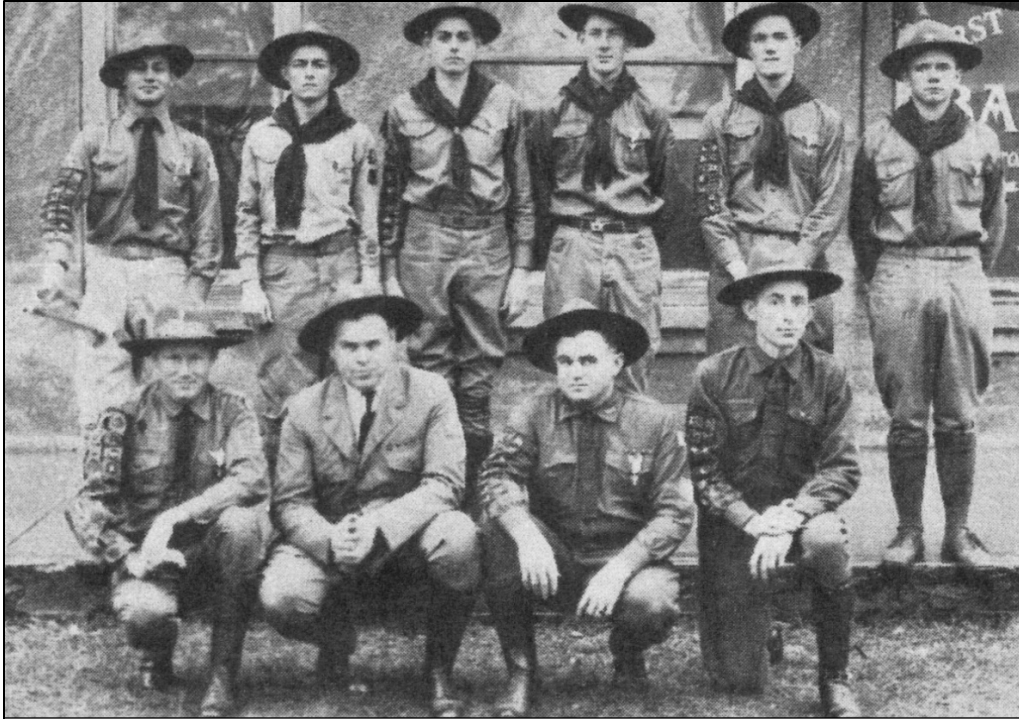


School students participated in sports activities such as basketball. Reportedly, the high school team won the State basketball tournament in 1927. The school's newspaper was called "The Spizurinktum." It meant having energy, ambition, and the will to succeed.



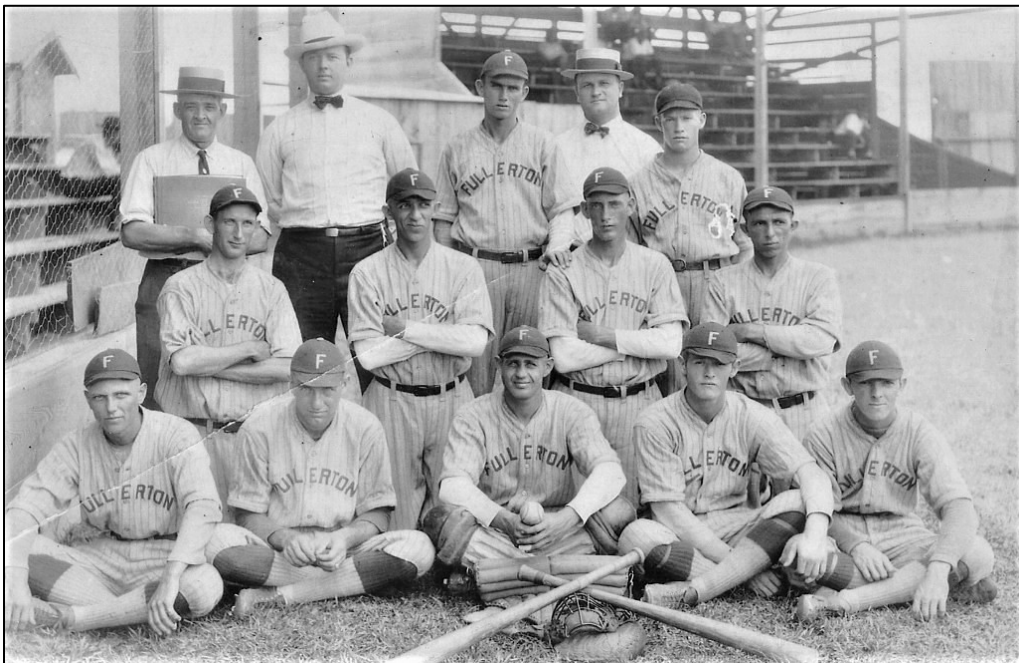
The 1927 Fullerton High School basketball team won a State-wide basketball tournament.

