

# GET YOUR TUCHUS DOWN TO CARROLL STREET

By Nina & Jake Elsas, The Patch Works Art And History Center



*Anyone who takes the well-spent time to jaw with an Original (i.e.: a "Cabbagetown" resident during The Mill Days... pre-1981) will learn very quickly that they rarely felt the need to go outside of the neighborhood.*

Well, sure, folks DID, but it wasn't because they absolutely had to. Any foray into the Wilds of Atlanta was often done out of curiosity

or because why the hell not. In their eyes – even after The Great Depression took a fleshy pound from the Mill Village businesses – the neighborhood still provided more than enough.

[SIDE NOTE: Yes, we thoroughly and gleefully and unapologetically excel at over-generalizing. If y'all truly feel the need to verify our claims in this Chapter 13, then get all y'all's gosh-darn collective tuchus down to Carroll Street on Saturday June 4<sup>th</sup> for The Cabbagetown Reunion Day Festival... and ask an Original. Ooooooooh, they'll be more than happy to spin y'all a yarn...]

Although y'all undoubtedly committed our previous article(s) to memory, we nonetheless thought it'd be nice to remind the less-attentive readers how The G-Dep caused a swift shift in the ratio of mill workers to private business owners – with an influx of mill workers filling the void left by fleeing, bankrupt merchants. (Remember that? NO?) Frankly, if not for that itsy-bitsy economic disaster, it would've been very challenging for new mill workers to find housing (yaaaaaay for economic disasters). Although Fulton Bag & Cotton Mill (FBCM) continued to build company homes into the early 1900s (e.g.: fourteen homes were constructed on Pearl Street near the streetcar line), its rapid expansion continued to lure flocks of new workers into the area. Settling down in Fulton Mill Village became increasingly difficult.

According to the National Register of Historic Places: *"The availability of housing was unable to keep up with the growing number of workers, and in 1900 Oscar Elsas (Jacob Elsas' son) reported that 40% of the mill workers lived in housing outside of the mill complex. By 1915 the number had increased to 50%; and by 1918 it was 65%."*

Well, that's what happens when a pubescent company grows out of its britches. No more cotton onesies for THIS mill.

Thus, in a twist of Depression-induced fate, FBCM caught something of a break. With neighborhood businesses crapping out like an Olestra-filled potato chip, Fulton Mill Village could more easily expand eastwards, and incoming mill workers could snag the privately-built-but-now-vacated homes.

And so sayeth the National Register: *"Prior to 1932, Cabbagetown residents who were employed by the mill constituted a much smaller percentage of the population than after 1932, when the mill became the primary employer of area residents."*

The 1940s in particular seem to have been a high point in Mill Worker Nirvana. During that decade, a certain amount of zen-like contentment had washed over the neighborhood and life was pretty grand. [SIDE NOTE: But hooooo boy, this state of relative tranquility didn't come easily. A lot of hardcore turmoil occurred in the first four decades of the 1900s. We'll eventually get back to this. Pinkie swear.]

Chatting with some "Primary Sources" (i.e.: Human Beings), The Patch Works has repeatedly heard that the '40s rocked (don't pay no mind to those naysayers). There was lots of work at FBCM (hello World War II), plenty of stores, less strife (especially among the residents), and the houses in Fulton Mill Village finally got indoor plumbing!!! Arrivederci outhouses! In fact, if y'all have a moment (okay, like, a freaking HOUR), check out our interview with Ivan Sellers on The Patch Works' website: he cheerfully reminisces about life in the '40s. But PLEASE just try to forgive us for Jake's insufferably droning voice...

***So, during this "happy" period, does that mean working inside The Mill got any better?*** More pay? Fewer hours? Better safety measures? Aw, hell no. But, once again, this is a Tale of Two Worlds: a mill and a mill town. The protagonists in this month's Chapter – the Originals – could deftly separate the two realities, acknowledging and accepting both the hardships of work and the pleasures of life in the Mill Village. It's why FBCM-employed Originals have no problem describing the appalling working conditions, while simultaneously proclaiming that they have zero regrets whatsoever; that they wouldn't change a thing; and that they loved every minute of their lives in Fulton Mill Village...

Cabbagetown is a concrete, physical example of Yin and Yang; Order and Chaos; the Good and the Bad; opposites attracting. Cabbagetown is a testament to Universal Balance. It's a study of an often heartbreaking but equally beloved symbiosis... an unlikely union that's impossible to understand for anyone who hasn't personally experienced it. And it's why – for the Originals – their world was defined by the co-existence between The Mill and the Mill Village. Without one, the other would lose its meaning.

## ***Help Us Keep the Cabbagetown Reunion on Carroll Street***

On June 4<sup>th</sup> 2022, The 51<sup>st</sup> Cabbagetown Reunion Day Festival will be held on Carroll Street. This historic event is the time for ALL Cabbagetown residents – past and present – to gather and see old friends, make new friends, listen to live music, play games, and buy local arts and crafts. It's a celebration of what truly defines Cabbagetown: the people themselves.

In order to hold this event, the neighborhood needs to raise money to cover overhead costs, such as a street-closure permit and hiring police officers. This is a 100% volunteer event; money raised goes ONLY into paying for The Reunion. And remember: every little bit helps! Thanks, y'all!

<https://thepatchworks.rallyup.com/cabbagetown-reunion-2022/Campaign/Details>

***Next month: the 1950s bring imbalance to Mill Worker Nirvana...***