript{75} 205.  
\textsuperscript{76} 143.  
\textsuperscript{77} 143.
the dams for the Keowee-Toxaway Project after the company refused to bargain with the Operating Engineers Local 470 union for a contract. Interestingly, the company and the union reported vastly different numbers of strikers. Clement-Blythe and Duke Power reported that only about forty of the one hundred and fifty-six employees walked out while the union reported that only forty remained on the job.\textsuperscript{78} The June 6, 1968 edition of the \textit{Greenville News} shows a worker wearing a sign that reads, “Clement-Blythe Refuses to Bargain with Local 470” as he pickets the Keowee-Toxaway dam site. Duke Power said the strike was not holding up the project.\textsuperscript{79}

In addition to refusing to bargain with workers’ unions, Duke has also been found guilty of multiple environmental violations. According to CBS News, Duke Energy was fined $102 million dollars in 2015 for nine violations of the federal Clean Water Act for illegally dumping coal-ash at five North Carolina plants that dated back to at least 2010. The most serious incident occurred at Duke Energy’s Dan River site, where a collapsed pipe at one of the coal ash dumps coated seventy miles of the river in a gray sludge. Other environmental violations occurred from coal-ash discharge at Duke Energy’s North Carolina plants in Eden, Moncure, Asheville, Goldsboro, and Mt. Holly. Prosecutors gave multiple examples of Duke Energy’s slow response or lack of response to polluting North Carolina’s rivers. Duke Energy plead guilty to each charge. Earlier in the year, North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory, a Duke Energy employee for twenty-nine years, proposed a deal to settle Duke Energy’s violations over toxic groundwater leeching from two plants. The proposed deal would cost the company less than one hundred

\textsuperscript{79} Bowie.
thousand dollars and included no conditions for stopping pollution or for cleaning up the sites. The agreement was quickly pulled after the Dan River spill.\textsuperscript{80}

\textbf{My Home in the South Carolina Upcountry}

My interest in the Keowee-Toxaway Project comes from growing up only a little over two miles from the Oconee Nuclear Station in Seneca, South Carolina. I spent many summer days swimming in Lake Keowee and playing at High Falls County Park, only a short bike ride from my childhood home. From the front porch of our house, members of my family can clearly see the atom-shaped water tower and the massive concrete structures that house the three nuclear reactors in the distance. I can think back through the times in my life when I considered the lakes simply as places to swim or fish without any concern for why they were there or what was under the water’s surface. After learning that the lakes were manmade, I realized that the landscape of my home underwent an incredible transformation to look as it does now. Roads had to be built to accommodate the traffic to and from the nuclear station and other road courses changed or designated as dead ends when the water rose and changed how residents got from one place to another. I learned much later of the residents who once lived in the areas now covered by Keowee and Jocassee and that their removal before the announcement of Duke Power’s plans was integral to that company’s plans for cheap land acquisition.

My maternal grandparents, Jubie and Mary Neal, purchased land near High Falls, near the Little River, in the 1950s. Although Duke Power never offered to purchase any of my family’s property, the project created a peninsula from which their property was no more than a mile away from Lake Keowee on the north, south, and east. I think my grandparents were typical

of many families in that time and place. They were sharecroppers before buying this property and at High Falls they farmed and kept a small number of livestock. Moreover, for many years my grandmother split her time between working at the Walhalla Garment Factory in Walhalla, South Carolina, tending to her garden, and raising their ten children and numerous grandchildren.

The descriptions of Johnny Hester’s sharecropping family in *The Forgotten Society of the Keowee River Valley* immediately reminded me of the stories told to me by my mother and grandmother. My mother can point out the houses where her mother and father grew up, even though only the chimney remains of the old Neal homestead a few miles away on Oconee Creek. She has also pointed out to me the tenant houses where her family lived and worked until they saved enough money to purchase land near High Falls. Much like the Hester family, my mother’s family had no indoor plumbing until the mid-1960s and lacked many of the modern conveniences that were readily available in other parts of South Carolina.

My grandparents gave an acre of land to each of their children and although some of my aunts and uncles sold their land to move elsewhere in the county, several, including my mother, stayed and built homes here. I am lucky enough to own an acre of my grandmother’s land adjacent to my mother’s, forever tying me to my childhood home. Continuing with my family’s multi-generational attachment to this small piece of land in Oconee County, my son now attends Keowee Elementary School, the same school that I attended as a child and that my mother did before me.

My elementary school class took almost yearly trips to Duke Energy’s World of Energy, the educational facility at the Oconee Nuclear Station site. Here we learned the history of nuclear energy, how the power plant worked, and how safe nuclear energy is when the right precautions are taken. Hearing the station test its emergency sirens was a regular interruption of my
childhood, although to the best of my recollection, we never had any drills in case of an accident at the station. Now that my son is attending the very same elementary school, I am happily aware that in case of an incident the school district has an evacuation plan in place that will take students to other schools in the county a safe distance from the nuclear station.

My first reading of Douglas Reichert Powell’s discussion of two parks in Johnson City, Tennessee, Buffalo Mountain Park on the south end of town and Winged Deer Park on the north, made me immediately think of High Falls County Park on Lake Keowee. Before Duke Power’s Keowee-Toxaway Project, High Falls had a small, yet beautiful, waterfall that provided the surrounding community members with a secluded but accessible place to fish, relax, enjoy the natural environment, and interact with their neighbors. To someone unfamiliar with the history of the region, High Falls as it is today would appear to have a name detached from the park itself, as with Winged Deer Park in Johnson City. Once the dams were in place on the Keowee River, the waterfall from which High Falls County Park gets its name was soon swallowed up as the waters of the Keowee River slowly rose to become Lake Keowee. At High Falls, people were once able to fish, camp, or swim where they pleased, but High Falls County Park, whose land was donated to the county by Duke Power, offers strictly enforced designated areas for camping, parking, volleyball, baseball, mini golf, swimming, and picnic shelters for those able and willing to pay the entry fee to access these facilities.81

The South Carolina Upcountry and Appalachian Studies

Scholars have not studied the South Carolina Upcountry to the extent that they have of other regions of Appalachia likely because of its location on the peripheries of the Appalachian

region, or a mixed piedmont/southern/Appalachian identity that has left the area without a singular field for local issue discourse. In addition to the Upcountry being included in in current Appalachian Regional Commission definitions of the region, it is also included in the John C. Campbell map dated from around 1914.\textsuperscript{82} Counties in the northwest corner of South Carolina were included in the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965.\textsuperscript{83} However, these counties were left out of a report published in that same year titled \textit{Appalachia: A Report by the President’s Appalachian Regional Commission}, giving some indication that there was some debate on their inclusion.

Very little scholarship exists that directly links Upcountry South Carolina or the Appalachian counties of the state to Appalachian Studies. The over one-thousand-page \textit{Appalachian Studies Bibliography Cumulation: 1994-2012}, explicitly mentions South Carolina in the titles or descriptions provided in approximately sixty entries. The South Carolina topics covered in the scholarship include colonial history, the travels of William Bartram through the region, the American Revolution, slavery, and, most commonly, the textile industry in Greenville and Spartanburg Counties. By contrast, North Carolina has well over three hundred entries in the Appalachian Studies bibliography.\textsuperscript{84}

South Carolina’s geographical location may play a part in the state’s exclusion from Appalachian Studies. The Appalachian counties of South Carolina are in the southeastern corner of the Appalachian Regional Commission’s definition of Appalachia. South Carolina’s six

\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Appalachia Then and Now: Examining Changes to the Appalachian Region Since 1965}, Appalachian Regional Commission, February 1965, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{84} West Virginia University Libraries, https://wvrhc.lib.wvu.edu/collections/appalachian/bibliography/.
counties are the second fewest, behind only Maryland, of the thirteen states included in the ARC defined region of Appalachia.\textsuperscript{85} The area’s location on the outer edges of the region may also be why South Carolina is one of only five states with Appalachian counties never to have hosted an Appalachian Studies Association Conference. The southern Appalachian States of Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia have hosted the ASA’s annual conference six time each and West Virginia, the headquarters of the Appalachian Studies Association, has hosted eight of the forty-one meetings through 2018.\textsuperscript{86}

In close association with the Appalachian Regional Commission is the Appalachian Teaching Project that began in 1999 as a way for academic centers at colleges and universities within Appalachia to meet with the ARC to discuss common concerns at a symposium in Washington D.C. Students at the graduate and undergraduate level present field research related to building sustainable futures in Appalachian communities.\textsuperscript{87} When I attended the conference with my classmates from our Documenting Community Traditions course at East Tennessee State University, I quickly noticed that nearly every one of the thirteen Appalachian states were represented. My home state of South Carolina was not represented at this conference. East Tennessee State University’s Center for Appalachian Studies web site lists current and past participants of the Appalachian Teaching Project. South Carolina is the only state out of the thirteen with ARC defined Appalachian counties never to have participated in the Appalachian Teaching Project.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{85} “Counties in Appalachia.” Appalachian Region. Appalachian Regional Commission. https://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/CountiesinAppalachia.asp
\textsuperscript{87} https://www.etsu.edu/cas/cass/projects/historyandoverview.php.
\textsuperscript{88} “Current Participants,” East Tennessee State University, https://www.etsu.edu/cas/cass/projects/participants.php.
Another reason for South Carolina’s general exclusion from Appalachian Studies is that many Upcountry South Carolinians simply do not identify as Appalachian as much as those from other parts of Appalachia. The Appalachian region of South Carolina is relatively small compared to the rest of the state. It is also located far from the state capital of Columbia and has little in common with culture of the coastal regions. The city of Greenville, located in Greenville County, is the most economically competitive part of Appalachian South Carolina when compared to counties such as Richland and Lexington near the capital city of Columbia and the popular tourist attractions in the coastal counties of Horry and Charleston. The Blue Ridge Mountains of South Carolina are often caught in between Appalachia and the Piedmont in terms of identity and economy, with Appalachia representing the negative aspects and the Piedmont representing the textile industry that carried the region for much of the twentieth century.

The identity of South Carolina is often associated with “the South” instead of Appalachia. The state’s economy was heavily reliant on the plantations of the low county for many decades and in 1860, it became the first state to secede from the Union. Confederate war memorials are frequently displayed along main highways or on government property throughout South Carolina, including the Oconee County seat of Walhalla. These monuments are protected by the state’s Heritage Act, which requires a two-thirds vote for any monument to be moved or altered.89 The state continues to recognize May 10th as Confederate Memorial Day, a fact I found out when I attempted to continue my research at the Oconee County Public Library only to find

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it was closed for the holiday. The *Greenville News* reports that South Carolina it as a state holiday in 2000, the same year it began recognizing Martin Luther King Jr. Day.  

The topic of energy in Appalachia is crucial in understanding the history and culture of the region. Entire portions of Appalachia were exploited through extracting natural resources from the region to be used for the benefit of the entire nation. When discussing industry and energy in Appalachia, coal (including mountain top removal) dominates the discussion with the Tennessee Valley Authority being one of the few alternatives. The section of the West Virginia University Appalachian Studies Bibliography titled “Coal, Industry, Labor, Railroads, Transportation” shows coal’s importance to Appalachian Studies by placing it first in the section header. Duke Power’s Keowee-Toxaway Project takes the hydro-electric power generation of TVA dams a step further by adding nuclear fission reactors. TVA began operating its first nuclear plant shortly after the completion of the Oconee Nuclear Station at Browns Ferry, near Athens, Alabama, in 1974. I see the era of this project as the final chapter in major projects of this magnitude, as we see clean and renewable sources of energy becoming more affordable and absolutely necessary going forward. For all the radioactive waste produced by nuclear power generation, the Oconee Nuclear Station’s World of Energy still tries to tie the industry to the renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar by proclaiming “Nuclear Energy is Clean Energy!” on their illuminated sign by the entrance on South Carolina Highway 130.

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Appalachian Studies provides a wealth of literature and a framework for discussing issues that affect Upcountry South Carolina. TVA provides an example of displacement, and hydroelectric power gives an extensive model for extractive industry in Appalachia. The Oconee Nuclear Station became only the second nuclear power plant in the country to receive a twenty-year extension of their operating license by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission after the initial forty-year license expired in 2013.\textsuperscript{93} With the current license set to expire in 2033, there are many questions as to what will happen to Oconee County as this date approaches.\textsuperscript{94} Will the nuclear station be renewed for another twenty years and what are the risks involved with operating a nuclear plant for close to eighty years? If it is not renewed, how will the plant be decommissioned and what will be its economic and environmental impact on Oconee County and the region? The dams are likely to remain in place and the hydroelectric stations could operate for the foreseeable future but will the region still see a dramatic rise in energy cost as it loses a major source of energy production? Examples such as the coal industry and TVA could provide Upcountry South Carolina with methods for how to deal with these issues and how to best avoid or limit the negative impacts.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Although building dams to benefit human society is far from a new endeavor,\(^1\) the massive dams of the twentieth century have forever changed landscapes, rivers, habitats, ecology, drinking water supplies, and power generation. In their introduction to *Big Dams of the New Deal Era: A Confluence of Engineering and Politics*, David P. Billington and Donald Conrad Jackson summarize the impacts of dam projects of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal:

Dams have become potent and debatable symbols of modern industrial society because of the myriad ways - both expected and unforeseen – they transform the environment. Through processes of addition and subtraction, they change rivers and river valleys. Adding predictability and constancy to flow, dams protect riparian lands from devastating flood while also providing for hydroelectricity, enhanced municipal water supply, and increased food production. But dams take away the intensity of peak floods, diminish the free flow of sediment, impede fish passage, inundate ecology and historically significant river bottom lands, and degrade river habitats by changing water temperatures and oxygen saturation levels. Pluses and minuses. Costs and benefits.\(^2\)

As a result of Duke Power’s well-laid plans, the Keowee River Valley underwent a tremendous process that has both added and subtracted from the South Carolina Upcountry. The dams and nuclear station provide enough electricity to power nearly two million homes and lakes Keowee and Jocassee provide recreational opportunities that draw thousands of tourists to Oconee County every year.\(^3\) Oconee residents also lost their river, their homes, churches, and places of business along with many culturally and historically significant sites. Pluses and minuses. Costs and benefits.

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The topic of this thesis is the narratives of the Keowee-Toxaway project in Oconee County, South Carolina, and an examination of the South Carolina Upcountry’s place in narratives of displacement. A review of the relevant literature includes topics on the background of the South Carolina Upcountry and the Keowee River Valley as well as the area’s representation through works published by local historians, academics, and fiction writers. A survey of displacements caused by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the National Parks Service, and of counternarratives and narratives of displacement provide a framework within Appalachian Studies for discussing the Keowee-Toxaway Project. Also included is discussion on representation of TVA and inundated communities in film and song. The final section of the literature review discusses the works of Appalachian writer Ron Rash that are set in Oconee County during the construction of the Keowee-Toxaway Project dams.

The Keowee River Valley

Most of the literature on local history or on the Keowee and Jocassee Valleys offers only a brief mention of the Keowee-Toxaway project and, with the exception of Michael Hembree and Dot Jackson’s *Keowee: The Story of the Keowee River Valley in Upstate South Carolina*, makes little or no mention of Duke Power’s (now Duke Energy) tactics for purchasing land and depopulating the area before the company announced the project in 1965. Many of the authors of this literature either lived in the Keowee Valley or the Jocassee Valley before Duke Power inundated their homes or they spent enough time in these places to develop a strong emotional attachment to them, so that these works provide plenty of information on the people and events of Keowee and Jocassee before the lands’ inundation.