Another youth organization was the Boy Scout Troup. The program at Fullerton was professionally led and produced eight Eagle Scouts.



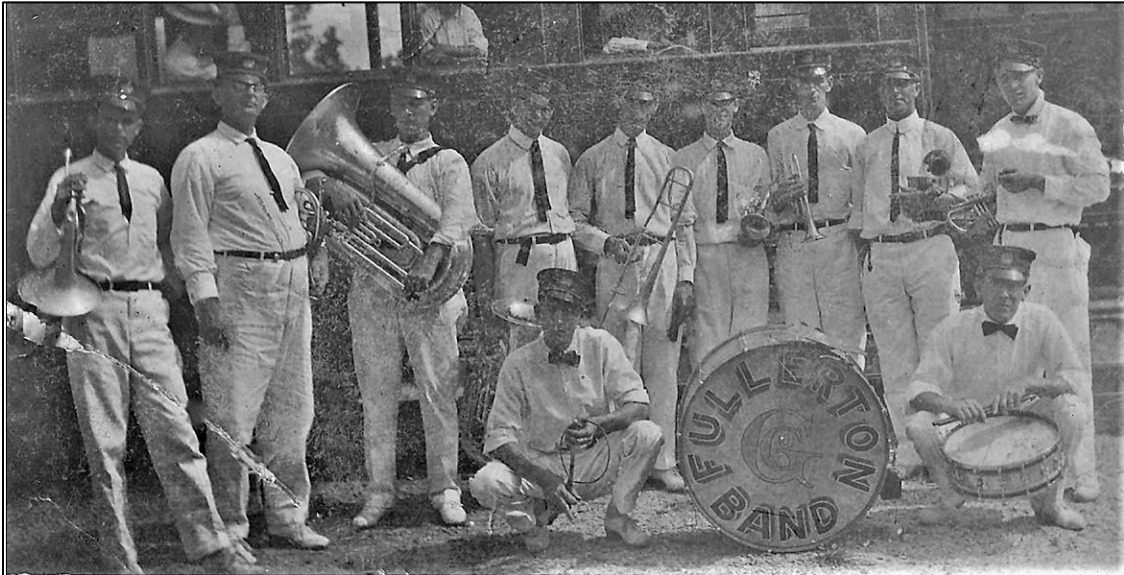
A 1927 photo of the Fullerton Boy Scout Troup Number 1, Choctaw Area Council. Note the adult leadership and the appearance of the young men.

The Company also sponsored a baseball team that competed with those of other sawmill towns in what was called the “Sawdust League.”



The Fullerton baseball team looks very professional and had managers who looked distinctive.

Another company sponsored organization was the town band. The band played frequently for events held at the town's Dance Pavilion.



The town of Fullerton band. Note the distinctive uniforms, ties, and caps.



The town Dance Pavilion was used for numerous functions. Shown here seems to be a Sunday afternoon event—the attendees are well dressed.



Manager of the drug store showing the tables with straws in glass containers. In addition to medicines, the store provided ice cream and soft drinks and was a meeting place for youth and visitors.



The town park served as a place for families to meet, visit, and enjoy the benefits of the progressive town.



