



*Preserving & Interpreting Savannah River Site History*

***SRS Heritage Foundation***

***Newsletter***

***July, 2020***



## **Understanding Our Past and Navigating Our Future**

***Lauren Miller,  
SRS Museum Director***



Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup> marked the beginning of unprecedented times for the Savannah River Site Museum as we closed the Museum to the public and began navigating a global pandemic. The Museum followed up with thorough cleaning measures, the creation of new operating procedures, and a detailed re-opening plan focused on artifact and staff/community safety.

With these new measures, and some time to devote to updating the Museum, things may look different the next time you visit. We're in the process of updating interpretive panels in both the Radiation

Exhibit and the North Wing as we await another grant-funded exhibit, and, through volunteer support, we've installed plexiglass both at the front desk to provide additional safety for our team, and in exhibit spaces to protect artifacts.

This time in quarantine, previously un-opened to the public, has also led to a deeper understanding of where the Museum began, and how our efforts are working so far. Upon digitizing the Museum's visitor logbook, I can report some exciting data. Since opening, the Museum has seen consistent visitation of about 65% visitors from within Aiken County, 30% tourists (outside a 50-mile radius), and the remaining from surrounding communities. In fact, visitors have graced us from as far away as England and Russia! By expanding open hours and having a consistent, clear open presence, the Museum increased its visitation from 2018 to 2019 by 68%. Upon re-opening in October, the Museum was averaging a 30% monthly increase in visitation until the Covid-19 closed its doors.

This data is encouraging as it supports what many of us feel and have experienced as a part of the Savannah River Site Museum's beginning. There is significant community interest in the history of the Savannah River Site, and steadfast support in efforts for a sustainable future of preserving and interpreting its many stories. The Museum re-opened in May on limited, reduced hours of Wednesday through Friday from 11am to 2pm, and, although slow and steady thus far, I look in confidence at the future of the Museum.

## Treasures of the SRS Museum: “Duck and Cover”

By Carl Fields

The Savannah River Site (SRS) Museum focuses on the history of SRS and the Cold War. One of the Museum’s Cold War exhibits is a video-transfer copy of the nine-minute-long 1952 film, “Duck and Cover,” featuring Bert the Turtle. The film was funded by the US Federal Civil Defense Administration to teach elementary school students how to protect themselves in the event of a nuclear attack. The film was made in the fall of 1951 and released in January 1952, in response to the first nuclear test explosion by the Soviet Union in 1949. The film is believed to have been shown to millions of US school children over many years. Some visitors to the Museum (and some of the Museum’s volunteer docents) remember seeing this film while attending school in the 1950s.

The black-and-white film is partly animated and partly live-action. Well-known scenes from the film are an animated sequence showing Bert “sheltering” from an explosion by “ducking” into his shell and a classroom scene showing children “ducking” under their wooden desks and using clasped hands to cover their heads and necks during a classroom drill. These “duck and cover” actions would provide some protection from heat and blast effects following a nearby nuclear explosion (these effects are not explicitly shown in the live-action portions of the film).

The film was made before either the US or the Soviet Union had developed thermonuclear weapons with high-yields. In addition, the film was made before the development of long-range ballistic missiles. In the early 1950s, a large-scale attack upon either of those countries by the other would have required several-hour-long flights by fleets of manned bombers. Radar systems could have provided a several-hour warning of such an attack. After the development of long-range ballistic missiles, warning times would have been much shorter.

The development of thermonuclear weapons and long-range missiles made portions of the film obsolete by 1960. In addition, the film does not mention radioactive fallout from weapons detonations. Despite these issues, the film was apparently never recalled or updated. It continued to be shown in schools. Visitors to the museum have told us they remember seeing the film in school well into the 1970s, and possibly as late as the 1980s. Teachers may have supplemented the material in the film with more current information in conjunction with these post-1960 classroom viewings.

