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BOOK NEWS

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From Farm to Factory

Forthcoming LSU Press Book Examines the Making of the Modern Southern Economy

Baton Rouge—Historians have long recognized the middle of the twentieth century as a turning point in the history of the modern South, owing to a convergence of social change, political realignment, and cultural expansion. In addition, sweeping economic changes spread throughout the South in this period, permanently shifting the area's material resources. ***Transforming the South: Federal Development in the Tennessee Valley, 1915–1960*** examines this transition from farm to factory and explores the dramatic reshaping of the region's economy.

Matthew L. Downs focuses on three developments in the Tennessee Valley: the World War I-era government nitrate plants and hydroelectric dams at Muscle Shoals, Alabama; the extensive work completed by the Tennessee Valley Authority; and Cold War/Space Age defense investment in Huntsville, Alabama. Downs argues that the modernization of the Sunbelt economy depended on cooperation between regional leaders and federal funders. Local boosters lobbied to receive federal funds for their communities while simultaneously forming economic development organizations that would prepare those communities for further growth. Economic reform also drove social reform: as members of historically disenfranchised groups attained employment in the new industrial workforce, they gained financial and political capital to push for social change.

Transforming the South considers the role played by the recipients of government funds in the mid-twentieth century and demonstrates how communities exerted an unparalleled influence over the federal investments that shaped the southern economy.

Matthew L. Downs is assistant professor of history at the University of Mobile.

December 2014
352 pages, 6 x 9, 7 halftones, 1 map
978-0-8071-5714-5
Cloth \$47.50s, ebook available
Southern History / Economic History

To request a review copy or set up an interview with the author,
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