The town of Fullerton offered numerous opportunities for children to have fun during the summer months. Here three are riding mules around town. The mules seem patient but not excited about the task of carrying the youngsters around!

CLOSURE OF THE MILL

The fate of the town of Fullerton was the same as thousands of other sawmill towns of the early 20th century— “cut out and get out” when the forests purchased were harvested. At the time reforestation was only a dream of individuals like Henry Hardtner of the Urania Lumber Company and William H. Sullivan of the Great Southern Lumber Company (Barnett and Carter 2017). The valiant efforts of a few like the Louisiana Long Leaf Lumber Company at Fisher and Industrial Lumber Company of Elizabeth to build permanence into their sawmill operations by avoiding destructive log skidder practices, and despite restricting their daily cuts to about 100,000 board feet, failed. In 1927 , the Gulf Lumber Company cut its last timber and closed. Ended was the life in “one of the most picturesque towns in the state” (Block 1996).

The company made a celebration of sorts of cutting the last tree—one reserved near the town for the “honor.” Two long-term employees, one White and one Black person, felled the tree. Two weeks later the mill closed. However, the planer mill continued for three months to dress, dry, and ship the last stack of lumber. Some have said that of the mill, its “doom was written the day it was planned and built” (Block 1997). Maybe so, but S.H. Fullerton made an unusual commitment to the town he built. He provided his workers with a life in the early 20th century that was exceptional for any town, especially for a rural town.

Reforestation had not been considered so the cut-over land lay bare and an unproductive tax liability to its owners. Some houses were purchased and moved to privately-owned plots, many more, like the mill as well, had to be dismantled and carted away.



Two workers, called flatheads, cut the last pine for the Gulf Lumber Company in the spring of 1927.

Years later, in 1938, the U.S. Forest Service paid \$1.40 per acre for 36,000 acres of the company land that included the town site of Fullerton (Burns 1979). This land became a part of the Kisatchie National Forest (KNF).

FULLERTON TODAY

In 1960, thirty-three years after the mill closed, a remarkable event—a reunion of past residents of the town began at the town site. The first event exceeded expectations—more than 600 people arrived. Each family brought its own basket lunch. Quickly the annual event grew, and 1,200 came to the third reunion. An organization was created to continue and expand the effort. For several years, the number of attendees grew to over 2,000 annually.

Responding to the initiative, the KNF began developing the site to provide water and develop recreational facilities. The Fullerton Lake Recreation Complex is on the site of the Fullerton sawmill and community. The site was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

Ruins and foundations of one of the largest sawmill operations in the South can be seen from the Fullerton Mill Trail. The Fullerton Lake Recreation Complex has single and group day-use picnic facilities, camping areas for trailers, campers, and tents, fire rings, bank fishing, non-motorized boat launch and boating, hiking, and biking trails, flush restrooms, water, and trash receptacles.



Visitors continue to attend the event held every year at the Fullerton town site to honor the contributions to the residents who lived and worked there and its influence on the local economy and culture.

As the age of the participants has grown, the number attending the annual event has declined and the Fullerton Reunion changed to become the Fullerton Day celebration. Now a century later, the numbers of attendees are smaller, but still there is a recognition of the significance of the town and its influence on the local economy and culture.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Rarely is there a recognition of a sawmill town created over a century ago, closed after 20 years, and yet continues to be appreciated for its uniqueness and the positive influence on the families who lived there. It has been the residents themselves who have kept this history alive. Over 30 years after the mill closed, past residents begin to return for a reunion to consider the uniqueness of the town, visit past neighbors, and remember its influence on them. They shared photographs and other material about that life that has helped document the history of the town.

These past residents, who had moved and lived elsewhere, after a time began to understand and appreciate the special life that had been provided by the town of Fullerton. There, they remembered and shared the benefits of a town years ahead of its time in providing services and benefits. Especially for a sawmill town located in Louisiana's historic Neutral Strip, they enjoyed the exceptional benefits of a lumber company town dedicated to supporting the lives of its employees.

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