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4 (Greenville, South Carolina, 1995.)
Among the books published by those with close connections to the area are Debbie Fletcher’s *Whipoorwill Farewell* and her *Images of America: Lake Jocassee*, both of which tell the story of those who once lived in Jocassee, the Jocassee Girls Camp, and of the lodge owned by her maternal grandparents. *Whipoorwill Farewell* contains many photographs of residents who once lived and visited Jocassee, newspaper articles, an extensive history of the Jocassee Girls camp founded in 1922, and the covered bridges that Fletcher calls “straight out of New England.”

The Attakulla Lodge (named for the Cherokee Chief Atakullakulla) was a ten-room home built in 1898 that the family began renting rooms to vacationers and eventually expanding to accommodate more guests. Reading through the book, a project originally started as a memoir, is like looking through a scrapbook composed by the author. It is deeply sentimental and quite extensive. Fletcher grew up in Columbia, South Carolina, but spent time during the summer months at her family’s home in Jocassee. She writes that the “Jocassee Valley has enough history to fill many books of truth and legend” and that the valley was important to the people for its “fertile land, growing livestock for its owners for generations, as well as the recreational activities so well-known.”

Fletcher’s *Images of America: Lake Jocassee* takes on less of a personal approach and highlights many of the topics covered in *Whipoorwill Farewell* but with more of a historical rather than reflective point of view. A sizeable portion of this book chronicles the Keowee-Toxaway Project and includes many photographs of the construction process that the author

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5 (Victoria: Trafford, 2003), 134.
6 See James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 510. Atakullakulla was recognized by the British as the head chief of the Nation in the 1760s and later.
7 Fletcher, 132.
8 Fletcher, 132.
obtained from the Duke Energy Archives in Charlotte, North Carolina. She describes the valley in a slightly different manner in this work, calling it an area made up of mostly small farms and vacation cottages.⁹ Among the pictures, Fletcher includes text that explains construction of the dams and clearing of timber. Fletcher recalls that Duke Power scattered tree trunks and debris along the steel bridge that led into the valley to keep local people out during construction.¹⁰

*Jocassee Valley* by Claudia Whitmire Hembree provides another extensive look at the Jocassee Valley before Duke Power covered the landscape with water. She includes some description of the Cherokee who once lived in the valley and recounts the legend of Jocassee, the daughter of Chief Attakullakulla, who drowned herself in the Keowee River after the death of her lover.¹¹ Hembree notes that this story is similar to other regional tales such as Lover’s Leap in neighboring Pickens County and Issaqueena, a tale of a Cherokee maid leaping from a waterfall, in Oconee County, a few miles north of Walhalla.¹² She also includes information on the early white explorers of the Keowee and Jocassee valleys, Philadelphia botanist William Bartram in 1775 and French botanist André Michaux in 1787.¹³ Hembree also provides an extensive review of the families who lived in the valley, including her own.

Hembree’s discussion of the Keowee-Toxaway Project describes the land transactions and other events that led up to the Duke Power project. Beginning in the late 1800s, timber companies began to purchase land from private owners and to solicit proposals for dams along

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¹⁰ Fletcher, 14.
¹² Hembree., 16.
the Keowee River in the early 1900s when J.H. Wigington surveyed the area in 1910. She claims that the announcement of the Keowee-Toxaway Project fulfilled a prediction made by her father, Homer Whitmire, in the 1920s when he said, “One day they’re going to build a dam down at Arthur and Rosa Johnson’s house and Jocassee will be gone forever!” When the United States Geological Survey installed gauging stations to monitor water levels and flow near Camp Jocassee on the north end and near Chapman bridge on the south end of Jocassee shortly before Duke announced the project, residents knew that something was about to happen to their rivers.

The works of Debbie Fletcher and Claudia Whitmire Hembree provide extensive documentation of life in the Jocassee Valley, but far less has been written about the area now covered by Lake Keowee. Jerry Vickery has attempted to remedy this lack of information on the Keowee River Valley in *The Forgotten Society of the Keowee River Valley: A Biography of a Sharecropper*. In this oral history account, Vickery follows Johnny V. Hester and his family as it moved around the Keowee Valley and provides an intimate look at the life of a white sharecropping family in the mid-twentieth century South Carolina Upcountry. In his introduction to Johnny V. Hester’s life story, Vickery wrote that the story he presents is “of a sharecropper’s existence in what was at one time an extremely backward, rural corner of Oconee County, South Carolina” with “land that was tiled by mule with the lowest rung on the society ladder behind the plow stock, the sharecropper.” Vickery stated that the family detailed in the book, the Hester family, “never owned a foot of ground, but toiled endlessly hundreds of acres from the first part of the century until their final exit in the early 1960s prior to the rivers’ demise.”

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14 Hembree, 123.
15 Hembree, 123.
16 Vickery, 15.
17 Vickery, 15.
that the purpose of detailing this family’s life in Oconee County is “to tell a story of an essential
downtrodden society that was part of the Keowee Valley life segment, which up until now has
totally been overlooked and forgotten.”

Although the front cover of Vickery’s book features the Oconee Nuclear Station reactors,
most of the events described by the author occurred decades before the Keowee-Toxaway
Project. Hester’s recollections of his life in a sharecropping family in the Keowee Valley fails to
mention any reaction or lasting impacts the Keowee-Toxaway Project had on his family. A few
pictures, however, briefly allude to the lakes, including one illustration of his birthplace on the
Nimmons’ farm which is captioned, “from an original photograph of the house before it was torn
down by Duke Power.” In the closing paragraph Hester adds, “Although the lake is there now,
this small place on earth will always be sacred to me.”

Because they did not own the land they were living on and working, sharecroppers such
as the Hester family were left out of any negotiations as Duke Power and their subsidiaries
purchased land in the Keowee River Valley. Even if consulted, they would not have received the
financial benefits of selling their property and using that money to purchase more land or a home
in Walhalla, Seneca, or nearby town in Pickens County. Although the Hester family moved to
Easley, in neighboring Pickens County, a safe distance from the impending inundation in 1959,
this work highlights the narrative of the sharecropper, one that may be the most suppressed of all
the narratives of the Keowee-Toxaway Project.

Michael Hembree and Dot Jackson’s Keowee: The Story of the Keowee River Valley in
Upstate South Carolina includes information on the Lower Towns of the Cherokee, eighteenth-

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18 Vickery, 16.
19 Vickery, 20.
20 Vickery, 243
century European explorers, and the early German resettlers who came into the northwest corner of South Carolina after the American Revolution. Hembree and Jackson write that Duke Power seriously began looking at the Keowee-Toxaway site in 1962 when the federal government opposed a steam plant on the Savannah River called Middleton Shoals. They also make the claim that the South Carolina Land and Timber Company was formed in 1963 for the explicit purpose of acquiring land for the Keowee-Toxaway Project and not for timber rights as the company’s name would suggest.21

The most poignant portion of their telling of the story comes from a quotation by former resident Dennis Chastain, a teenager at the time of the project, who recalls his family’s final trip into the Jocassee Valley before it was flooded in 1973. Chastain says, “It was kind of sad. I remember very well the experience of riding up there and knowing that within a matter of days or weeks all that would be under water. You get out on Jocassee now on a boat, and people really don’t have a sense of what’s under there. There’s a whole world under that lake. Mountains and valleys and ridges.”22 Chastain compares Jocassee to Cades Cove in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and says “it was just about as pretty a place as you can imagine.”23 Chastain also claims that had the valleys not been flooded, that the area “would be one of the most unique natural resources in the eastern United States” because “you’d have 15 to 20 miles of whitewater on four major rivers. It could have been one of the premier national parks in the country.”24

Hembree and Jackson also write about the second phase of the Keowee-Toxaway Project, the pumped-storage facilities to be built above Lake Jocassee. Duke Power proposed the Bad

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21 Hembree and Jackson, 80.
22 Hembree and Jackson, 90.
23 Hembree and Jackson, 90.
24 Hembree and Jackson, 94.
Creek pumped-storage facility in the summer of 1977 and almost immediately met opposition from the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department, and the United States Department of the Interior, among other unnamed environmental groups. These governmental agencies claimed that the Bad Creek facility likely would damage vegetation and water quality and destroy one quarter of South Carolina’s trout streams. They withdrew their opposition after Duke Power agreed to donate three hundred and seventy acres on Big Eastatoee Creek for a heritage preserve. In the late 1980s, Duke Power proposed a similar pumped-storage facility at Coley Creek along the South Carolina-North Carolina border. Environmental groups such as the Jocassee Watershed Coalition objected to a second pumped-storage facility and claimed the project would “put an unnecessary financial burden on Duke Power customers and destroy an unblemished wilderness area.” Two years later, Duke Power abandoned plans for the pumped-storage facility on Coley Creek without citing any specific reason.

Other books on local history of the area were published shortly after the announcement of Duke Power’s project. Among them are Nora Nimmons Field’s The High Falls Story, which describes one of Oconee’s first villages and community gathering places, much of which (including the waterfall for which the area is named) is now under Lake Keowee. Another work on local history, Pearl McFall’s The Keowee River and Cherokee Background, tells the history of the Cherokee Lower Towns that existed in Oconee County from the sixteenth century through the American Revolution. I have no way of knowing for sure, but I suspect that these books,

25 Hembree and Jackson, 90-91.
26 Hembree and Jackson, 91.
27 Hembree and Jackson, 91.
29 (Self-published, 1966).
both published in 1966, were attempts to collect and preserve local history that only a few years later would be at the bottom of Lake Keowee.

Not only has the landscape of Oconee County changed since the valleys were inundated, but the population has become older and much of the population increase has come from retirees who have moved to one of the many resort and retirement communities along the banks of Lake Keowee. In *Keowee Key: The Origins of a Community*, one of the community’s first residents Alice Badenoch, describes the Keowee Key resort from its inception through its first two decades. This resort community began in 1972 as a cooperative effort between Realtec Incorporated and Crescent Land Company, formerly known as South Carolina Land and Timber Company and a subsidiary of Duke Power.\(^{30}\) Crescent Land Company chose to work with Realtec on developing the community because of the real estate company’s previous work at Sapphire Valley and Connestee Falls in western North Carolina and for “its demonstrated concern for ecology.”\(^{31}\) The year before Crescent Land Company officially announced plans for the new development they provided Realtec with the “Duke Power List,” a list of over eight thousand names of individuals interested in purchasing land on Lake Keowee.\(^{32}\) Badenoch acknowledges the homogeneity of the community (non-native, retirement age, affluent, well-educated) as compared to the lower-middle class residents who were displaced. She writes that residents “must have felt that some sort of flood gates had been opened as they watched their landmarks disappear and witnessed the rapid influx of population.”\(^{33}\)

\(^{30}\) (Seneca, SC: Jay’s Printing, 1989), 19.
\(^{31}\) Badenoch, 19.
\(^{32}\) Badenoch, 21.
\(^{33}\) Badenoch, 62.
In one of the few scholarly works relating to the Keowee-Toxaway Project, John M. Coggeshall considers the Jocassee Gorges to be a “majestic yet menacing ‘frontier space’” that “encapsulates the deeply-rooted ambiguity of the place to residents and visitors alike.” He writes that significant portions of the land purchased by Duke Power, but not inundated, were sold to private development companies that created gated communities along the shores of Lake Keowee, paving the way for retirees from the North and West to bring in “new accents and new values – but also new tax dollars and new employment opportunities.” Coggeshall added that in the 1990s, one of these private communities restricted access to locals by placing a gate on the public road leading to McKinney Chapel and cemetery, both of which continued to be community gathering places long after the lakes covered the road used to access it. Although the guards are instructed to allow through people who wish to visit McKinney Chapel, Coggeshall writes that many residents refuse to “‘beg permission’ from outsiders to visit a public place and their ancestors’ graves.”

Most recently, Christopher J. Manganiello included the Keowee-Toxaway Project in his discussion on the inextricable connection between water and power in the South in his *Southern Water, Southern Power: How the Politics of Cheap Energy and Water Scarcity Shaped a Region*. Here Manganiello explains the creation of water reservoirs across the South as the work of “New South capitalists, New Deal regional planners, and Sun Belt boosters” who desired to “spur industrial development, consolidate or challenge corporate power, and deliver a multitude of economic and social benefits to urban customers, rural citizens, leisure seekers, and

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35 Coggeshall, 171.
36 Coggeshall, 172.
shareholders.” He also writes that by doing so, “corporate and state operatives attempted to conquer environmental conditions such as flooding, drought, and a lack of quality indigenous fossil and mineral fuel sources.” The Duke Power Company capitalized on the more than one hundred thousand acres of land along the Keowee River that their agents had purchased between the 1920s and 1960s. The company garnered enough public and local government support to challenge the “public power models exemplified by the Tennessee Valley Authority” in favor of a corporate model that supposedly would provide endless streams of tax revenue to the local economy. The public model, exemplified by TVA, features government control and operates with government subsidies and taxpayer funds; the corporate model, rooted in free enterprise, relies on private control of property and a profit model.

Tennessee Valley Authority

Population removals for the purposes of creating water reservoirs for power generation and other public usages have occurred across Appalachia over much of the twentieth century. In TVA and the Dispossessed: The Resettlement of Population in the Norris Dam Area, Michael J. McDonald and John Muldowny explain that in 1933 the Tennessee Valley Authority began purchasing land in East Tennessee with the purpose of creating a reservoir and hydroelectric facility in the Norris Basin, at the confluence of the Clinch and Powell rivers. The TVA promised that the project would provide flood control for residents, cheap electricity, and a new life that would free residents from being controlled by their physical surroundings.

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38 Manganiello, 11.
39 Manganiello, 145-146.
40 McDonald and Muldowny, 3-27.
The dams built for the project flooded the Norris Basin and displaced the nearly 3,500 families who lived there. With the assistance of the Resettlement Administration and the Reservoir Family Removal Section of the Coordination Division, residents with sufficient resources were encouraged to move, while those without such resources were referred to government organizations that could aid in their relocation. However, the TVA initially lacked a comprehensive plan to aid families who did not receive any money from the land sales or those who did not receive sufficient compensation to allow them to relocate permanently. Social caseworkers hired in 1935 by the newly-formed Reservoir Family Removal Section of the Coordination Division interviewed the families and attempted to find the major factors that prevented them from relocating. Interview results convinced the Reservoir Family Removal Section to offer services that included connecting families with government agencies, salvaging building materials, and helping families with finding new jobs. Families who refused to move were turned over to the Legal Division, which evicted five families under eminent domain.

Although McDonald and Muldowny conclude that residents displaced by the Norris Dam project saw the TVA in a negative light for causing them to lose their way of life and because they did not immediately experience the benefits promised by the TVA, Michael Rogers feels that these conclusions fail to acknowledge that residents experienced a wider range of opinions about the project. Rogers writes that most Norris residents at the time of the removals lived in dire poverty, attended school only through the fifth grade, made their living through farming, and rarely traveled beyond their homes in Norris. However, as subsistence farmers with little interaction to the market economy, the Great Depression of the 1930s affected them very little.

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41 McDonald and Muldowny, 82.
42 McDonald and Muldowny, 175-176.
43 McDonald and Muldowny, 176-178.
Rogers concludes that while many residents were content with their lifestyle in rural East Tennessee, a large number were open to opportunities which could provide themselves and their children with a lifestyle closer to that of mainstream America. Rogers concludes that the acceptance of the TVA by Norris residents helped them to disprove many negative stereotypes of Appalachian people and shows that their hopes and dreams resembled those of most average Americans.