In addition to containing outdated material, the film has received criticism (and some undeserved ridicule) because the temperature, pressure, and radiation levels at “ground zero” of a nuclear explosion are so *extremely* high that “ducking and covering” would be useless (as would any other action one could take). “Duck and cover” actions *would* have some protective value at intermediate distances -- where, for example, blast effects (reaching those more distant locations perhaps 10 seconds, or more, after the initial explosion) could cause windows to become shards of flying glass shrapnel.

The theme song of the film begins:

“There was a turtle by the name of Bert  
and Bert the turtle was very alert;  
when danger threatened him he never got hurt  
he knew just what to do . . . .

The song goes on to, of course, inform us that “what to do” is to “duck and cover”. The song was released as a commercial recording. It is said to have sold over 3 million copies.

As a museum exhibit, the film provides a window into Cold War situations and attitudes (and fears) in existence when SRS was being built. In addition, for today’s youngsters, the images in the film provide views of typical classroom interiors, street scenes, vehicles, and clothing styles from that now-vanished era.

“Duck and Cover” is, in some respects, a curious relic from a brief time period during the Cold War. Viewed from the perspective of almost 70 years after its release, many see it as darkly comic – and somewhat “hokey”. It is also, in its own small way, an important historical artifact from that time – as well as a nostalgic reminder of another era to those who saw it in classrooms during the 1950s. Perhaps most important, it should remind museum visitors to appreciate that no US student has ever *had* to “duck and cover,” *for real*, due to a nuclear attack on our nation.

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The film was selected by the Library of Congress in 2004 for inclusion in the National Film Registry for long-term preservation because of its cultural and historical significance. Other films inducted into the National Film Registry in 2004 included “Ben Hur” (1959 version), “Schindler’s List,” and “Jailhouse Rock.”

Bert is, indeed, a turtle for the ages.



## New Dibble Library Exhibit

By Walt Joseph

### Dibble Memorial Library

#### Aiken Needed a Library Building

Aiken had a subscription library as early as the 1870s but it was a floating library moored in private homes, stores, and downtown buildings. There was no permanent building and this lack became a rallying cry among some city progressives. With the growth of the winter colony in the late nineteenth century, a library was seen as a must have for “the up-building” of Aiken.

#### Henry Montgomery Dibble (1859-1921)

Henry Montgomery Dibble, an affluent Midwesterner, came to Aiken in 1884. He was 25. He had completed his degree at Cornell University in Literature in 1882 where he distinguished himself as class historian and editor of *The Cornelian*. Heading home to Michigan, he had a brief and unsuccessful law career. In poor health and looking for new prospects, he moved south to Aiken where he found his footing. Henry M. Dibble became a very successful banker, businessman, and farmer. He was also a great reader and Aiken’s strongest advocate for a permanent library.

#### Henry Montgomery Dibble Memorial Library

It took five years for a permanent library to be funded and built, and it would be named in his honor. \$20,000 was collected by the Aiken public and winter residents and the City donated the cost of the lot purchased at the corner of Laurens Street and Hood’s Lane. The Dibble Family alone gave \$2,000 and humorist Will Rogers, at the request of his winter colony friends, gave a highly profitable benefit performance.

Burrell Hoffman, a “New York architect” whose previous work included “Vizcaya” in Miami, was hired as designer and a building contract was let to Anderson & Steifel who started work in April 1926. A small but elegant brick building on Laurens Street soon became home to the travel weary library books.

#### Aiken County Public Library

In 1950, the Dibble Library joined an innovative county mobile library service established in 1935 to service rural areas, under a partnership known as the Aiken County Library Commission. The Dibble Building was expanded with a two-story rear addition in the 1950s to accommodate the influx of new residents from the Savannah River Plant. With the end of segregation in the 1970s, library services became available to all county residents. More room was needed and the Library was moved to Banksia, a historic winter colony home, in 1974. Aiken County used the vacant building owned by the Friends of the Library for record storage through 2005?. In 2012, the Dibble Memorial Library Building became home to the SRS Museum.



