

The following is the performance script written by Dr. Becky Becker and her theatre students in May 2009.

Bibb City: Collected Lives from a Mill Town

Fire: The Thread that Binds

(Ensemble enters to watch the mill. It is burning.)

Bessie Bacon (Cassie): Oh the burning of the mill, it was sad.

Fred Hyder (Crawley): I think. . . it's like something of their past is gone.

George Folds (Wolfe/Gwen): Well, people had worked there all their lives, and like I say, they never said anything bad about the mill. And I'm sure that as they looked and saw it burn, they had feelings that.... it.... it hurt them. Myself, I look at it and I ...

Bessie Bacon (Katie): I heard the fire trucks, and I knew it was close by, so I hopped up out of bed and looked out my back window, and the mill was on fire. So, I quickly put on my clothes and went outside.

George Folds (Crawley): I would not want to work there, but still, it was a part of my life. You find out as you go through life that... with all the good and the bad... you take both of'em, and, and, you look at it as... well, it's your life.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Melissa): And people were already standing out there, and my next door neighbors had a bench over by the road that goes down by the mill. And we sat on that bench and watched.

George Folds (Brittany): And that mill was their life.

Bessie Bacon (Jackie): And it was so, it was a cool night, I think the last day of October, we didn't even need a jacket. In my house, we didn't need any heat at all.

Virginia (Katie). It burnt in such a hurry and so hot. I was walking with some friends that next morning before we knew it, in Overlook, and there was ash all in the ground and all over, I guess the wind blew it and that was what, three or four miles from the Bibb?

(Hattie enters "sweeping" the actors away; she sings "I'll Fly Away.")

Preservation is an Art: Weaving our Past

Mr. McKnight (Jackie). We saved the foundation, the basic shape of the boy scout hut....

Mrs. McKnight (Brittany). I was standing down in the foundation, we were just looking around, we were here watching them build the house, I look up and this guy is there, ask me if we were rebuilding the boy scout hut. He told me he used to be a part of this Troop 1, the Bibb troop. He asked if I knew about the little park across the street.

There is the little one across the street and one way on down the road, both Shirley Winston Park, I remembered when she died, one of the first female police officers to die on duty, but I never understood why there was two parks. He said the boys did the park as a troop project, after she died. They made that little park. She was, um, the mother of one of the boys in the troop and they made that little park for her.

Mr. McKnight (Jackie). We had so many people ask us what we had done with the boy scout hut. It seemed to be a real part of the paternalistic culture here, and we heard so many stories about Troop 1 and its boys.....

Mrs. McKnight (Brittany). Its boys! I told my friend we were living in Bibb, on Linden Point, and she said, 'Linden Point?! Linden Point is where all the bad boys live!'

Mr. McKnight (Jackie). And it was true, after the mill shut down, well ah, like I said, some slumlords, they just started bringing in some rather unsavory elements.... but I feel like we have really raised the property value, and a lot of Linden Point is actually resided in now, and I feel like we are a very positive step in, ah, the future of Bibb

Mrs. McKnight (Brittany). People still look at Bibb a certain way, some people think we are crazy.

Mr. McKnight (Jackie). I remember knowing about the mill as a child, and the mill workers, it was just a place we didn't go.

Mrs. McKnight (Brittany). We just really want to see it move forward, and stop deteriorating, and it will never be a mill town again, and it will probably never be a bustling center, or anything, we just want to see it really be something, you know, the other night, we'd come out for a walk, on the Riverwalk.

Mr. McKnight (Jackie). We'd stop for somebody playing a banjo or guitar music, something, sorta three sheets to the wind, but it was beautiful, we loved itThe Riverwalk breaks off at the mill, and it really needs to keep going, through it, or around it, or something. There could be so much here, with the view, and the river as recreation, and ah, we just want to see the river and everything, and the history being taken advantage of, because it is a very unique, ah, special community.

(Hattie and Willy enter, seeing the river and its potential.)

Business is an Art: Making of a Mill Town
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HATTIE (Carrie): The Bibb Dam, the mill and the village were built here for only one reason: pure and natural waterpower (Lupold 3).