Another town in East Tennessee, located on the Watauga River, was Butler, now commonly referred to as “Old Butler,” a small community of about two hundred families who subsisted mainly on income from family farms and timbering activities. In an effort to control flooding that disrupted communities and railroad lines across East Tennessee, as well as to generate hydroelectric power, the Tennessee Valley Authority constructed the Watauga Dam, which put the town more than 100 feet below the surface of Watauga Lake by the summer of 1949. Russ Calhoun Sr.’s Lost Heritage: The People of Old Butler, Tennessee, and the Watauga Valley describes the mixture of emotions that the residents of Butler experienced when they were told that their town would be inundated. Some residents were happy to start new lives away from the flood-prone valley and with construction finishing shortly after the conclusion of World War II, felt that their support of the dam was their “patriotic duty.” Other residents anguished over watching the exhumation of the graves of generations of their families and

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45 Rogers, 105.
47 Calhoun Sr., 3.
voiced their opposition to the government that would take them away from the lives that they have built.48

On the TVA webpage “The Town that Wouldn’t Drown,” TVA officials wrote that Butler, Tennessee, “was constantly inundated” by floodwater from the Watauga River prior to the construction of the Watauga Dam.49 The TVA describes Butler as a primarily agricultural community that considered flooding “a normal part of life.” The decision to build the Watauga Dam made Butler “the largest populated community and the only incorporated town ever to be inundated by a TVA project.”50 As the TVA began planning the Watauga Dam project, Butler consisted of six hundred and fifty families along with several hotels, drugs stores, grocery stores, hardware stores, gas stations, restaurants, doctors’ and dentists’ offices, churches, and schools. In 1947, TVA completed the land and facilities purchases necessary including the town hall, jail, pipelines, streets, roads, utilities, and sewage system properties for the sum of thirty-five thousand dollars.51

In the beginning, the people of Butler showed little interest in the TVA’s plans to relocate the town. Eventually, the reality of the town’s situation set in as the date for the completion of the Watauga Dam came ever closer.52 Through the formation of a non-profit corporation, two hundred acres of farmland were acquired for relocating the town and plans for the new town were drawn up. According to the TVA, “125 residences and 50 other structures” were relocated

48 Calhoun Sr., 4-5.
50 “The Town that Wouldn’t Drown.”
51 “Dam Interrupted.
52 “Butler to Go.”
so swiftly that “the ice in the refrigerator had not even melted” when families were able to move back into the same homes at the new site.\textsuperscript{53}

Drought and drawdown on Watauga Lake exposed the old community in 1954 and again in 1983, inspiring people to gather to see the town that was once their home and to share memories. During the 1983 gathering, one resident said that people did not want to move but “it was just something you had to do.”\textsuperscript{54} Although they were not necessarily in favor of the project, the resident also said that there was not any “real organized opposition either… but in the long run, I think the majority of the people improved themselves as a result of the move.”\textsuperscript{55}

Shenandoah National Park

In another displacement, this time for the creation of a national park, Virginia’s Public Park Condemnation Act of 1928 forced approximately five hundred families from eight counties in Virginia from their homes in order to establish the Shenandoah National Park.\textsuperscript{56} In The Anguish of Displacement: The Politics of Literacy in the Letters of Mountain Families in Shenandoah National Park, Katrina M. Powell uses letters written between the displaced residents and the National Park Service to show the complexity of removing people of various socioeconomic standings and land ownership status from land acquired for the greater enjoyment of the public.\textsuperscript{57} She argues that “the complicated processes of land transfer, relocation, and park administration led residents to write letters that protested not the park itself (it was too late for

\textsuperscript{53} “Butler to Go.”
\textsuperscript{54} “Butler to Go.”
\textsuperscript{55} “Butler to Go.” See also: Butler Project Collection, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, for the 1983 drawdown of Lake Watauga and reminiscences of residents on Old Butler. See also: Glenn and Betty Slemp Collection of Old Butler, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, material from Watauga Academy from Old Butler prior to inundation.
\textsuperscript{56} (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 2.
\textsuperscript{57} Powell, Anguish of Displacement, 4.
that) but the way the residents were ‘seen.’”  

Because of their socioeconomic standing and anachronistic ways of life in a world racing into modernity, I believe the concerns and future well-being of these Virginia residents were of little concern to the project’s decision makers beyond their removal from the park.

Much like the early discourse of the Keowee-Toxaway Project, Powell states that the law makers and state officials dealing with the Shenandoah National Park “never considered in all their negotiations… the implications for the people living on the land. Indeed, they rarely considered who the people were” (italics original).  

She also writes that the ways in which the identities of the residents were constructed by the “official” narrative is what made them “displaceable.”

How Duke Power, local government, and other Oconee County residents saw displaced residents is clearly evident in the local media’s representation of Keowee and Jocassee residents. A highly provocative cartoon on the title page of a special article in *The Seneca Journal and Tribune* October 13, 1965, titled “The Story of Oconee,” depicts a Jocassee resident in overalls, barefoot, carrying a shotgun, and standing near a jug marked with the “XXX” synonymous with moonshine. The image of Keowee is not much better as the cartoon represented it by a worn-out farmer wiping sweat from his brow. These constructed identities, the moonshining hillbilly and the wearied farmer, make them replaceable by the local and state government officials elected to represent them. However, in retelling the stories of the Shenandoah National Park and the Keowee-Toxaway Project and including the mountain residents’ point of view, Powell claims

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60 Powell, *Anguish of Displacement*, 12.  
61 October 13, 1965.
“we recognize the centrality of individual stories to a collective narrative about a place or an event.”

Another parallel between Duke Power’s project and the Shenandoah National Park is the lack of organized resistance from residents being displaced. Powell notes that “many people living in the mountains were not informed of the park’s proposal until much of the decision making had already occurred” and they “may not have known their options in resisting” these decisions. Powell writes that some residents of the Shenandoah Valley saw that they were being tricked out of their land by the government. In an oral history, Estelle Nicholson Dodson said of the officials purchasing land for the national park, “when they first started it up, they come around and tell you the sweetest mouth you ever heard in your life to get your home.” The residents of Keowee and Jocassee would hear a similar form of “sweet-talk” coming from land purchasers and their promises to rejuvenate the Keowee River Valley.

**Narratives of Displacement and Counternarratives**

Narratives of displacement and counternarratives expose power structures, aid in the construction of personal identity, and give the displaced a voice in the discourse. In *Identity and Power in Narratives of Displacement*, Powell explains her use of the term “displacement” as opposed to terms such as “exile,” “refugee,” “diaspora,” or “asylum” because of what “the term does for us in terms of temporality and notions of place; indeed that the word ‘place’ is enclosed within dis-place-ment figures heavily into my treatment of it as a concept and term.” She also writes that displacement “relates to representing identity, connotes an emphasis on the

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64 Powell, *Anguish of Displacement*, 32.
immediacy of relocation, the kairotic and active moment of movement.” Powell writes that counternarratives “resist individuals’ out-of-placeness by constructing very traditional notions of home and belonging” and that “understanding individual stories across disparate events help us to recognize commonalities of displacement rhetorics and urge us to consider the systemic and routine institutional and discursive forces at play as the displaced see a discursive presence.”

The tremendous changes of the landscape that occurred as a result of Duke Power damming the Keowee River had its own effects on the identities of residents in the Keowee and Jocassee Valleys. Some residents considered that the presence of a large company with a lot of money to spend gave some hope for the future, although others saw that the battle to keep their homes was a fight they could not afford. Duke and local government’s deeming the residents “displaceable” and their reprehensible disregard for local input gives insight into the systematic forces of displacement and exclusion from the discourse based on socioeconomic standing. The Keowee-Toxaway Project shares these commonalities with other displacement events in Appalachia, including TVA projects, mountaintop removal, and hydraulic fracturing operations.

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that systematically purchase land or mineral rights until there are not enough residents left to resist.

Counternarratives or counterstories are used by marginalized groups to construct broader realities to those constructed through social institutions of dominant culture.\(^{69}\) In his article, “Introducing Critical Race Theory to Archival Discourse: Getting the Conversation Started,” Anthony W. Dunbar writes that “counterstories . . . are helpful in exposing microaggressions within both interpersonal interactions, as well as marginalizing dynamics within social institutions as the legal system, educational system, and social welfare system.”\(^{70}\) Marginalized groups, such as displaced residents, can use counternarratives to challenge the status quo, build a community among the disenfranchised, present the possibility of multiple truths, as well as quicken and engage social consciousness which “involves actively bringing the multiple perspectives to the forefront.”\(^{71}\) Counternarratives can be used to “supplement or complement a dominant culture narrative” and to develop “competing or conflicting stories.”\(^{72}\) Dunbar also notes that “an understanding of documented historical perspectives; written, oral, or audio-visual that exist are potential points of intersection with a counterstory. An understanding of this premise that has breadth and depth would move beyond the famous and well-documented cultural moments to include the daily-lived experiences and existence of under-represented populations.”\(^{73}\) By looking at the lived experiences of Keowee and Jocassee residents, their


\(^{70}\) Dunbar, 113.

\(^{71}\) Dunbar, 115 and 117.

\(^{72}\) Dunbar, 115.

\(^{73}\) Dunbar, 115.
perspectives and contributions to the discourse helped to move the narrative of the Keowee-Toxaway Project beyond the one presented by Duke Power and local government to become more inclusive and to expose the aggressive behavior the company used in the displacement.

Narratives of displacement also can be discussed through the framework of Critical Race Theory, as detailed by Dunbar, to seek “improved circumstances or conditions from the point-of-view of an individual(s) affected by a particular circumstance or condition.”74 However, the improved circumstances in the case of families who lost their homes to TVA projects or the Keowee-Toxaway Project does not involve the reclamation of lost property, but acknowledgment of their stories and of their experiences. Dunbar also writes that government and corporate records are “utilized as evidence of compliance with laws or statues, as well as documentation of institutional memory.”75 Critical Race Theory then “repositions and problematizes what has been presented or designed as evidence in regards to underrepresented or disenfranchised populations.”76 There was nothing necessarily illegal about the actions of Duke Power in Oconee County and the records created by the company, as well as by local and state governments, are likely to support the company. Duke Power circulated its story of the Keowee-Toxaway Project through official press releases and local media, but the displaced families were never given a chance to tell their version of the story. The residents of Keowee and Jocassee were marginalized and misrepresented throughout the process just as narratives of “othered” persons are misrepresented, buried, or missing in archival documents.

74 Dunbar, 112.
75 Dunbar, 114.
76 Dunbar, 114.
Inundated Communities in Film and Song

There are multiple references to flooding of private lands in media such as film and music. Films such as *Wild River* (1960) try to capture some of the attitudes of the people living in soon to be inundated valleys and the Coen Brothers film, *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000), uses the impending flooding of a valley to give the band of escapees a sense of urgency and in the film’s conclusion, assists in the group’s escape. Jocassee was even incorporated into the 1972 film adaptation of the James Dickey novel *Deliverance*. In a scene near the end of the film, Jon Voigt’s character Ed watches excavators as they exhume actual graves from the Mount Carmel Baptist Church Cemetery in the Jocassee Valley before the gates of the dam were shut and the valley began to flood.77

The TVA has been celebrated both for bringing electricity and a level of prosperity to the rural South and vilified for taking land away from farmers, and burying years of history beneath the surface of lakes designed for the recreation and enjoyment of the middle and upper classes. Pete Seeger sings of “democracy’s future” when extolling the TVA’s usage of “the force that was wasted” to help “the great turbines turn dark into light” in George Rucker’s “The TVA Song”.78 Jean Thomas also wrote and performed a song called “The TVA Song” that credits the TVA with putting folks to work for “short hours and certain pay” to build the dams and clear the reservoirs. The song concludes with the line, “Oh things are up and comin’, God bless the TVA.”79

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77 *Deliverance*, directed by John Boorman (1972; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros.).
More recently, the Athens, Georgia, based alt-country/indie rock band, The Drive-By Truckers, have recorded “TVA,” which tells of the harshness of life as a sharecropper and that the TVA provided “an honest day’s pay.” Songwriter Jason Isbell uses the song to show that TVA projects helped residents to “put down the plow” and contribute to the greater prosperity of the South. Echoing Jean Thomas, the song’s refrain is “Thank God for the TVA.”

The Drive-By Truckers also recorded “Uncle Frank,” the antithesis of “TVA” which highlights some of the negative effects of TVA projects. Isbell begins by highlighting how displacement narratives are hidden by the abundant electricity and the fair market value paid to residents when he sings “They powered up the city with hydro-electric juice, now we got more electricity than we can ever use. They flooded out the hollow and all the folks down there moved out, but they got paid so there ain’t nothin’ else to think about.” Isbell then tells the story of Uncle Frank who bought “fifteen rocky acres, figured no one else would want” after returning home from serving, presumably, in one of the world wars. Uncle Frank was removed from his land to make way for a TVA project and the promises of jobs, highways, and cheap electricity were soon forgotten. Now land like he once owned is either under water or “sold for lake-front property where doctors, lawyers, and musicians teach their kids to water-ski.”

Placing musicians in the same upper-class category as doctors and lawyers is a bit tongue in cheek, but the reality of farmers selling their land for “fair market value” to the government or private

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companies and accepting promises that they will never get to enjoy is a fact for many displaced families.

Johnson City, Tennessee-based songwriter Sam Quinn also expresses his unambiguous attitude towards the TVA when he sings “so close your ears brave mother dear and damn the TVA” in his song, “T.V.A.,” that he recorded with his band, The Everybodyfields in 2004. Quinn’s song also conveys a concern for the changing lifestyle of rural families that electricity would bring when he sings “I don’t know about this electricity, Use the days and steal the nights and make my waters rise.”

In another song about flooded communities, Old Crow Medicine Show’s “Half Mile Down,” co-written by Ketch Secor and singer-songwriter Jim Lauderdale, tells a story of a family displaced by the Watauga Dam that would likely sound very familiar to residents of TVA projects as well as Duke Power’s Keowee-Toxaway Project. The song describes locals first losing common recreational areas and then watching the surveyors make their plans and bulldozers destroy the peaceful valley. The song also describes locals being hired for the project for meager wages and forcing them to relocate their loved ones, both alive and buried.

The songs of Jean Thomas and Pete Seeger praise the TVA for bringing jobs and electricity to Appalachia and for the company’s contribution to the greater prosperity of the country. It is incredibly difficult to argue against hundreds of jobs and energy security, but it is the more recent artists such as the Drive-By Truckers, The Everybodyfields, and Old Crow Medicine Show who examine the consequences felt by people who were displaced from their

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homes. In examining references to displacement by TVA projects, I found it most compelling that works which referenced the broad impacts of the TVA, as in flood control and electrification of rural communities, have a far more positive outlook on the projects than works that focus on the lived-experiences of the displaced.

Ron Rash and the Keowee-Toxaway Project

Several of the works of Appalachian writer and poet Ron Rash are set in real places and include actual events in western North Carolina and the northwest corner of South Carolina. With such a prominent Appalachian writer giving events in Oconee County so much attention in works such as One Foot in Eden, Saints at the River, and Raising the Dead,84 I have to wonder why more serious scholarly attention has not been given to this sub-region of Appalachia.

Rash used the Jocassee Valley as the setting for his novel One Foot in Eden, and his collection of poems Raising the Dead includes many references to both Keowee and Jocassee. In One Foot in Eden, he depicts the final days of the Jocassee Valley as filled with turmoil and anguish, both relating to the flooding and to other events in the novel. The characters Rash creates encompasses the varying attitudes towards the actual Keowee-Toxaway Project, including enthusiasm, indifference, loss, regret, and refusal to leave the valley until the bitter end.85 While some Jocassee residents chose to burn or demolish their homes before leaving the valley, there are no reports of homes being burned in the manner that concludes the novel.