A new exhibit featuring the Dibble Memorial Library was installed recently on the grounds of the SRS Museum. The new exhibit was prepared by New South Associates to replace an earlier Library exhibit that had been installed in the south end of the Dibble gallery. The original exhibit was put on display in 2015 and was removed to make room for the “6,000 Voices” exhibit that was placed in the Museum in 2019.

The new exhibit is designed to tell the story of Henry Dibble (1859-1921) and his advocacy of a public

library for Aiken. The Dibble Memorial Library was dedicated to him in 1926 and was incorporated into the Aiken County library system in the 1950’s. The former library became home to the SRS Museum in 2012. The new exhibit is visible from the sidewalk in front of the Museum.



## Welcome Jessica, Our New Intern



Hi everyone! I'm Jessica Forsee, a public history graduate student at Georgia Southern University, and I'm excited to be an intern for the Savannah River Site Museum. I'm from an Air Force family, most recently stationed at Warner Robins AFB, so the mission of the Museum to share and generate interest in the STEM fields using history is a passion of mine. I first came to the Museum in February and knew I found a Museum dedicated to sharing the stories of Site workers, environmental impacts, and the technological advancements made. While interning over the next year, I will work on the popular culture exhibit remodel and help with educational programming development. I'm excited to share stories of specific Cold War influences on Site workers and the greater Augusta-Aiken area through the culture exhibit. I'm sure a few of you are familiar with "Duck and Cover" drills; the culture exhibit will put those larger Cold War cultural icons in the context of the Site and its workers and families. Educational programming, like field trip activities (whenever those become an option again) or virtual learning is an ongoing process; I look forward to aiding in developing processes that the Museum can use for the coming years. Since I am based at Georgia Southern, I will be a remote intern during most of the work week but; starting in mid-August, you can find me at the Museum every Friday where I look forward to meeting each of you.

## NNSA Director Visits SRS Museum



Lisa Gordon Hagerty, Director of the National Nuclear Security Administration, visited the SRS Museum July 10<sup>th</sup> to review plans for a new exhibit. The proposed exhibit, tentatively titled "SRS Protects Our Nation" or "SRS-Keepers of the Peace", will be sponsored by NNSA and will occupy the north end of the Dibble gallery. The broad theme of the exhibit will be to show how the SRS tritium mission contributes to national security; examples of weapon delivery systems, including submarines, aircraft and missiles will be included.

The Director was accompanied by US Representatives Joe Wilson of South Carolina and Rick Allen of Georgia. The visitors enjoyed their tour and strongly supported expansion of the Museum exhibits and programs.





## SRS at Seventy

November 28, 1950 What A Year That Was !! By Art Osborne

Seventy years ago, in the Spring of 1950, things were busy. Citizens interested in promoting growth in the Savannah River Valley of Georgia and South Carolina had teamed up and formed several groups like the Committee of 100 to spur growth and increase industrialization. Positive results included identification of the Savannah River hydroelectric potential in the late 1930s. This resulted in the Clarks Hill project (Strom Thurmond Dam) started in the late 40s and completed in 1954. This project was also a plus in the Du Pont decision-making process that resulted in the selection of Aiken and Barnwell counties for the SRS. There were also several other modest improvements but there was a feeling of being left behind when people looked elsewhere and saw far more growth following the end of World War II. The acronym CSRA had yet to be coined; our locale was called the Savannah River Valley.

The State Development Board was created in this era to help South Carolina communities find suitable industrial matches with the resources they had to offer. The creation of the board underscores the importance of industrial expansion to South Carolina's leadership. Governor Strom Thurmond was the first to open the Governor's Mansion doors to industrialists, using the first family's residence as a venue to drum up and entertain prospects.