WILLY (Melissa): “At Lovers’ Leap”. . . (Hattie kind of shoos him away with the broom, in her opinion, he shouldn’t know of Lovers’ Leap)

HATTIE (Carrie): “ At Lovers’ Leap. . . (she looks at Willy, and kind of frowns) the Chattahoochee flowed through a narrow rock gorge...the natural fall of the river combined with the narrow gorge made [it] an ideal site for a dam” (3).

WILLY (Melissa): . . . or good fishing. (laughs)

HATTIE (Carrie): Anyhow, that's how the mill end up being in the North Highland Area, because of the good ole Chatahoochee. But let me tell you a little somethin'. Mill folk did not have an easy life. "At the turn of the century, women, children, and men worked 12 hour a day" and come outta the mill exhausted (Lupold 8).

WILLY (Melissa):... "covered in lint" and soaked in sweat. Got to be 118 degrees in that Mill in the heat of summer (Lupold 8). I brought 'em their cokes. The dope that kep' 'em goin'.

(Hattie and Willy move off; Fred, Bessie, George and L. Ray enter.)

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): From dusk till dawn, or as we called it from cane to cane, the Bibb City Mill never slept. I did work in the mill for 6 weeks once. It was hot (shakes his head) hard work. . . I worked in the Twister room. (shakes his head)

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): I started out in the spinning room, I know that is greek to you, but (laugh)...it's where you run yarn off of one cone onto another, it is a process, some way, in the uh different cones, and it gets ready for the next department. I had a job doing that, seeing that everything was running straight or uh not getting matted together.

George (Carrie): People, uh, that worked there came from the farms, see, most of the people in Columbus Georgia, if you go back to their relatives, you go back to their heritage, where they came from, they came from south Alabama, uh...uh, Dothan Alabama, Slocum Alabama...a lot of funny names down in Alabama, but that's where they came from, and what happened uh, back in the uh, what was the name, in the 40s, around the 40s, 30's...

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): Even before that...

George (Carrie): Yeah, the 30s...

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): Yeah, like my father, he's from Midland, he was recruited cause he played baseball, and the mill had a baseball team, and that was important to them, that they have a good team, so they recruited him, and they brought him from Midland, Alabama to here, to work at the mill and to play baseball.

George (Carrie): It was a period of time, I'd say back in the 30s and 40s when the farms weren't doing too good, and there were droughts, the price for uh, crops was not really good so, and you had as many as a dozen members of the family in one house down on the farms in south Alabama, and they couldn't make it, so some of the members of the family, uh, heard about the textile mills in Columbus. **(more directly to the audience)** My, uh, my mom, and her sisters and brothers came up and, she, she took care of the family while the other ones worked in the mill, there were like, uh, ten brothers and sisters. They all rented a house over on Hamilton Rd., which was about uh, a good mile from the mill. And you can imagine back then it mighta been a 2 bedroom house, if 3, and they all lived in the same house. And they would work shifts. First shift was from 7:00 to 3:00, second shift was 3 to 11, and the third shift was from 11 to, uh, 7

in the morning. And I worked from 3 to 11. And I was a weaver. And a weaver is a person who takes the uh, the uh, what do you call it Ray, **(crossing back to L. Ray)** the yarn and it goes through looms. And you have thousands and thousands of little strings that are running through the looms, and, and, the looms that they had at the Bibb were very old. They were probably, I think they were uh, about 8 foot long right, and what the Bibb made back in that period of time, were sheets.

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): The people who worked in the mill were hard working. . good people.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): It wasn't hard work, what I did, it was, uh, I guess it was, confining. You had to stay right with it, you know, so that nothing would happen to the yarn.

George (Carrie): It was hard working there.

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): For working one week, I made 22 dollars, 2 dollars of that was bonus for 8 hours over time. (he smiles and laughs a little) And I can tell you this, it was 22 dollars more than I was making when I wasn't working. (laughs)

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): When I was there, they had these little rooms for smoking, and I smoked at the time, and I'm sitting there, and this guy, who I'm gonna guess was 35, and I was 16, and he's in there and he's all excited. And, uh, he said, you know, "I just got the job of a lifetime." Ok, this is, "this is, absolutely the best job of my life". and he was becoming a fixer, this is a loom fixer, and he, he fixed it when he broke down. And he says, "I make a dollar seven an hour." And I started thinking.... aw, I gotta go to college!