Set in the years just before the Jocassee Valley was flooded, Sheriff Will Alexander drives through the night and compares the darkness and silence to “seeing into the future when

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84 One Foot in Eden (New York: Picador, 2002).
Raising the Dead (Oak Ridge, TN: Iris Press, 2002).
85 One Foot in Eden, passim.
much of this land would be buried deep underwater.”\textsuperscript{86} Rash’s character also compares the impending displacement of the descendants of Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and English settlers to the Cherokee who once worked the land in the Jocassee Valley when he writes “people poor and desperate enough to risk their lives to take that land, as the Cherokees had once taken it from other tribes—would soon vanish from Jocassee as well...Reservoir, reservation, the two words sounded so alike. In a dictionary they would be on the same page.”\textsuperscript{87} He also writes that “this time the disappearance would be total. There would be no names left, because Alexander Springs and Boone Creek and Robertson’s Ford and Chapman’s Bridge would all disappear. Every tombstone with Holcombe or Lusk or Alexander or Nicholson chiseled into it would vanish as well.”\textsuperscript{88}

In his book of poems \textit{Raising the Dead}, Rash shows a deep understanding of the loss incurred by the residents of Keowee and Jocassee even though, to the best of my knowledge, he never visited the valley prior to inundation. Rash describes families attending their final church services in “Last Service,” the first August in many years where fields no longer bore tall rows of corn (“Bottomland”) and as in “A Homestead on the Horsepasture,” a farmer who “stayed to watch water tug his farm under one row at a time, so slow.”\textsuperscript{89} Rash also describes an area just below Jocassee called Fall Creek, the 1916 flooding of the Toxaway River that devastated Jocassee, and the many names of the flower native to the area, \textit{Shortia galacifolia}, with the common name of “Oconee Bells” and once called “Shee-Show” by the Cherokee. In “Under Jocassee,” Rash describes the surface of the lake as a liminal space that allows a brief connection

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{One Foot in Eden}, 4.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{One Foot in Eden}, 23.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{One Foot in Eden}, 23.
\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Raising the Dead}, 64.
between valley and lake as a boater peers through the waters of Lake Jocassee to see a woman
carrying out her daily chores sixty years before.\textsuperscript{90} And in the final poem in the collection, “The
Men Who Raised the Dead,” Rash describes the men in charge of moving buried loved ones “to
be saved if not from death, from water.”\textsuperscript{91}

Elisabeth C. Aiken writes that both \textit{One Foot in Eden} and \textit{Raising the Dead} “explore the
complex relationship between land and people, tradition and progress, and the volatile role water
often plays in shaping events.”\textsuperscript{92} Aiken also adds that Rash uses his position as writer “to
preserve Appalachian culture, highlight the lasting environmental damage, and question the
dominant narrative of progress as beneficial to all”\textsuperscript{93} and that the collaboration between Duke
Power and state government expresses “the neo-colonizing tendencies that worked to promote
their own agenda.”\textsuperscript{94} Aiken cites Helen Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins’ theory of
Appalachia as a region exploited by outsiders to the point of the region being an internal colony
within in the United States while also acknowledging white Appalachia’s place in the forced
displacement of Native Americans from the region.\textsuperscript{95}

This literature review summarizes the related research and local publications on the
Keowee-Toxaway Project, displacements caused by the TVA and National Parks Service, and
the definition and theory of displacement narratives. Former residents of the Keowee River

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Raising the Dead}, 4.
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Raising the Dead}, 71.
\textsuperscript{92} “Capitalizing on Appalachia: Resisting Colonization and Exploitation in the Works of Ron
Rash and Fred Chappell” (PhD diss., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2014), 122.
See also Helen M. Lewis and Edward E. Knipe, “The Colonialism Model: The Appalachian
Case,” \textit{Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case}, ed. Helen Lewis, Linda
Johnson, and Donald Askins (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium, 1978): 7-32,
\textsuperscript{93} Aiken, 123.
\textsuperscript{94} Aiken, 124.
\textsuperscript{95} Aiken, 27.
Valley have documented their memories, experiences, and many of the landmarks and historical sites that are now beneath the waters of Lake Jocassee and Lake Keowee. Filmmakers and authors have also used the Keowee-Toxaway Project as a filming location and setting for their works of fiction. The building of hydroelectric dams has garnered both praise and criticism from musical artists and the works of Ron Rash set in the Oconee County highlight the cultural and historical losses of the project. These topics are important for providing the necessary framework for discussion of the Keowee-Toxaway Project in Appalachian Studies and providing context and theory for the questions raised by this research.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

I have used a variety of primary sources in my research including oral histories recorded from residents of the Keowee River Valley affected by Duke Power’s Keowee-Toxaway Project, local and regional newspaper articles, personal observations and remembrances, and documents relating to the initial licensing of the project and the recent relicensing. I also used documents relating to other dam projects in Oconee County produced by the Army Corps of Engineers and reports from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. The oral histories allowed me to talk with people who either were displaced by Duke Power or who felt the impacts of displacement on their community. Local and regional newspaper articles provided me with information on the official narrative of the project as represented by official press releases and other major announcements, and a way to analyze local discourse through letters to the editor and similar columns.

Oral History Interviews

Duke Power completed the dams, nuclear station, and reservoirs (lakes Keowee and Jocassee) approximately fifty years prior to my research, leaving many of those who dealt directly with Duke Power in the 1960s or before deceased or unable to locate. The only people left are their children, many of them only teenagers at the time of the flooding, who can relate their experiences and the memories of their childhoods or early adulthoods. I collected four oral history interviews for my research on the narratives of the Keowee-Toxaway Project. I used a criterion-based selection process in which I relied heavily on networking and referrals to recruit participants as outlined by Kathryn Roulston in Reflective Interviewing: A Guide to Theory and
The criteria I used for selecting interview participants was strongly based on the individual’s connection to the areas now covered by lakes Keowee and Jocassee. In an effort to include a variety of perspectives I invited participants who were displaced from their primary residences, those who lost family homes, and those who felt the impacts on their community. I intended to keep my participant selection focused only on displaced residents, but because many Keowee River Valley residents old enough to make decisions were already elderly in the early 1960s, at present there are simply very few left living to potentially interview for this project. I intended to have eight to ten participants but unfortunately, I had difficulty with potential participants returning my calls and messages. The curators at the Oconee Heritage Center (OHC) in Walhalla, South Carolina, gave me some initial referrals of possible participants including former residents or their children. The OHC, along with the Oconee County Public Library, sponsored a speaker series on the topic of lakes Keowee and Jocassee in 2016. Ron Rash, scholars from Clemson University in the fields of anthropology and engineering, and the owner/operator of a dive shop and charter company on Lake Jocassee, spoke at various venues across the county. According to the Oconee County Public Library webpage, the goal of the series was to “start a conversation that will lead to the creation of an oral history collection held by both the library and the Oconee Heritage Center . . . about the coming of the lakes.” This project was unsuccessful in collecting oral histories from former residents of the Keowee and Jocassee valleys, though they gave me no reasons for the lack of success.

1 (Los Angeles: Sage, 2010), 81-82, 98.
2 https://oconeelibrary.org/land-before-the-waters/.
Many of the people whom I talked to either on the telephone or via email did not want to participate because they felt they did not remember enough about the events that took place. Other potential participants whom I reached through networking were non-residents interested in the history of Oconee County but unable to give a first-hand account of either living in the Keowee River Valley or the Keowee-Toxaway Project. Most of the people I contacted eagerly gave me more names of more people but many had no contact information other than directing me to look them up on the social media platform Facebook. After repeated futile attempts to contact these individuals through Facebook, I abandoned the use of social media as a method for contacting potential participants and sought out more reliable contact information such as telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. I was also given verbal directions to the home of a potential participant without any other contact information. For personal safety reasons, I chose to not show up unannounced at this home and therefore did not use this referral.

I initially secured consent to be interviewed from four people with diverse connections to the Keowee River Valley and unique perspectives on the Keowee-Toxaway Project. Very late in the writing of this thesis, a former resident of the Keowee Valley approached me and in the interest of representing as many stories of the Keowee-Toxaway Project as possible, I met with this individual and recorded the interview. However, instead of transcribing and coding this interview in NVIVO as I had with the other interviews, I opted for taking notes on the interview recording. Because many of the themes presented in this interview were consistent with the others I had already conducted, I only transcribing small portions of the interview that would fit within the major themes I had already established. However, this interview caused me to expand my research into topics such as county council positions held by gated community residents and into the perceived oppression of long-time Oconee residents by the growing lake community.
Although the quantity of interviews is much lower than I had anticipated, the perspectives of my interviewees is quite diverse. Claudia Whitmire Hembree was raised in the Jocassee Valley but was away at college at the time Duke Power announced its intentions for the valley. She returned home to meet with the Duke Power representatives and with her siblings to sell their property and move her mother out of the valley.\(^3\) Mike Wilson grew up in the Fall Creek area on the north end of what is now Lake Keowee. Although his family’s land was not inundated, he saw Duke Power buy out many of his neighbors. Wilson also spent more than thirty years as a lineman for the Blue Ridge Electric Co-op and had many years of experience working closely with Duke Power.\(^4\) My third participant, Debbie Fletcher, grew up in Columbia, South Carolina, but spent her summers in Jocassee. Her grandparents owned and operated the Atakulla Lodge in Jocassee from the 1920s until her grandmother was tragically killed in an automobile accident on her way to open the lodge for the summer in the mid-1950s.\(^5\) Harry McCall also spent his childhood summers in Jocassee. His family eventually moved to their home on Lake Keowee from Charleston, South Carolina, after his family was offered property on the lake in exchange for their land and house in the Jocassee Valley.\(^6\) My final interview was with Wilma Crocker Thompson. She grew up in the Keowee Valley on a fifty-two acre farm bordering Cane Creek and she attended Keowee High School (now Keowee Elementary). Her father was a sharecropper who mostly grew cotton and eventually purchased the farm in the 1950s. Their family farm is now at the bottom of Lake Keowee near the Biggerstaff Christian Retreat Center.\(^7\)

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3 Claudia Whitmire Hembree, interviewed by author, Taylors, South Carolina, May 7, 2018.  
4 Mike Wilson, interviewed by author, Westminster, South Carolina, March 11, 2018.  
5 Debbie Fletcher, interviewed by author, Columbia, South Carolina, March 10, 2018.  
6 Harry McCall, interviewed by author, Salem, South Carolina, June 2, 2018.  
7 Wilma Crocker Thompson, interviewed by author, Walhalla, South Carolina, October 8, 2018.
I had a sixth interview scheduled with a former resident of the Keowee River Valley, but he had to cancel due to failing health and repeated hospital stays. This gentleman also invited me to a closed Facebook group called “Remembering Seneca, South Carolina.” Here several members made very strong comments about their families dealing with Duke Power, but none of them responded to my requests for an in-person interview.

My research was exempt from institutional review board requirements but I still used every effort to make sure that the focus and intent of my study very clear to all who wished to participate. I also obtained written consent from each participant to use their real names, record the audio of the interview, and to deposit the recordings and transcriptions in both the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee, and the Oconee Heritage Center.

Each of the participants in the interview portion of my study were gracious enough to invite me into their homes for their interviews. I had prepared to offer an alternative location such as the Oconee Heritage Center or another location of their choosing to make the participants as comfortable as possible. One of the more interesting aspects of the interviews was the distances traveled to conduct them. From Oconee County, I traveled to Columbia, South Carolina (approximately 140 miles), and to Taylors, South Carolina (approximately 45 miles), while one of my participants traveled from Greenville, South Carolina, to meet me at his family’s home on Lake Keowee. Only two of my participants, Mike Wilson and Wilma Thompson, currently live in Oconee County.

There is some overlap in my primary and secondary sources because two of my interviewees, Claudia Whitmire Hembree and Debbie Fletcher also have written books on the

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8 Roulston, 96-97.
Jocassee Valley. Although I have used their published works extensively for background information on the area, I tried to design my interviews to dig deeper into their direct experiences and feelings concerning the flooding of the Jocassee Valley that they did not express in print. The use of both their published material and oral histories gives their voices far more input than my other participants. To mitigate the overrepresentation of their narratives, I have tried to use their published works only for background information and their oral history interviews in the analysis of the diverse narratives of the project.

When I was finally able to conduct the interviews, I made sure the participants knew that I was from the area. I felt like this was incredibly important in establishing credibility with my interviewees and getting the most honest representation of their feelings and perceptions of the project. As part of my selection process, I spoke with each participant on the telephone to see if he/she met the criteria for participation and, as suggested by Kathryn Roulston, to learn about their connections to the Keowee River Valley in order to better prepare for the interviews. This was particularly important when interviewing Claudia Whitmire Hembree and Debbie Fletcher because I did not want to ask them questions they addressed in their books. There were a few moments in my interview with Mrs. Hembree in which she pulled out her book *Jocassee Valley* and referenced points that I had missed or failed to remember.

My pre-interview process generally involved sharing family names and family members that the other might know. My deep family and personal connections to Oconee County also pose potential weaknesses in my perspective and how I analyzed the data through unintentional researcher bias. Another area of potential bias comes from my status as an Appalachian Studies student. The field of Appalachian studies has focused primarily on the negative effects of

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9 102.
resource extraction and how stereotypes have been used to exclude the voices of mountain residents and have led to exploitation by corporations based largely outside of the region. This point of view had the potential to shape how I see the Keowee-Toxaway Project and how I analyzed the interviews I collected. To mitigate any bias in my research, I did not leading questions, that is, ones designed to elicit particular responses.\(^\text{10}\) Also, with questions that elicited more sensitive answers from the participants, I tried to empathize with them while remaining neutral and without giving too many personal opinions on a topic that could influence their responses.

The interviews were semi-structured with a list of eight open-ended questions (contained in Appendix B) that I asked each participant. The open-ended questions allowed participants to formulate answers in their own words and based on their own experiences.\(^\text{11}\) I then asked follow-up questions based on their individual answers or specific topics they mentioned. The questions focused on the participant’s relationship to the Keowee River, what they remember about various aspects of the Keowee-Toxaway Project, including presentation to the public, local discourse, and public input. I also asked my participants to reflect upon the promises made by Duke Power and by local government and if the project has lived up to those promises and expectations. Each of my participants had very different experiences with the Keowee-Toxaway Project, so it was important to use my question list as a starting point for each topic and then ask follow up questions to elicit more detail and explanation from my participants as suggested by Kathryn Roulston.\(^\text{12}\) As an oral history project, I have used primarily a documentary approach because it

\(^\text{10}\) Roulston, 87.
\(^\text{11}\) Roulston, 12-15.
\(^\text{12}\) Roulston, 15.
aims to preserve the lived experiences and perceptions of the Keowee-Toxaway Project from a point of view that has been almost erased by the dominant narrative.\textsuperscript{13}

I recorded each interview with a digital audio recording device and immediately backed-up the audio file when I returned home. After the first four interviews were complete, I began the time-consuming task of transcription because text is much more easily coded and analyzed than are sound recordings. Just as Kathryn Roulston writes in her description of transcribing interviews, I began “the process of interpreting interview data and generating preliminary analysis” at this point.\textsuperscript{14} I also made notes with key themes and important quotations as they emerged when I re-listened to the recordings. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I only transcribed portions of my interview with Wilma Crocker Thompson because I conducted this interview several months after the others.