Jimmy Byrnes, Thurmond's successor, and the state's "New Deal man," was surprised to find that he was expected to follow in Thurmond's footsteps in this regard. Now-a-days this has become a standard courtesy around the country Aiken and Barnwell counties, the western South Carolina counties that bordered the Savannah River across from Augusta, were not home to any new defense industries or Army camps during or immediately after the war. On the state level, Fort Jackson in the Columbia area, Camp Croft in Spartanburg, and the coastal area benefited the most from military dollars. Due to their location, the war-related regional activity that most impacted South Carolinas within the central Savannah River basin was centered in Augusta. All of this drastically **changed in November, 1950 when the SRP project was announced**

November 28, 1950 at 12 Noon a most-carefully worded announcement accompanied by a map of the proposed plant area was released to the press and radio stations. Flash radio announcements brought the news into homes and businesses in the CSRA, interrupting regularly scheduled programming. The incredible announcement was repeated at regular intervals throughout the day. Billy Tisdale of Ellenton and his co-workers at the Leigh Banana Crate Company had heard that an important announcement was to be made for people in their community. "At noon we went out to listen to our car radios. It was hard to believe; in fact we didn't exactly believe it. But we didn't get much work done the rest of that day."

One teacher, Louise Cassels, heard it second-hand in her Ellenton classroom from a student who went home for lunch. The announcement was one of the region's top news stories, making headlines across the South. Newspaper extras were run in Atlanta, Augusta, Savannah, Columbia, and Charleston, and the *Barnwell People-Sentinel*, a small weekly paper, ran its first special edition in its 74 years of news reporting. Major American papers also carried the story, mostly providing little more information than was given in the press release, but some accounts correctly likened the new operations plant to Hanford. Word had leaked out that morning as AEC and Du Pont officials, working in twelve teams, began with military precision to inform state and city officials in Atlanta and Augusta in Georgia and in Aiken, Columbia and Barnwell, in South Carolina through simultaneous interviews scheduled for 11:00 a.m. The week's frigid weather would no longer be a topic of conversation as The Savannah River Valley (CSRA) was now to be the location of the largest military/industrial operation ever undertaken and with an urgency not seen since World War II.



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**AEC ANNOUNCES NEW PRODUCTION SITE TO BE LOCATED  
IN AIKEN AND BARNWELL COUNTIES, SOUTH CAROLINA**

The United States Atomic Energy Commission today announced that its new production plants to be designed, built and operated by the E.I. du Pont de Nemours Company of Wilmington, Delaware, will be located in Aiken and Barnwell counties, South Carolina near the Savannah River. About 250,000 acres will be acquired for the site. Exact boundaries remain to be determined. The new site will be known as the Savannah River Plant.

As was noted by the President last July in asking the Congress to appropriate \$260,000,000 to start construction, these additional plants, like the existing facilities, will provide materials which can be used either for weapons or for fuels potentially useful for power purposes. The Commission emphasized, however, that the operations at the Savannah River plants will not involve the manufacture of atomic weapons.

Acquisition of the land will be undertaken by the Corps of Engineers.

The specific boundaries of the site will be announced later after completion of detailed engineering studies. However, the general area in which the Commission proposes to build the plants and related facilities with their security areas is shown on the attached map.

To make way for the plants and the surrounding security and safety zone, it will be necessary for about 1,500 families to relocate in the next 18 months. The Federal-State agricultural agencies are organizing to give help to the families who must relocate. The first families affected will be those in Areas 1 and 2 on the map. These general areas will be vacated at an early date to make way for construction. Exact boundaries of these areas cannot be defined until engineers have established the location of the facilities.