(Actors enter "weaving" patterns on the floor, fanning themselves and remarking on the heat.)

Weaving a Labor Force with Hard, Honest Work

(Minnie, Billy, Fred and Virginia do repetitious motion with hands, only stopping to speak.)

Minnie (Brittany). It was real hot in the mill, I worked in there before there was air conditionin', and you'd sweat and...

Billy (Jackie). This steam would rise with this lint and it would get pasted on everything, and so the metal work, certainly the ironwork, would begin to rust.

(Willy appears as if out of nowhere.)

WILLY (Melissa): Did you know they called 'em "lint heads"? People from outside the Bibb?

HATTIE (Carrie): Stay outta here, Willy, and let these people get on with their stories. (shooing him off.) Sorry folks.

Billy (Jackie). So, you had to paint things. And uh, people don't realize it, but uh, millwork was dangerous, you could get a hand, an arm, a foot stuck in anything easily. You could fall, you could hurt yourself, certainly if you were anywhere near the shipping deck, with the huge weight of those cotton bales, uh, one of them could fall on you and kill you in a minute.

Minnie (Brittany). I worked in the weaving department, that's where I worked. Now, I did work in the cloth room and I worked a short time in the office. I have always been an active person you could say, so I enjoyed the weave room. You had to do the hard stuff to start with. You had to work your way up. You had to walk all over that place three times, each shift. Of course it was hard work, but I had worked all my life. So the man, one of the men was checkin' me, and I was going so fast, so he gave me a new title, I was the fastest...

Billy (Jackie). There were ways, real ways to get hurt. I remember, I had to paint the inside of a compressor. The opening of a compressor was about this big. **(makes very small opening with hands)** I didn't weigh nothin' at the time, and I think that's why I got the job.

Minnie (Brittany). I got to keep the job even though my penmanship was so bad, because I was the fastest.

Billy (Jackie). I'd climb in that little hole and be painting, and you'd pass out like that. Somebody'd have to climb in and get you, yank you out.

Minnie (Brittany). Our crops, our peanuts and everything just rotted in the field, and then our poor mule, her name was Pet, the vet gave her some big capsule, don't know how she swallowed it, and then she just, well fell over and died. We had to borrow money, we didn't have nothing, so we came here and we...We had things here.

Billy (Jackie). A pressure cooker, it was a pressure cooker, but it became a not unpleasant situation, Bibb. The boll weevil, that was an unpleasant situation. It hit us in 1932, and uh, it decimated the cotton, all the cotton fields in this area. There were also caterpillar worms and, uh, other sort of pest, plus drought. One thing and another just made farming, uh, untenable. So we moved to town, and we found what we could, the mill. It was the first time I had actually seen money. At that time, I was real glad to have that job. I got paid, with cash money, I held it in my hands and felt it, and I bought my own things., No tradin', borrowin', arguin', just bought my own things. I was honestly proud. I was a painter. It wasn't toy work, or play work, it was hard work, no messin around we had to, a lot of the mill, it was like a steam bath it was so hot in there, and this steam would rise with this lint and it would get pasted on everything, like we were in a sticky snow globe, and so the metal work, certainly the iron work, would begin to rust. So, you had to paint things. I remember, I had to paint the inside of a compressor. The opening of a compressor was about this big **(makes very small opening with hands)**. I'd climb in that little hole and be painting, and you'd pass out like that. Somebody'd have to climb in and get you. It was.....it was....well, it was nothin'. I had a real, good, reasonable life, it was nothin', there was nothin' plush about it, but the fact that the basics were covered, uh, made a lot of difference, especially then. I couldn't fit in those compressors anymore, but then, then it was just right, almost cozy, working

hard inside that compressor.

Minnie (Brittany). It was hard work but we were used to hard work, we were hard people, that's why they liked a lot of us farm people. The farm was a lot different than the mill.