I used a free trial version of the qualitative data analysis software NVIVO to code my interviews and group portions of each interview into common themes. I previously had attended a training webinar and gained valuable experience using NVIVO as part of my graduate assistantship in the Appalachian Studies Department that helped me understand the basics of this powerful analytical software. To code and analyze the interviews I used the grounded theory approach described by H. Russell Bernard in \textit{Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches} \textsuperscript{15} This process involves identifying analytical categories and potential themes in the interviews by becoming “grounded” in the text of the interviews through close study to discover interviewees’ patterns of thought. To identify these categories, I first


\textsuperscript{14} 105.

\textsuperscript{15} (New York: AltaMira Press, 2002),
looked for the larger themes using inductive or “open” coding by identifying the topics or actors discussed by the interviewee. Then I used deductive coding to determine how major themes such as buyouts by Duke Power, public discourse, public input, preservation, treatment of locals, and the lasting impacts of the project were connected to one another and to my research questions. Appendix C contains a list of the major and minor themes I discovered while coding the interviews.

**Local and Regional Newspapers**

Newspaper articles from the *Keowee Courier* (Walhalla, South Carolina), the *Seneca Journal and Tribune* (Seneca, South Carolina), and regional news articles from the *Greenville News* (Greenville, South Carolina) helped me to discover how the project was introduced to the community through front-page articles and coverage of official press-releases. Local papers such as the *Keowee Courier* and *Seneca Journal and Tribune* also provided evidence of local discourse through editorials, political and current events cartoons, letters to the editor, local history articles, and “Inquiring Reporter” sections that ask locals their opinions of events. I used the regional newspaper the *Greenville News*, to compare local and regional representation of the project and of the displaced residents. I also thought the *Greenville News* would include more information on the potential impacts of the project on the entire South Carolina Upcountry.

Both the *Keowee Courier* and *Seneca Journal and Tribune* are available on microfilm at the Oconee County Public Library in Walhalla, South Carolina. I looked through every edition of these weekly newspapers from 1964 until the completion of the project in 1973 and saved the individual articles in Portable Document Format (PDF) to then print and code later in my analysis. To find relevant articles in the *Greenville News*, I subscribed to newspapers.com, a

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16 Bernard, 464.
service that allowed me to narrow my search by year and to search the text by keywords. The keywords that I used include “Keowee-Toxaway,” “Keowee Toxaway” (no hyphen), “Keowee River,” “Duke Power,” “South Carolina Land and Timber Company” (along with its various abbreviations), and “Keowee residents.”

I was unable to use NVIVO for coding the newspaper articles because of my limited time with the free trial of the software. Instead, I printed out all of the newspapers articles that were relevant to my study and then highlighted or wrote the major theme of the article on the page. I then grouped these very similarly to the way I did the oral history interviews. Another method of coding in grounded theory involves tracking repeated words called in “vivo coding.”

Although I did not notice many repeated words or phrases in the oral histories, there were several that I took note of while coding the newspaper articles, including “bonanza” and various references to the “modern age.” In general, the headings for each section of Chapter Four of this thesis are the main themes that I used to code the data from both the oral histories and local newspapers although I replaced some of my original themes with descriptive quotes from interviews and other sources.

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17 Bernard, 464.
CHAPTER 4
NARRATIVES OF THE KEOWEE-TOXAWAY PROJECT

“It Was a Done Deal.”

There are varying narratives on Duke Power’s methods for purchasing the land necessary for the dams and the land that would be flooded by the Keowee-Toxaway Project. The Oconee Heritage Center calls the company’s methods “unobtrusive,” but according to my interviewees, Oconee County residents affected by the project realized they had been deceived by the Duke Power Company when it announced plans to flood Keowee and Jocassee in 1965. The information gathered from oral histories and newspaper articles show that while many Oconee Country residents saw the potential benefits of the Keowee-Toxaway Project, those displaced saw any attempt to stand up to Duke Power futile as they felt as though they did not have the financial power or collective voice to do so.

Duke Power’s most effective land purchasing tactic was the use of well-known locals as buying agents. Debbie Fletcher related what Dot Jackson, a former resident of the Keowee River area and author of *Keowee: The Story of the Keowee River Valley in Upstate South Carolina*, had told her some years before when she said “during the negotiations, one man was snookered into selling his land because they didn’t represent themselves as Duke. They represented themselves as somebody who wanted to buy the land to have a sheep farm because there was a particular kind of sheep that would do well really well in that environment.” Mike Wilson recalls these local agents as “money people that everybody knew” whom Duke Power contracted “to go

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2 Fletcher interview.
around and be their front-man because, of course, people are going to be more receptive to a local and they (Duke Power) are somebody from outside.”

Claudia Whitmire Hembree remembers the local agent, Luke Winchester from Pickens, South Carolina, who made her family an offer on their twenty-two acres of land in the Jocassee Valley. Her family felt compelled to sell its land because, as she said, “I think in life you have to pick your fights. We were dealing with a huge company and that’s why we just said, well, as my brother said, ‘it’s a done deal.’” By the time Duke Power came to make an offer, the Whitmires’ property was in the names of the Whitmire children, who then had to meet with Winchester to discuss the buyout. Claudia Whitmire Hembree, along with her five siblings, met with Winchester, who made them an offer and as she said, “we had to sign it.” The Whitmire family appeared to have little faith in negotiating with the power company.

Mike Wilson remembers that most of the people living in the Keowee area “were older and most of them didn’t farm or stuff anymore. They might have a pasture. There was a few that might have a corn crop or something or another down in those bottoms.” This general decline in farming along the Keowee River would have provided further motivation for residents to sell their land. Mike Wilson had a great aunt and uncle who owned land along the Keowee River. The local agents came to these older folks living in Keowee and told them that the land was being bought by groups who intended to farm the land again. I speculate that making such

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3 Wilson interview.
4 Hembree interview.
5 Hembree interview.
6 Hembree interview.
7 Wilson interview.
8 Wilson interview.
claims to an aging population today and then flooding that property would likely result in a legal battle between the company and the residents.

I learned from talking to Wilma Crocker Thompson that some locals in charge of securing contracts for Duke Power knew the company’s plan well in advance and even leaked some of this information to Keowee residents before Duke Power officially announced the project. Thompson told me, “When they came in and bought it, they [the purchasing agents] said they needed that because it was going to be underwater.” Bruce Rochester was the realtor who approached her family about selling their fifty-acre farm. She could not remember the exact date, but it had to be before Duke Power’s official announcement in January of 1965 because her parents moved into their new home, which her father built himself, in August of 1965.9

By first concealing its intentions and identity in the land purchasing process, Duke Power’s agents clearly gained an upper hand in negotiations with residents and thus after the company announced the project, set terms favorable to the company after the project’s announcement. Debbie Fletcher remembers the first time her family was approached about selling their property:

The lodge had this huge front porch and I remember I was on the porch, just piddling around on the porch and this car drove up and a man with a white shirt got out and I remember he had his sleeves rolled up to here . . . That’s when he told us he was from Duke Power . . . and that they had plans to build a dam and the valley was going to get flooded and they needed to make arrangements to buy our property. It’s my understanding from my brother and from others that they approached us first because we were the largest land owner of property that was going to be totally inundated and I’m sure they thought that if they got us taken care of first then the others would fall in line.10

Another tactic Duke Power used involved first targeting land owned by people who had summer homes in the area before making offers to those actually living along the Keowee River

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9 Thompson interview.
10 Fletcher interview.
or in the Jocassee Valley full-time. Mike Wilson said, “by the time they had that much land, they could condemn your place and give you what they thought it was worth. So, it’s best to deal with them or get condemned. And they had already geared up to start that.”11 The fear of condemnation and eminent domain appears to have persuaded many people living in the Keowee River Valley to sell their property to Duke Power and South Carolina Land and Timber Company quickly and without much bargaining.

Debbie Fletcher believes that her family’s real mistake was taking Duke Power’s offer too quickly. Her uncle Buck thought that if they sold quickly, they would get a better deal. Some families, however, did get a better deal when they negotiated with the power company. After family members inquired about swapping their land in the valley for lakefront property on either Lake Jocassee or Lake Keowee, Duke representatives told them that Jocassee was “too remote” and would be used for the pumped storage facility and that swapping for property on Lake Keowee was out of the question. Then, after the publication of her book Whippoorwill Farewell in 2003, Fletcher met a doctor living in Easley, South Carolina who claimed that Duke Power swapped the one hundred and thirty-five acres he owned in Jocassee for a parcel of the same size on Lake Keowee with approximately two miles of shoreline. This news was devastating to Debbie Fletcher.12

Harry McCall’s family, owners of a summer home in Jocassee, also benefitted from swapping its land in Jocassee for land on Lake Keowee. By doing so, the family was able to avoid paying taxes on the price Duke offered them for the land in Jocassee. The McCall family also spent many years involved in legal battles with Duke Power and the property owners living

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11 Harry McCall, interviewed by author, Salem, South Carolina, June 2, 2018.
12 Fletcher interview.
in the subdivision that was developed around them. Duke Power even went so far as to claim that the McCalls were trespassing on property the company had signed over to them years before. Harry McCall said that with the amount of money and resources at Duke Power’s disposal, “they would bankrupt you…Duke Power has enough money that if they want to sue you because they don’t like your name, by the time you go to court and you pay four or five hundred dollars for lawyer’s fees, you’d be thinking about changing your name.”\textsuperscript{13} The only thing that saved the McCall family was that the first judge sided with it and this precedent helped the family in later trials.\textsuperscript{14}

Mike Wilson said he was just a kid when he first heard about the project, but he did not “remember anybody being ill about it or anything.”\textsuperscript{15} Instead, he remembered a sense of excitement. He said, “There wasn’t anything back then around our area. So, it was something to talk about and something to watch happen,” like going to the platform Duke Power built in Jocassee for people to watch bulldozers being lowered down the steep embankments, clearing trees and brush as their blades made way for the new shoreline.\textsuperscript{16}

Duke Power made an offer on the Wilson family’s property only after purchasing the adjoining five-hundred acre farm owned by the Finley family, an offer that Mike Wilson says his father quickly refused. Duke Power was not simply purchasing the land that would be inundated, it was buying thousands of acres that would remain above the water line. Wilson said “a lot of that was where the lake didn’t back all the way over and cover it. They told [residents] they had to have that, too, and they couldn’t keep it.”\textsuperscript{17} He also recalled that families who could afford

\textsuperscript{13} McCall interview.
\textsuperscript{14} McCall interview.
\textsuperscript{15} Wilson interview.
\textsuperscript{16} Wilson interview.
\textsuperscript{17} Wilson interview.
lawyers were able to keep some of their land that was not inundated. Wilson said he believes residents were taken advantage of but “land around here was dirt cheap back then and so they got more than they would have got if another local person had bought it from them.”\textsuperscript{18} Thompson also remembered friends and neighbors to whom Duke Power made offers, even though their land was not scheduled to be inundated. She told me that Duke Power only wanted their land because it was going to be lakefront property on Lake Keowee when the project was completed.\textsuperscript{19}

Most of my interviewees told me that Duke Power paid residents approximately $250 per acre of farmland and a little more for their homes or for usable timber. Thompson said that her father always felt as though he was “getting the short end of the thing, he wasn’t getting much money.” She personally felt that they were probably getting a better deal than most of her neighbors. She said her parents received twenty thousand dollars for their fifty-acre farm, including their farmhouse and other structures adjacent to Cane Creek. Her parents gave her older brother and sister one-acre plots each of the original fifty-two acres that her parents purchased several years prior. Each of them had already built homes there and when Bruce Rochester came to purchase their property, he offered them each $7,500 for their land and homes. Assuming that Duke paid her parents the same amount for the acre of land where their home was located, they would have been paid approximately $255 per acre for the remaining forty-nine acres of pasture, garden, and farmland.

Land that Duke Power purchased around $250 per acre soon became prime lakeside real estate and by the middle of the 1970s, gated communities such as Keowee Key were selling that

\textsuperscript{18} Wilson interview. 
\textsuperscript{19} Thompson interview.
same property for $25,000 per acre. The price for lakefront property in Oconee County today is easily ten times that amount. Harry McCall said his neighbor on Lake Keowee at present has his lakefront home and property on the real estate market for nearly one-and-a-half million dollars. McCall also said property taxes in the county have risen dramatically. His family paid $250 per year to Oconee County when it first moved to Lake Keowee and now pays in excess of $14,000 to the county each year.

The sense of excitement mentioned by Mike Wilson soon changed after the project’s completion when Duke Power and Crescent (formerly known as South Carolina Land and Timber) began dividing and selling lakefront lots. Wilson said the mood shifted some “when Duke went into the realty business and started selling off all the land that taxpayers had helped buy and loading it down with people.” By this statement, Wilson meant that residents were not happy that Duke Power developed the land bought from Oconee County residents by building subdivisions and gated communities that allowed the company to market the property at high prices to retirees. Harry McCall also saw how these new arrivals, primarily from northern states and Florida, have affected property prices. He said “the northern people have come in and it's almost like a little New York. A lot of people from Florida moved back up to western South Carolina and North Carolina because the prices in Florida have gone up and the heat and humidity down there. So, everything is going up.”

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20 Wilson interview.
21 A Zillow.com search for one acre waterfront lots Lake Keowee returned eight results with an average asking price of $281,750. The most expensive one acre lot listed is $525,00 and the least expensive $179,000. Search results accessed September 25, 2018.
22 McCall interview.
23 Wilson interview.
24 McCall interview.
Thompson also felt strongly about the power shift that happened as a result of the lakes created by Duke Power and the wealthy newcomers who began purchasing land that prior to the sale to Duke had been in some Oconee County families for several generations. She said, “I know that a lot of northerners came in and bought land at Lake Keowee. My personal feeling is, I know they've got money, but it seems to me like they pretty much think that they’ve got more say-so than anybody else because they live on the lake and their property is a lot more valuable than a lot of other people’s property.”

Thompson told me of a woman who owned a mobile home park on the shores of Lake Keowee. Other lakefront property owners tried to push her out of the area even though the park was there long before the newcomers purchased their property. Thompson said “it’s like they were better because they had bigger, fancier homes and they were at the lake and had more money. The people that were here didn’t have all that money, they were looked down upon and they could dictate what you could and could not do with your own property and I don't like that.” She said the owner of the mobile home park got to keep her property and her business, but many Oconee residents have had a difficult time adjusting to their new neighbors who have the wealth and political power to make lifelong Oconee residents feel powerless. She said “They pay a lot of taxes and I’m sure it helps Oconee County, but it has made things worse around here for the people that already lived here. It’s just like we’re outcasts and the new people coming in that’s got more money and buy the lake lots and can pay more property taxes, they’ve got more of a say-so than the people who were here to start with and I just don’t like the way that part’s turned out.”

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25 Thompson interview.
26 Thompson interview.
27 Thompson interview.
In one example of Lake Keowee property owners battling for political power, Keowee Key resident Paul Corbeil bested two life-long Oconee County residents in the 2009 Republican primary on his way to the Oconee County Council. Corbeil is a retired financial services manager who studied business at Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York. In the three years he had lived in Oconee County before his election to the county council, Corbeil also had served as director and treasurer for the Keowee Key Property Owners Association.\textsuperscript{28} The Daily Journal, along with Corbeil, credited the lake community for the success in his campaign as part of a special election to fill the District 1 County Council seat. His Democratic Party opponent Jack Collins won six of the district’s nine precincts and tied in another. Collins told the newspaper that “as long as the population lines remain as they are in the district, the lake residents would continue shifting election results.”\textsuperscript{29} The final tally was a landslide with Corbeil getting 1,473 votes to Collins’ 490. The article also includes a picture of Corbeil receiving his “I Voted” sticker after he cast his ballot at the Duke Power’s World of Energy complex adjacent to the Oconee Nuclear Station site. More recently another Keowee Key resident John Elliott won the District 1 council seat in November 2018. His election raises my own personal questions about the conflict of council members representing their community of primarily wealthy non-locals which stands in contrast to the rest of the district and Oconee County.