## Treasures of the SRS Museum: The Crawford Greenewalt Manhattan Project Diaries

By Carl Fields and Walt Joseph



The SRS Museum's first major exhibit was a timeline chart of SRS history and accomplishments. One of the earliest items in that timeline exhibit (in the first panel) is a copy of a 28 October 1950 letter from US President Harry Truman to DuPont President Crawford Greenewalt (1902-1993). A three-volume transcription of Greenewalt's World War II technical diaries is an important SRS Museum artifact that is not currently on exhibit. These diaries cover the period from December 1942 through December 1944 describing Greenewalt's life and work (sometimes on a day-by-day basis) during a time when he had a key leadership position in DuPont's work supporting the US government's Manhattan Project, which developed of the first atomic bombs that were used to end the Second World War.

The diary describes his view of the technical history of the project. It also covers the relationship that developed between scientists (several of them Nobel Prize winners) and the DuPont managers and engineers. DuPont assigned Greenewalt to the Manhattan Project responsible for converting the scientist's theoretical research into a full-scale plutonium production project.

The diary describes the completion of the first pilot-scale production reactor at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, the process by which the Hanford site in Washington State was selected, and the construction of the engineering works at Hanford. The diary focuses on the complex relationship between scientific and engineering issues and how both types of issues were resolved in order to produce the plutonium used in two of the first three atomic bombs.

DuPont assigned Greenewalt to be the corporate liaison with the nuclear scientists in Chicago on December 16, 1942. Within days he had recruited Hood Worthington, Monty Evans and Dale Babcock to be first members of the DuPont staff in what was called the Technical Division (TNX) of the Explosives Department (ED). Other DuPonters, including John Wheeler and Charlie Wende were added a few weeks later.

When the DuPont Company was asked to design, build and operate what was to be the Savannah River Plant in 1950. Greenewalt had risen to be President of DuPont and he immediately brought several key people to the Plant who had worked with him in the Manhattan Project. A new Atomic Energy Division (AED) was created in the Explosives Department with Monte Evans as Assistant General Manager of ED and Bill Mackey as AED Manager. Lombard Squires became Director of the Technical Division of AED with Hood Worthington as his Assistant Manager. Dale Babcock became part of AED in Wilmington and Charlie Wende joined the Savannah River Laboratory, where he rose to Assistant Laboratory Director. Many other DuPonters brought Manhattan Project experience to Savannah River including Milton Wahl and Bill Overbeck who served as successive Directors of the Savannah River Laboratory. Savannah River was fortunate to have these and other Manhattan Project veterans to help solve the complex issues of starting the new venture.

The first two volumes of the transcription cover the time period between 16 December 1942 (just after the initial criticality of the first experimental nuclear reactor built under the University of Chicago football stadium grandstand) to October 19, 1944 (just as the resolution to perhaps the final major technical issue affecting the Hanford production reactors was being implemented — this issue was the unexpected effect of fission product xenon-135, which is common to all fission nuclear reactors). The third volume of the transcription is basically a collection of supplementary material. Some of these items focus on specific



technical issues. Others supplement the first two volumes by describing some of Greenewalt's activities during few-month periods both before and after the time period covered in those volumes.

As best we have been able to determine, the SRS Museum's copy of the transcription of Greenewalt's diaries is one of only two copies in existence. Our set was produced at the Savannah River Technical Information Service as DPST 84-836, an unclassified, deleted version with a very limited distribution. The museum will likely put them on exhibit (at least temporarily) at some future time. A longer-range goal of the Foundation is to make the contents of these important historical documents more widely available.

Greenewalt served as President of DuPont from 1948 until 1962 and as Board Chairman from 1962 until 1967. He authored a book on industrial management and several publications on birds, including a book, still in print, on hummingbirds. The hummingbird book features many high-speed photographs that "freeze" their rapidly-moving wings. His son, Crawford Greenewalt Jr. (1937-2012), was professor of classical archeology and author of multiple books on that subject.

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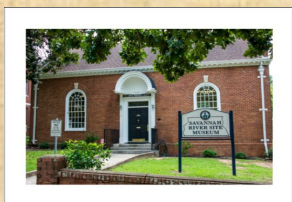
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