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): Well, there were occasionally fires, but they would be put out quickly. The mill was run by waterpower. And so that is how they could put out fires quickly. That water was the best in the country, go up to the fourth floor, and it uh had the best color and taste, of any other water. (chuckles) Well, everybody thought that their mill was the best. And there were several mill villages in Columbus. But Bibb City was the best mill to work for in town.

WILLY (Melissa): Why'd they shut it down? (to Hattie)

Minnie (Brittany). I worked there for forty-two years.

HATTIE (Carrie): Times. They change.

WILLY (Melissa): Yep. Even when we can't read the signs.

Minnie (Brittany). People didn't have no where to go, didn't fit no where, didn't know nothin' else and then some weren't old enough for Social Security, never thought it would close.

(Repetitious movement stops.)

Virginia (Liz/Katie). That river made the Bibb Mill one of the greatest examples of hydroelectric power in the United States, it's not just a district, it's a landmark.

(Hattie enters and sings some of "Shall We Gather at the River")

Pride: The Thread that Binds

Minnie (Brittany). I was real proud of the school, used to have to, it was, send the teachers home to meet the children's parents and that was real good, and the teachers they didn't allow no nonsense, and there was no nonsense from the teachers neither, and it was a real good school, there was people not living in Bibb that wanted to go to our school.....

Virginia (Liz/Katie). There was such a pride for their neighborhood. In their neighborhood, there was people who grew up there. Ya know it was community, it was a family.

Billy (Jackie). Ohh yeah, that was the best thing about Bibb, that it was community, it was such a strong community. That was also the worst thing about Bibb, for some, that it was a community. You catch my drift?

Virginia (Liz/Katie). I don't think, well no I don't think there were a lot of children, but I don't think that the mill had as much trouble with child labor as other places and I don't think Columbus did as some places in the state.

Billy (Jackie). The children, those who weren't working, would bring their fathers and their mothers lunch, their brothers and sisters, they would bring a bucket, with collard greens, cornbread maybe, and a piece of ham, or fatback, maybe and...

Virginia (Liz/Katie). We see a lot of pictures of the dinner toters, the children who would take the meals to their parents who were working in the mills. I think people don't know, it was sort of passed from generation to generation. Ya know two or three generations that worked in the mill and they probably didn't have as high an education as the majority...

Minnie (Brittany). Everybody knew everybody, everybody respected everybody, you used to could leave your door unlocked around here, everybody did, you can't really do that anymore, but I came back here, I've always liked it here, liked my job, people ask me bout other jobs in the mill, I don't know, I liked my job.

(A shift to another perspective.)

Mr. Hogg (Wolfe/Crawley). Well not really communist but there was control. If the principal had said to Mr. Issacs that we have a problem with so and so he told the parents that they needed to straighten up and fly and right, well it never happened while I was there but I knew it had happened. Uhh... Boom! They were gone. Children were kicked out of... out of the house. Haha you said goodbye. Haha. Boom they were gone. No Job. No house. So it didn't happen very often. Haha. But there was that sense and there was also....this uh... felt like they were this one real big family and in a way they were. Yeah it was uhh... like I say they weren't used to a man [teacher] and...and... I..I...I guess that is what bothered me greatly cause it took so long to get them loosened up where they would participate and and then I had to stop most of them from participating. Haha. They uhh... no I wouldn't say that.... But there was a lot of control by the mill. Yeah. In a lot of things. They controlled the house. And that was true of most mill towns.

(A shift back.)

Billy (Jackie). So, a lot of workers at Bibb became very, very proud of working at Bibb, an uh, they were poor still, uh they had, a lot of mill employees had a fairly decent life, and you talk to them today and you'll find a lot of pride. A mill was just like a boat, every job had a name, and it was real important. One way you could get a guy to do a harder job and not pay him more was to give him a new name. I was a painter, I worked in Muscogee Manufacturing Company, in high school, college, it was hard work, it was real hard, tedious work.

(Hattie and Willy enter as shift occurs.)

People is Preservation

WILLY (Melissa): Aw, Hattie, you know I sure as heck can't sweep a porch better than you!

HATTIE (Carrie): Ain't a matter of who can do it better, the point is to do it. (WILLY begins sweeping) Willy, did you ever hear about Granny Pickins?