The evidence appears to be mixed regarding the overall benefits to communities such as Lake Keowee that actively attract retirees. In their 2001 study, “In-migration: South Carolina’s Newest ‘Sunrise Industry’,” Patrick Mason and Katherine Pettit wrote that population growth in the state was flat and, at times, on the decline prior to the 1960s. They also noted that the Center

for Carolina Living in Columbia, South Carolina, estimates that forty-eight percent of the people moving to South Carolina are in some stage of retirement and have average yearly household incomes over ninety thousand dollars. The center also calculates that there are approximately six hundred and fifty thousand people in the state over the age of sixty-five who collectively contribute more six-and-a-half billion dollars to the state’s economy and sustain more than one hundred thousand jobs. In a separate study on the economic effects of a rapidly increasing retirement-age population, Karen L. Hamilton claimed that as retirement populations increase, so do the number of jobs, mostly in the healthcare and service industries. However, she writes that too much population growth in retirement communities can negatively affect average wages levels, likely through the increase of low-paying service jobs, while also raising the cost of housing, cost of living, and other factors that could negate any wage increases.

The lakes also separated long-standing communities on both sides of the Keowee River. Wilson recalled, “We had a lot of people who went to our church that lived on the river. Most of them lived on the other side. Even though that’s Pickens County, everybody considered them being from Salem. Once the lake backed up, seems like almost all of them ended up moving to Pickens or Easley or Six Mile. So, we didn’t see them anymore. They used to come to church, homecoming and stuff like that. That’s about the only time you saw them anymore.” He also said of his changing sense of community, “When I was growing up, I knew everybody around Salem. If I saw a dog on the side of the road, not only did I probably know whose dog it was, I probably knew its name. And then it got to where I didn’t know hardly anybody up there

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31 “Impact of Retirement Populations on Local Jobs and Wages,” Economic Development Quarterly 24, no. 2 (February 2010), 122.
32 Wilson interview.
anymore. So, you know, things change.”\textsuperscript{33} Intentional or not, as lakes replaced the river, communities were dismantled as residents made their way to higher ground.

Striking images of the displacement of Oconee County residents as a result of the Keowee-Toxaway Project appeared in local papers. For example, a \textit{Seneca Journal and Tribune} article titled “It’ll Be Under Water Pretty Soon,” pointed out that the poor farmers from the mountains were not the only ones affected: “You look up suddenly, if you’re driving along a road in the Seneca-Clemson vicinity, and you might see a house moving down the road toward you. Houses are being moved from the Keowee lake area . . . you have to feel sorry for the fellow who bought one of those brick houses in the Lake Keowee area.”\textsuperscript{34} This article suggests that homes and land continued to be sold in the Keowee area to unsuspecting buyers well into the 1960s. The sellers likely would not have had any more information on the area’s future than did the buyers. It appears that homeowners with the financial means to hire a moving company chose to pick up their brick homes and move them to a safe location. One can only imagine the heartbreak of buying a new home and then being told only a few years later that Duke Power was going to buy your property and flood the entire area.

Reactions and experiences were mixed among residents living in the Keowee River Valley. Thompson remembers that some of her neighbors did not like what Duke offered for their property and, like her, were not happy about the prospect of their homes and memories being covered by a hundred feet of water. But in her words, “It was going to happen regardless. There wasn’t going to be a way out of it. That was it.” After her father told her that they were moving out of their house along Cane Creek, she decided that she would take one last look at the

\textsuperscript{33} Wilson interview.
\textsuperscript{34} February 22, 1967.
house and the property. Thompson said she remembers crying as she walked from the house down to the barn and then to Cane Creek as she thought to herself, “this is the last time I’m going to see this. And it was.”\footnote{Thompson interview.}

**“Who Dares Oppose Such a Project?”**

With help from local government, Duke Power was determined no to let anything stand in its way. Although many residents saw no legal recourse for opposing the project, there are at least two documented cases in which residents and the federal government questioned Duke Power’s actions. Opposition from the federal government was attacked vehemently by local newspapers, while Duke Power ignored previous agreements the company made with residents, which resulted in a legal case filed by Jocassee residents that ultimately made it to the South Carolina Supreme Court.

Within a few months of Duke Power announcing its intentions in the Keowee River Valley, President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Secretary of State Stuart Udall, along with the Tri-State Power Committee, argued that the Keowee-Toxaway Project should be put on hold until the impacts of the project could be studied. However, Duke Power, local government, and Oconee residents who supported the project were eager to get it underway. Local media almost immediately attacked Secretary Udall calling opposition a “Blow to [the] State.”\footnote{Greenville News, Greenville, SC, March 25, 1965.} An article in the *Greenville News* titled “Get On With Keowee-Toxaway!” said, “Almost without exception, the citizens of South Carolina have welcomed the idea of the Keowee-Toxaway Project since it was first announced in 1965. There were a few dissenters, of course, people who seem to have a psychopathic fear of all private utilities; but sweet reason and forceful public opinion appear to
have prevailed.” To anyone living outside the Keowee River Valley and Oconee County, it would appear that the project was met with universal acceptance and applause. The voices of the displaced were immediately cast aside in this article and anyone who dared question Duke Power was labeled a “psychopath.”

Local newspapers almost seemed to mock Secretary Udall when he suggested that the area be studied for the possible impact on fish populations. In an article titled, “And There Are Tadpoles Too,” the Keowee Courier agreed that fish populations should be studied; however, it reasoned that “more water would mean more fish and would make the area a virtual fisherman’s paradise.” What the newspaper failed to address was that some species of fish, such as the trout that lived in the many streams and rivers of Oconee County, would not thrive in the deep, murky, and current-less lakes, as they do in clear, fast-moving rivers. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources website says of the native fish species: “Since trout only live in pure, cold water, they are highly sensitive to excessive silt loads, increased water temperatures, and lowered oxygen levels. When improperly conducted, practices such as logging, agriculture, residential development, and dam and highway construction can effectively destroy many trout-producing habitats.” Each of these practices increased across the eastern portion of Oconee County as a result of the Keowee-Toxaway Project.

South Carolina State Senator from Oconee County Marshall Parker, one of the more vocal proponents of the project, said the “shocking action” taken by Secretary Udall and the Tri-State Power Committee could destroy the project resulting in a $6 million annual loss to Oconee

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and Pickens counties, $14 million to the state, and $24 million to the federal government, along with a major source of employment.\textsuperscript{40} Senator Parker demanded, “Who dares oppose such a project?” State Representative Snead Schumacher echoed his colleague’s stance and argued that any opposition was “a direct disservice to the people of South Carolina” and added “I am irrevocably committed to support the development of South Carolina through private capital in lieu of public funds at any time it can be done.”\textsuperscript{41} An article from the \textit{Seneca Journal and Tribune} claimed that “protests, vocal and otherwise, are being raised right and left in Oconee this week following the protest made last week by the Secretary of the Interior.” However, the article went on to describe protests to Secretary Udall’s stance not from groups of organized common folks, but from local elites such as the Board of Directors of the Seneca Chamber of Commerce and from Senator Parker.\textsuperscript{42}

Duke Power clearly applied pressure on both local and federal government in September of 1966 when it asked for an expedited approval process for its initial license to begin the project. The company said that if it did not receive a decision by the Federal Power Commission (FPC, now called the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) by October 1, 1966, it would withdraw plans in South Carolina and “move the project elsewhere at great expense.”\textsuperscript{43} The FPC issued the initial fifty-year license for the Keowee-Toxaway Project on September 26, 1966, a mere twelve days after Duke Power threatened to abandon the project.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Greenville News}, Greenville, SC, March 25, 1965.  
\textsuperscript{42} June 30, 1965.  
Some families did, however, fight Duke Power’s apparent self-designated right to do as it pleased in the valley. Debbie Fletcher recalls that her grandfather C.O. Williams received two hundred and fifty dollars per acre for his land in the Jocassee Valley and a little more for some of the timber. The Williams’ family also had an agreement with Duke Power that allowed it to keep the property in its name until it became necessary for the completion of the project, most likely as a way to keep the property if the Jocassee Valley was not inundated as planned. The Jocassee Dam was the last to be completed and therefore most of the valley remained above water for several years after the start of the project. When it came time to talk with Duke Power about selling their property, she said, “We didn’t negotiate well, let me put it that way. My family hardly got anything.”45 Fletcher’s family, one of the few to make any attempt to stand up to Duke Power, did so because the family’s two-story log cabin, built by her great-grandfather, was torn down and buried by Duke Power before the sale was finalized. She said that her family did not have time to retrieve any belongings from the home and that Duke Power “obviously made a mistake because they had not purchased that part of the land yet.”46 Fletcher then told me: “it was still our property and Duke knocked it [the cabin] down and buried it. So, we did go to court and got a restraining order against Duke and they were not allowed to come on our land . . . they had done something pretty egregious.”47 She also said that she heard from former employees of Duke Power that the company did not abide by the restraining order because shortly thereafter “they cut a road up right behind the lodge, across our property.”48

45 Fletcher interview.
46 Fletcher interview.
47 Fletcher interview.
48 Fletcher interview.
The actions by Duke Power led to the family taking the case all the way to the South Carolina Supreme Court. Debbie’s older brother Jim Richardson was part of the Williams’ family legal team that defended Duke Power’s lawsuit to acquire a twenty-two acre tract of land in the Jocassee Valley.\(^{49}\) This parcel of land was reserved and optioned in December of 1965 for purchase within five years of that date only “when the land is required to begin actual construction of the Jocassee Dam.”\(^{50}\) Construction on the Jocassee Dam began in April 1968 and the diversion tunnel, coffer dam, and river diversion completed in October 1969. Five years later, the South Carolina Supreme Court ruled in favor of Duke Power and the Crescent Land and Timber company inferring that the land was “[r]equired ‘at a point in time simultaneous with the actual commencement of construction of the Jocassee Dam.’”\(^{51}\) Jim Richardson stated in email correspondence that to the best of his knowledge their case was the only litigation that resulted from Duke Power’s land acquisition strategy and he also was also not aware of any condemnations.\(^{52}\)

Other residents were determined to prevent Duke Power from forcibly removing them from their homes. Harry McCall, whose family owned a summer home in the Jocassee Valley, commented that his former neighbor Jack Hinkle was adamant about staying in the valley. McCall said they used to tease Hinkle saying “I guess you’ll be down inside a pipe and the pipe will stick up three hundred feet and we’ll lower food down there to you. He [Hinkle] said ‘I’m not leaving’, but when everything was said and done and they realized the new house that they’re

\(^{50}\) Crescent Land & Timber Corp. v. Williams, 207 S.E.2d 98, 262 S.C. 671 (S.C., 1974).
\(^{51}\) Crescent v. Williams.
\(^{52}\) Richardson email.
going to get with the modern conveniences, telephone, television, it was hard to say ‘I’m going to stay up here.’”

This is proof that at least some residents initially opposed to selling their land to Duke Power, in the end, saw they had no other option and took the money they were offered.

Public Input

Duke Power’s Keowee-Toxaway project was an enormous undertaking that even fifty years later continues to define Oconee County. I have been unable to find an official number of displaced residents, but overlaying a current map of Oconee County with the lakes on a map that I pieced together from the *Farm Plat and Business Guide: Oconee County*, I counted approximately ninety farms registered in this publication from 1953 that are now beneath the waters of either Lake Keowee or Lake Jocassee or that were very close to the current shoreline. See Figure 3 for this composite image. This number does not include non-farm residences. Through my collection of oral histories and review of local and regional newspapers, it is apparent that these displaced residents were not given a platform or public forum to voice their concerns to local government, Duke Power, or their neighbors who supported the project.

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53 McCall interview.
Figure 3 Composite Image of Oconee County, SC (Reproduced with permission of Rockford Map Publishers, Inc. Rockford, Illinois and South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments)
Debbie Fletcher summed up what she thought these farmers felt when they heard their family farms would be inundated by reservoirs and how a similar project might be received today:

Those little farmers in the valley, how are they going to take on Duke Power? This whole project was approved in secret. If it was done now there’d be hearings and protests and it will be all over the nation. People would be talking about building this nuclear station. We knew nothing about it, nothing about it until that man showed up and told us about it. We had no opportunity to say anything or protest or write letters or anything.\footnote[55]{Fletcher interview.}

Although completion of the project took years from announcement to complete inundation, residents were made to feel as though any efforts to stall the project would be futile. McCall told me, “There wasn't any pro bono attorney going to take it. You're going up against Duke Power that's already got a stack of lawyers and if you're doing this pro bono, which I don't even know if any lawyers did pro bono back then, it would just be a lost cause.”\footnote[56]{McCall interview.}

Many residents learned about the project and its progress only through reading newspapers or talking to their neighbors.

Wilma Crocker Thompson noted that Oconee County residents were in no position to fight Duke Power at this time. She said:

I think most people were like us. We were poor and we didn’t know really much about lawyers and we wouldn’t have had money to get lawyered anyway back then. I imagine most of them were in the same boat we were in and no, they wouldn’t have fought it because they figured Duke Power had more say-so and more money behind it and more fighting behind it than they did and they’d have to just give in to it. It was going to come and that was it.\footnote[57]{Thompson interview.}

Many of the displaced residents knew that Duke Power had the upper hand and the financial power to do anything it wished in the county and the residents did not have the financial backing or the collective voice to make a stand.
No documentation exists that any interested party held a public forum to allow residents to voice their concerns or ask questions about how they would be affected by the project. I repeatedly attempted to contact the Oconee County Council, Planning Board and other local government agencies to find any records of residents speaking at public forums. The Oconee County Clerk to Council Katie Smith responded to my requests via email. She said that although the Oconee County Planning Board is now a part of the Oconee County Council, the council was not formed until 1975, at least two years after the completion of the project. After speaking with multiple sources in local government on my behalf, she was unable to find any records related to the Keowee-Toxaway Project or the minutes for any meeting that would have allowed residents to voice their opinions or concerns. None of my interviewees could remember a single public event that discussed the project or the displaced residents.58

“America’s Last Period of Gullibility”

All the people I interviewed in the oral history portion of my research expressed some degree of regret for the inundation of the Jocassee Valley and the areas along the Keowee River and how the areas have changed in the last fifty years. Even those with minimal connections to the area have very strong feelings about what was lost to their generation and to future generations and about the ease with which a powerful company could displace residents and flood thousands of acres without regard to the history or culture of these Southern Appalachian residents.

Philip Lee Williams worked with his father as a volunteer from the University of South Carolina archeological team that was excavating Fort Prince George before it would be covered

58 I also found no evidence of public forums in the *Seneca Journal and Tribune, Keowee Courier*, or *Greenville News.*
by the waters of Lake Keowee. He was extremely upset to see Oconee and Pickens County
residents losing their homes and their history. Williams had some very strong words for Duke
Power and the attitudes of Oconee County residents during this time in his book In the Morning:
Reflections from First Light:

For weeks, crews have been cutting down all the trees in the glorious Keowee Valley
because the Duke Power Company, damn their eyes, is about to impound a lake that will
flood the area with water a hundred feet deep…The valley, one of the most beautiful in
the Southern United States, has been destroyed. I feel literally sick every time I see it…I
have come to think of the 1960s as America’s Last Period of Gullibility, when it could be
over-awed by utility companies such to an extent they would allow their heritage to be
raped.59

The caption under a picture of a family farm is titled, “Time Gives Way to Modern Age”
and the caption further says that the building is “awaiting the onslaught of upstate South Carolina
progress.”60 “Progress” and “moving into the modern age” are words local publications used to
describe the optimism that many had towards the project. Another article from the Greenville
News is titled, “Land No Good for Farming To Be Valuable Under 40 Feet Water.”61 The article
written by Greenville News staff writer Charles McFall focuses on J.R. Coker, whose family
farm along the Little River the article describes as “little more than five acres of scrub land
surrounding his house.”62 The article obviously intended to impress on the public that Duke
Power’s project would lift weary farmers from the rocky and hilly plots of land that in the minds
of some, kept them in poverty. In the article, Coker claimed, “A lot of people acted aggravated
by what Duke offered them. But they came out really satisfied. They had to be if Duke done
them as good as they done me.”63

59 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 100.
60 (Greenville, South Carolina), April 23, 1967.
61 August 6, 1967.
62 McFall.
63 McFall.
Williams might argue that these were false senses of optimism and satisfaction. Their “gullibility,” as Williams puts it, gave the government and a private corporation the power to forever change the landscape by displacing families and covering centuries of history in a blanket of water over one hundred feet deep. Mike Wilson said “Back then, everybody I knew trusted the government. Now, nobody does. Things changed. I don’t know if the government changed or we changed.”64 It seems that many Oconee County residents were looking to the future without much thought to preserving their past and all that business people and local government could see was tax revenue and tourist dollars.

The residents of Oconee County had plenty of possible points to challenge Duke Power. The area was home to the Cherokee and other Native American tribes for several centuries before white re-settlers forced them out and took control of this portion of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The eighteenth-century British Fort Prince George was a site of significant archeological excavation, but even those working to preserve as much of the fort as possible were working on Duke Power’s timeframe and worked until the waters of Lake Keowee began to cover their worksite. John Combs and his team from the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of South Carolina had only “18 months to beat the rising waters of Duke’s Lake Keowee” as they worked to learn as much as possible about Fort Prince George before the site was inundated.65

A special section from the Seneca Journal and Tribune from October 13, 1965, exclaims, “The Story of Oconee County is a Story of Progressive People!” This special publication highlights all the things that Oconee residents had to be proud of in their county including

64 Wilson interview.
recreational opportunities afforded by Lake Hartwell (another recent addition to the Oconee County landscape by the Army Corps of Engineers) and the many rivers that flow through the county, along with the benefits to be provided by the impending Keowee-Toxaway Project. The piece even highlights some facets of life in Oconee that the county would soon lose. Clemson University, along with the city of Clemson, would be annexed by neighboring Pickens County in 1968 when the college worked with Pickens County to move the county line to the center of Lake Hartwell. Camp Jocassee was also highlighted as a place “where hundreds of young girls have spent wonderful summertime hours roaming those same lovely woodland paths that Jocassee herself once trod.”

The camp would be lost to the waters of Lake Jocassee just a few years later.

On July 13, 1966, the *Seneca Journal and Tribune* printed a picture of High Falls with a caption that reads:

> Probably no spot in Oconee County is more popular these sweltering Summer days than the ‘Ole Swimmin’ Hole’ at High Falls…This beautiful setting lends itself to various forms of summer recreation…such as swimming, picnic outings, or just relaxing on the sand beach. Last Friday afternoon, when above photo was made, more than a hundred people visited the falls.

Although the article’s aim was to highlight the scorching temperatures of summer, there was no mention that in just a few short years this community gathering place would be one of many inundated by Lake Keowee.

A lot was lost to the waters of lakes Keowee and Jocassee: not only historic sites such as Fort Prince George or much of the natural habitat for the rare flowering plant, the Oconee Bells, but all the hard work put into clearing land and tilling fields, days spent fishing or swimming in

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67 *Seneca Journal.*
the river, and times spent with friends and family. The Keowee-Toxaway Project and the promises for a new, modern way of life in Oconee County began the final chapter of a way of life in the South Carolina Upcountry. Wilma Crocker Thompson told me, “I enjoyed growing up on the farm. It wasn’t an easy life, but I think it helped me to be the kind of person I am today . . . It was harder back then, but I think it shaped me as a better person.” She said, “My memories are there and I hate it’s covered up in water.”

Local Discourse

To analyze local discourse, I chose to rely mostly on local and regional newspapers because sections such as letters to the editor offer opportunities for residents to comment on local events while editorials and other articles show what matters to the community and any prevailing opinions. The initial announcement of the Keowee-Toxaway Project was met with immediate applause both locally and regionally. However, by the time Duke Power had acquired the necessary licenses to build its dams and nuclear station, the newspapers started running stories that included local history and featured homes, bridges, and historic sites that soon would be lost. Although none of the articles that I found ever mentioned Duke Power or the Keowee-Toxaway Project and any sense of loss in the same article, it is apparent that some Oconee County residents saw the need to document and to preserve as much as they could.

In its first edition after Duke Power announced that it would spend seven hundred million dollars on hydroelectric power facilities in Oconee County, the Seneca Journal and Tribune quickly sold a two-page spread that read “Welcome Duke Power to Oconee” with a local business sponsoring each letter. The “Inquiring Reporter” section of this same issue was the

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68 Thompson interview.
only instance in which a newspaper presented local feedback on the project. It is immediately apparent from the four individuals pictured that the newspaper made no attempt to have a diverse set of respondents. All four are well-dressed, middle-aged white males connected to local government, statewide banking, or law practice. Howard English, manager of the Oconee Planning and Development Board said that Duke Power’s announcement “spoke for itself and didn’t need further elucidation.” He also said that the project would “pave the way for future development in the realm of industry, of conservation, and of recreation.” William I. Reames, vice president of South Carolina National Bank and Seneca Mayor J.C. Crews both spoke of the increased tax revenue as a result of an increase in tourism and population growth. Salem Mayor Clyde Talley, Oconee County Clerk of Court Roy D. Harden, and Anderson attorney Ellison Long each praised the project for its economic potential.70

Although most of the writing about the project was overwhelmingly positive towards Duke Power’s plans, one unnamed resident’s letter to the editor, dated January 7, 1965 was published the following week on January 13. The letter reads:

Dear Sir:

I am one who is not happy to hear of the proposed inundation of the Keowee Valley. Aside from the fact that this beautiful stream will be eliminated, this valley is the cradle of Oconee’s beginnings. The first traders lived here: the Indian towns of the Keowee and Toxaway were here; Fort Prince George was here. All of these sites will be covered by the lake.

Now, I realize that historical considerations will in no wise deter the building of the dams, but I have not yet seen in print any indications that Duke Power Company intends to preserve in any manner this historical heritage of Oconee County.

The same page includes letters from Duke Power Company Vice President J.P. Lucas commending the paper on its treatment of the announcement and another from the company’s

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president W.B. McGuire thanking the paper for its “excellent news presentation” relating to the project.\textsuperscript{71}

New concerns arose when Duke Power formally made plans to add nuclear power to the project’s power generating capacity. Charles R. McDonald of Westminster, South Carolina wrote to the editor of the \textit{Seneca Journal and Tribune}: “We of Oconee County praised Duke Power Company for building all these dams and power plants in Oconee, but have we stopped to think?” McDonald explained that both Georgia Power Company and the federal government own land in Oconee County and have refused to improve or sell the land for homes and businesses. The only exception is the federal government that built parks and “charge us the same rate to visit as they do tourists from other states.”\textsuperscript{72} He went on to say:

Now, Duke Power Co. will own practically from Little River, east on that side of the county and anyone coming within miles of the power plant will become contaminated or something like the people in Japan after the bomb was dropped in World War II. I don’t see where that leaves Oconee County to grow much unless we build tall buildings like the cities have. The small amount of land left in Oconee for people to own will be so small till Oconee can’t grow very much. We can’t raise enough food for ourselves- we will have to depend on someone else like the rest of the world seems to be doing. Who will feed little old Oconee County, Russia?\textsuperscript{73}

The horrific devastation of the atomic bomb only two decades prior was still fresh in this Oconee County resident’s mind. With thousands of acres being either covered by the lakes or owned by power companies and the federal government, land scarcity would be another concern for county residents.

\textit{Seneca Journal and Tribune} staff writer Rooche Field also published an article in this January 13 issue titled, “When Reservoir Is Built: Will Lovely Jocassee Valley And ‘Oconee

\textsuperscript{72} June 28, 1967.
\textsuperscript{73} June 28, 1967.
Bell’ Be Only A Memory?” Field called Jocassee “little Switzerland of the South” for its secluded beauty. The article features a picture of Camp Jocassee and includes an interview with the camp’s owner Mrs. Morris Brown of Walhalla. In addition to the four-acre girls camp, Brown also owned one hundred and sixty-six acres in the Jocassee Valley. She says, “I haven’t sold my land yet. An agent for Duke Power offered me one hundred dollars an acre without seeing the land, but the value of the land far exceeds that amount. This land is valuable.” Field writes, “Nestled among the deep blue of the surrounding mountains and refreshed by the swift flow of the Whitewater River, Jocassee is a place of loveliness regardless of the season and is set apart from the noisy world of man. Any who see the valley would regret its loss forever.”

It is apparent that many still regret the loss of the Jocassee Valley along with the Keowee Valley. Even those who spent a very limited time in Jocassee remember it for its striking beauty. In a piece from March 8, 2016, Rudy Mancke, host of South Carolina Public Radio’s Nature Notes, remembered his only visit to the valley in 1965; he said he was “blown away by the biodiversity” of the valley. He talked of seeing the *Shortia galacifolia* or “Oconee Bells” on his visit and that Lake Jocassee now covers most of what was once this rare plant’s habitat. He added, “I sure do miss it.”

**Historic Sites and the Cherokee**

Nearly all the sources on the history of Oconee County include at least some mention of the Lower Towns of the Cherokee and their lasting impression on the area through artifacts and

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place names. The archeological efforts by the University of South Carolina were well publicized in local media, but the inclusion of the Eastern Band of Cherokee appears to be non-existent.

I contacted Greg Lucas of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources who told me: “I seriously doubt if the Cherokee were consulted during the original licensing of Keowee-Toxaway.” Duke Energy Senior Project Manager Alan W. Stuart also responded to my e-mail request for information on the involvement of the Cherokee in the original licensing process. He writes: “I cannot speak to the original relicensing since it was so long ago. However, given FERC would not have issued a license without the mandatory Section 106 consultation requirements fulfilled, I feel confident the required consultation was conducted.” I have been unable to uncover any documents that directly involved the Cherokee or any other Native American tribe in the initial licensing or archeological excavations.

The Final Environmental Assessment: New Operating Agreement Between U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Southeastern Power Administration, and Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC from the recent relicensing includes that known archaeological and historic sites within the reservoirs and along their shorelines are afforded protection under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The act requires federal agencies, such as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, to consult with State Historic Preservation Office, Tribal Historic Offices, Indian Tribes, and Native Hawaiian Organizations when large scale impoundments or similar projects threaten historically significant sites. This document does not specify whether or not any efforts were made to contact these offices, governments, or organizations during the initial licensing. However, when Duke Energy filed for relicensing in 2014, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

contacted nineteen Native American tribal councils about updates to their “Drought Plan” with only the Catawba Indian Nation commenting that they were “opposed to illegal artifact hunting at times of low water.”  

“A Great Future in Store for Oconee”

By most local media accounts, Duke Power’s Keowee-Toxaway Project had the potential to transform the county and the region to one of national recognition and unparalleled economic growth while keeping much of the natural beauty of the area intact. Although the area’s rivers had drawn tourists, campers, and other outdoor adventure seekers for decades, the new lakes were sure to attract a new generation who saw the lakes for their boating, waterskiing, and fishing potential. As for displaced residents in Oconee County, many saw the project as a way to move away from scratching a living out of worn out soil or to move their aging parents closer to one of the nearby cities such as Walhalla or Seneca and closer to amenities such as grocery stores, doctors, and other modern conveniences. This positive narrative of the Keowee-Toxaway Project is, in general, the dominant narrative to which I have mostly posed counternarratives throughout this analysis.

Wilma Crocker Thompson remembered that when she first heard about Duke Power’s plans for the Keowee area, she did not like it because she assumed that her family’s farmhouse would always be there and be passed on from generation to generation. Yet, as time passed between her father selling their property and their farm’s inundation, she realized how much the move would improve the lives of her parents. Thompson said, “I thought Momma might have

things easier . . . and then I was okay with it. But I still regret it happened.” She also remembered seeing an early map of how the area was going to look and how the project would beautify the area with new parks and the lakes.80

Concern for her ageing mother was also on Claudia Whitmire Hembree’s mind when her family received an offer from Duke Power to buy their land. She told me the Jocassee Valley was once a “little resort valley,” but after World War II, people had the means to travel to other places. She said, “My mother was a widow and, as it turns out, we were sort of glad that she could get out and move to Anderson (South Carolina) and be in a nice community and have access to things and go to church there and [have] a more active lifestyle. I think that was a lot of my concern at the time.”81

On September 22, 1965, the *Seneca Journal* reported that Duke Power had submitted an itemized recreational plan to the Federal Power Commission (now FERC) that would commit the company to provide a minimum of eight public access areas on Lake Keowee and three on Lake Jocassee.82 The plan also mentioned the development of camping areas, residential home sites, summer home sites, and a public resort area of at least one thousand acres near the Jocassee Dam. The proposed resort site was never built83, but some camping areas and lake access points were provided for the use of locals and tourists alike.

While the shores of Lake Keowee have become crowded with boat docks and hundreds of private residences, early planning and conservation efforts were made to protect Lake

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80 Thompson interview.
81 Hembree interview.
83 I could not find any information relating to why Duke never built the resort mentioned in this article. Keowee-Toxaway State Park is approximately one thousand acres and is near the Jocassee Dam, but one cabin and twenty-four campsites hardly classifies it as a resort.
Jocassee. Duke Power leased sixty-eight thousand acres around Lake Jocassee to the South Carolina Wildlife Resources Department who stocked with whitetail deer, turkey, and black bear. The same newspaper article that includes Duke Power’s recreational plans for the area, also noted that Duke Power planned to lease property to other services such as food, bait and tackle, marine, and boat repair, provided maintaining of free public parking and boat launching access.\textsuperscript{84} Opened in 1991, Devil’s Fork State Park is currently the only public access point for Lake Jocassee. The state-managed park charges $5 per adult to enter the park grounds.\textsuperscript{85}

Although Duke Power inundated the Jocassee Valley, the company kept thousands of acres around Lake Jocassee from being developed. An article in the \textit{Seneca Journal and Tribune} from February 1967 noted Duke Power’s plan to keep Lake Jocassee in a “wild state.” The article states that “Duke will lease lots on the lower lake but the upper lake will remain largely wilderness, with access to one camping area by boat.”\textsuperscript{86}

In 1970, Duke Power donated one thousand acres of land on Lake Keowee for the creation of Keowee-Toxaway State Park. The park charges no entrance fee and includes one cabin, twenty-four campsites with water and electricity, and two hiking trails that total about five and a half miles in length.\textsuperscript{87} The park also includes the Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center which includes exhibits on the area’s bio-diversity and history.\textsuperscript{88}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[84] Duke Gives Detailed Plan.
\end{footnotes}
donated for Keowee-Toxaway State Park is part of the thirty-three thousand total acres the company has transferred to the State of South Carolina around Lake Jocassee. In 2000, the Richard King Mellon Foundation purchased almost eight thousand acres, which it immediately donated to the state. The Winter/Spring 2000 issue of the Jocassee Journal, published by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, said that the purchase, with assistance from the Conservation Fund, is integral to the Jocassee Gorges “becoming a prominent part of the nature-based tourism economy of the Southern Appalachians.” South Carolina Department of Natural Resources director Dr. Paul Sandifer called the purchase “the most significant conservation land acquisition in the Southern Appalachians in the latter half of the 20th century.”

The Keowee-Toxaway Project also prompted Oconee County to find ways to finance and build new roads to provide access to the lakes. On October 12, 1966, the Seneca Journal and Tribune reported that the Appalachian Regional Development Commission had approved a grant worth over three million dollars for the construction of the necessary highways to make the lakes more accessible. The two highways built with this grant would connect Lake Keowee to Walhalla to the west and to Pickens County in the east.

**Living Up to Expectations**

The economic benefits of the Keowee-Toxaway Project, with its two lakes and nuclear station, were mentioned frequently in the local and regional newspapers throughout the project’s construction. Seneca Journal-Tribune staff writer Martha Navy wrote that the project was going

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90 “Appalachia: $3 Million Grant Approved for Lake Keowee Access Roads,” Seneca, SC.
to be a “tax bonanza” for the county and the state. She estimated that the timber harvested from the valleys would be a “billion dollar business . . . alone” and that over the next ten years, 450 jobs would be created as a result. *Greenville News* bureau chief for Oconee and Pickens counties also predicted the project would be an economic “bonanza” for the two counties as well as the Upstate. 91 Another article from the *Greenville News* written by executive news editor Carl D. Weimer and associate editor J. H. McKinney Jr. told readers that Duke’s project will provide access to “the hidden valleys and brooding crests of the Blue Ridge Mountains in extreme northwest South Carolina (which) have been in a large measure cut off from mankind’s enjoyment” and likened the area to the mythical paradise of Shangri-La. 92 Other articles told the public that the lakes, parks, and wildlife areas will be a major tourist attraction for the region and create a “water sports mecca.” 93 I was unable to find any estimates of how many tourists come to the area because of the lakes, but anyone who has tried to find a parking space on a summer afternoon at Devil’s Fork State Park (the only public access point on Lake Jocassee) or who has watched the seemingly unending stream of watercraft on Lake Keowee knows that the lakes have attracted plenty of tourists and locals alike.

Many locals took part in the activities provided by the new lakes soon after the project was completed. Mike Wilson explained that “back when they first built it, it was nice for us locals to go out there.” He remembers riding with his friends from one end of Lake Keowee to the other in the summertime and they “might not see another boat and there wasn’t a house anywhere. And then it finally got to where we sold our jet skis. It got so miserable on the lake

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because it’d beat you to death, there were so many boats and jet skis everywhere.”

The common areas where locals had free rein to camp, fish, and swim soon became restricted as state and county parks designated areas for specific recreational activities. Wilson, along with friends or family, camped near Fall Creek landing in the summer and he noticed that eventually one could not park by the water anymore and gates were put up to keep out campers.

As for the economic bonanza promised to the residents of Oconee, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has placed Oconee County at a “transitional” economic status since 2004 meaning that the county is transitioning between strong and weak economies and ranks somewhere between the worst twenty-five percent and the best twenty-five percent of the nation’s counties. The ARC also reports that Oconee County had a poverty rate at or higher than the national average between the years 2012 and 2016. Oconee County is in much better economic shape than areas of eastern Kentucky and other in which the ARC has classified as “distressed,” placing them in the worst ten percent of the nation’s most economically depressed counties.

Assessing the long-term benefits from the increase in local taxes is a much larger task and outside the scope of this thesis. It is unlikely that for all the land under its control, Duke Energy is contributing as much to the local economy and to local tax revenue as originally promised or at the same rate as other landowners in Oconee County. During his legal battles with

94 Wilson interview.
95 Wilson interview.
Duke Energy, Harry McCall wanted to find out how much the company was paying in taxes. He related:

I talked to them at FERC to try and find out what taxes Duke is paying on this bed. They own the bed of the river. They own it. They bought it, they flooded it. But try to find out what tax Duke Power is paying . . . It is listed. You've got to call Columbia and it is highly confidential. Duke power has got a lot of pull . . . The lake encompasses probably thousands of acres and they've got it almost pennies on the dollar is what they're getting it at. And then, like I said, I wanted to find out when we were in that lawsuit with Duke, what they were paying and stuff and it's just almost impossible.  

McCall added:

Duke, as long as they held the land, it was listed as farm land. They hardly paid any taxes on it. The minute it is sold, Oconee County now wants any of the back taxes Duke owed for…residential. So, whoever buys the land has to pay five years back or something and it's just unreal. You have no garbage collection. You have few things that I take for granted in Greenville like sewer and different things. But it’s a changing world here. The old part is moving off with the old timers and the old people. Oconee has had a lot of growing pains real fast.

Former residents also question the preservation efforts around Lake Jocassee. Even though she is happy that much of the shoreline of Lake Jocassee has been maintained, Claudia Whitmire Hembree is still protective of how people talk about the place where she grew up. She told me of a time that she was on a tour of the Bad Creek pumped storage facility near Jocassee and the guide kept referring to the natural resources that had been preserved by Duke Power around Lake Jocassee. She said, “He was talking about resources. I thought, ‘what happened to your human resources in all of this?’ Because that was a displacement. We were displaced . . . whoever was working for Duke did not present very well that there was a lot at stake for the individuals who live there.”

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99 McCall interview.  
100 McCall interview.  
101 Hembree interview.
Resources and economic benefits were the primary concerns of Duke Power and local government and, in the minds of those displaced by the Keowee-Toxaway Project, Duke and local elites gave little thought to the people living there. Some of my interviewees were unsure of what promises or expectations that Duke Power laid out for Oconee County while others felt as though the company had lived up to every single one (e.g. jobs, roads, cheap electricity, parks). The population of the county has grown remarkably in the past fifty years, nearly doubling since the years before the project began to an estimated 77,270 in 2017,\(^\text{102}\) and the Oconee Nuclear Station has provided enough energy for this growth and the growth of the South Carolina Upstate. On one hand, many people move to Oconee County every year and buy homes on Lake Keowee worth millions of dollars and make significant tax contributions. On the other hand, families with ties to the area that go back many generations feel as though they have become second-class citizens. The project created two incredibly beautiful lakes with parks that provide hiking trails, campgrounds, mini-golf, and fabulous places to swim. The project also inundated many community-gathering places, waterfalls, and places to hunt and fish as the commons were lost to private property and to designated recreational areas. Land has been preserved for wildlife and sportsmen. Land was also taken away from people who worked hard farming cotton, corn, and tobacco to provide for their families. Pluses and minuses. Costs and benefits. Narratives and counternarratives.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The data I collected from oral history interviews, newspaper articles, and other documents point to a general exclusion of the residents’ narratives of the Keowee-Toxaway Project. Much like the residents displaced by the Tennessee Valley Authority and National Park Service, residents of the Keowee and Jocassee valleys felt as though they were devalued and deemed displaceable. Analysis of the oral history interviews revealed that even though some former residents continue to see the benefits of the project, they still feel that Duke Power cheated them out of their homes, land, history, and culture.

One of the goals of my study was to determine how Duke Power and local government presented the project to the public and to residents who were to be displaced. The $700 million price tag made the headlines and local newspapers included this figure in nearly every article as Duke Power gradually announced the extent of the project. Even with the maps of the proposed lakes that were printed in local newspapers following Duke Power’s announcement of the project, many residents only found out that the power company had scheduled their property to be inundated when local agents came to their doorstep and made them largely non-negotiable offers. Duke Power took the upper hand in these negotiations by purchasing much of the needed land through subsidiaries years before the company made its intentions known to the public. Early in the purchasing process local agents misled residents and lied about their intentions, playing on the residents’ attachment to place as they told them the land would be rejuvenated and would once again become prosperous farmland.

It appears that neither Duke Power nor local government provided any type of public forum for residents to ask questions and have input on Duke Power’s decision to inundate their
land. Duke and local government ignoring the concerns of residents is shaped by issues of power and socioeconomic standing. Katrina M. Powell writes, “The opinions of the people tended not to matter unless they agreed with those in power. Those who opposed the dominant forces were squashed.”

Giving residents any kind of agency in the project may have delayed or even canceled the project all together. Instead, residents felt as though they were little farmers who had no chance against a giant corporation and therefore posed little resistance. The only major sources of opposition came from Secretary of State Stuart Udall, who encouraged more studies on the impacts of the project, and from the Williams’ family that tried to keep its property in the Jocassee Valley for as long as possible.

Local media was overwhelmingly in support of the project and only mentioned the loss of historic places and structures as a necessary part of bringing Oconee County into modernity. Tax revenue and the promises of jobs and a steady stream of tourists blinded many to the diverse and historically and culturally significant places they were losing. Although Duke Power has played a major role in providing jobs and upgrading the county’s infrastructure to accommodate the nuclear station and lakes, judging by the Appalachian Regional Commission’s “transitional” rating for Oconee County, the predicted “bonanza” never placed average Oconee residents at economic parity with the rest of the nation.

Douglas Reichert Powell stated that new regional scholarship asks whose interests are served by given versions of that region. Duke Power and county government are overwhelmingly the largest beneficiaries of the Keowee-Toxaway Project and by the dominant narrative that portrays Duke Power and the government officials who expedited the project as the region’s saviors. Their interests are clearly served by the continuation of this narrative. Duke Power has

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been selling electricity to the region from these facilities for over forty years and I suspect has made tremendous profits. Oconee, far from South Carolina’s capital and from tourist attractions in the state’s coastal regions, had over $64 million in tax revenues in 2016.\textsuperscript{2} Oconee County residents have also experienced some improvements such as new roads and schools, but according to the most recent data available from the Appalachian Regional Commission the poverty rate has climbed 4.5% since 1980 to 18.5% in 2016. This percentage is higher than the state’s 17.2%, the Appalachian region’s 16.7%, and the national 15.1%. The ARC also reports that per capita income in the county has remained roughly equal to the rest of Appalachia since 2008 at approximately 80% of the national average.\textsuperscript{3}

Powell writes, “In retelling and re-remembering the past of the mountains, we recognize the centrality of individual stories to a collective narrative about a place or an event.”\textsuperscript{4} The dominant narrative presents lakes Keowee and Jocassee as two of the areas greatest assets and Duke Power as its greatest contributor. However, the narratives in the oral histories I collected present a much more complex series of narratives that involve displacement, loss of the commons, separation of communities, perceived oppression by wealthy newcomers, and in some cases, a strong sense of regret. One of the most moving moments I experienced while conducting the interview portion of my research came when former Keowee Valley resident Wilma Crocker Thompson told me, “I guess a lot of people think that Duke Power is probably one of the best

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\textsuperscript{3} “Socioeconomic Data: Oconee County, South Carolina,” Appalachian Regional Commission, https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp.
\textsuperscript{4} Powell, \textit{Anguish of Displacement}, 9.
\end{flushleft}
things that ever happened to this area, but I think it’s one of the worst . . . My memories are there and I hate it’s covered up in water.”

The stories told by the displaced residents of Oconee County show a complex narrative of lakes Keowee and Jocassee that involves questionable treatment of locals in the buyout process as well as the loss of culturally and historically significant sites. Displaced residents of Keowee and Jocassee, many of whom still have strong connections to the land now covered by the lakes, have much more to add than the dominant narrative of the Keowee-Toxaway Project would express. Looking forward, I hope that Appalachian studies scholars will pay more attention to the South Carolina Upcountry and to the future of large-scale energy projects such as Keowee-Toxaway. Moreover, I hope that the narratives of displaced Oconee residents, which have long been ignored because of elites’ perceptions that these former residents did not count, will be viewed equally as important in the history of the region as the dominant narrative of the project.

5 Thompson interview.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TIMELINE OF THE KEOWEE-TOXAWAY PROJECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Southern Power Company begins preliminary designs and land purchases in Oconee County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Duke Power forms the subsidiary South Carolina Land and Timber Corporation to handle land purchasing for the Keowee-Toxaway Project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1964</td>
<td>5,000 acre land transaction worth $1,000,000 fuels rumors of major project in the Oconee County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1966</td>
<td>Clearing of timber in Keowee and Jocassee begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 5, 1966</td>
<td>Plans for a two-unit nuclear station as a part of the Keowee-Toxaway Project announced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1967</td>
<td>South Carolina Governor Robert McNair sets off red-white-and-blue dynamite charge to signal groundbreaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1967</td>
<td>Duke Power adds plans for a third nuclear reactor at Oconee Nuclear Station.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1968</td>
<td>Lake Keowee begins to fill and construction begins on Jocassee Dam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>South Carolina Land and Timber Company changes names to become Crescent Land and Timber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1, 1969</td>
<td>The World of Energy Visitors Center opens adjacent to the Oconee Nuclear Station.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1969</td>
<td>Duke completes two 33-foot wide, 800-foot long tunnels to house the turbines at Jocassee Dam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 1970</td>
<td>Lake Keowee reaches full pond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1971</td>
<td>Keowee Hydro Station begins commercial operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Jocassee Dam is completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 16, 1973</td>
<td>Unit 1 at Oconee Nuclear Station begins operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 19, 1973</td>
<td>Jocassee Hydro Stations 1 and 2 begin commercial operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Units 2 and 3 begin commercial operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1974</td>
<td>Lake Jocassee reaches full pond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1, 1975</td>
<td>Jocassee Hydro Stations 3 and 4 begin commercial operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 5, 1991</td>
<td>Bad Creek Hydro Station 1 and 2 begin commercial operation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Could you tell me about your relationship to either the Jocassee or Keowee Valley?

2. What do you remember about the first time you heard that they were going to flood the valleys?

3. How did Duke Power and local government present the project to the public?

4. Do you recall or did you attend any public forums about the project? Where did this forum take place and what was said or asked?

5. How was the project discussed by locals? In media accounts? By Duke or governmental accounts?

6. Do you remember any groups or individuals that spoke out against the project? Who were they? What were their reasons?

7. With all the historic Cherokee sites in the area, do you remember any input from or considerations given to the Cherokee before Duke Power flooded the valleys?
8. Do you feel like the Keowee-Toxaway Project has lived up to its promises and expectations for people living in this area?

APPENDIX C

THEMES FROM ORAL HISTORIES AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

• Buyouts
  o Amount Paid to Residents
  o Duke Treatment of Locals
    ▪ Ethics
    ▪ Workers Striking
  o Gated/Retirement Communities
    ▪ Political Power
    ▪ Shift in Local Demographics
  o Initial Reactions
  o Land Swapping
  o Local Agents
  o Negotiations with Duke Power/SC Land and Timber/Crescent
  o Summer Residents Versus Full-time Residents

• Expectations

• Historic Sites
  o Archeological Efforts
  o Cherokee Sites
    ▪ Cherokee Involvement
  o Preservation
• Local Discourse
  o Neighbors
  o Enforcement of Dominant Narrative

• Mid-Twentieth Century Life in Oconee County
  o Farming
  o Communities
  o Descriptions of the Area Before the Lakes

• Opposition
  o Secretary of State Stuart Udall
  o Williams Family Case

• Positive Aspects
  o Jobs
  o Parks
  o Wildlife Preserves
  o Tax Revenue

• Public Input/Forums

• Remembrance/Loss
  o Emotional Attachment
VITA

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