WILLY (Melissa): No, m'am.

HATTIE (Carrie): Well, we always called her Granny Pickins. And I'll tell ya, Granny Pickins could sweep that porch. She worked third shift so when she came home, she worked while her kids were asleep, and came home in time to get them up, get them dressed, and get them off to school. And then she slept while they were at school so she was awake when they came home. They really never even knew she was gone. A lot of families worked like that. There was no such thing as babysitters. Husbands and wives workin' at the mill on alternate shifts so they could take care of the kids... Granny Pickins could sweep that porch. I've never seen anybody sweep a porch like she did. It was clean, clean, clean.

(Hattie walks off with arm on Willy's shoulder as Jean and Jeri settle in to chat.)

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): My name is Jeanette McClung, born Jeanette Skinner.

Jeri (Crawley): And my name is Jeri Harden, now Jeri Broadwell. (spell it out)

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): We both grew up in Bibb City, and we have been best friends since the first grade.

Jeri (Crawley): That's something you don't usually see.

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): Oh yes. It has been a long time. And my uncle married Jeri's cousin. We do consider each other family, even though we are not blood related. I have 15 relatives involved with the Mill. One was the watchman. But that has nothing to do with Bibb City. Anyway, the town was built by an Englishman. It was the South part first then the North.

Jeri (Crawley): And one thing that was nice about it was that it was built on the natural environment. You know, usually you tear down some trees for roads, but this was built without destroying any geological features. They started with the Mill. I also remember a boy scout cabin. It was torn down and a new building was put there on the Riverwalk. It was 50 cents per room and you got four rooms. They took it out of our paychecks. And they built an auditorium. It had basketball and a pool. It was called Comer auditorium. It had meeting rooms too.

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): Oh, and at Christmas, the Mill gave parents a card for the children. They went to the auditorium and got a "bag of gold". It had good candy: coconut haystacks, ribbon candy...

Jeri (Crawley): Oo. The ribbon candy!

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): Hubert Stubbs, I believe, was athletic director of the

auditorium. And Jeri's dad was a cop, then he was the director of human resources. We were both in the Girl Reserves rather than the Girl Scouts. In May, we would perform a Mayday Festival. It was performed in a grassed area by the Mill. We had a Mayday King and Queen. And my grandparents always won the first prize in the "clean-up" contest. Also, we would dance around the May pole, and we plaited the streamers, over, under...

Jeri (Crawley): Invariably, my streamer would break every year. During the war, World War 2, Jeanette's Aunt got Mayday Queen. People paid 5, 10 cents to vote. Pap Patterson paid a whole big amount for her Aunt. Lila was her name. She was almost dressed like the Statue of Liberty.

(Shifting to John)

John (Gwen/Katie): In a way, a lot of these people came from what they call LA(lower Alabama). So they got all these family ties and all of that. Where you spent time in the mill. Where you lived in the mill was a little bit of a class structure. Some houses were considered better than others, and I won't even say which ones cause I heard different stories. Y'know? What kind of job you could have to afford the house, because you paid by the room in the house. If you had a four-room house and only two people livin in it, then you had a good job. Those first houses tended to be four rooms, two front doors, sort of like duplexes.

(Minnie joins John and begins to tell him her story.)

Minnie (Brittany). I loved to go swimmin, did a lot of swimmin in the river, wore my red swimsuit I bought for the beauty pageant, my weaving room, they put me in a Bibb Mill beauty pageant even though I was really too short for, I was.....

They let us off work, to go get our hair did, to go get all dressed up, for the beauty pageant. There was a girl from room, or floor. The weaving room picked me, even though I was too short. It was cuz I had a real nice figure, back in those days. One woman even told me, 'You don't have a extra pretty face, a beauty pageant face', that woman, I told her it wasn't really about the face, told her it was 3% face, and 97% figure. I got third place, the girl that won, uh, now she had the longest, prettiest pair of legs, she had beautiful legs, lot longer than mine, even with my white heels. I went out and bought a pair of white heels, so I would look taller. The girl that won, she got some prizes, but she deserved them, she had to do some other things...

The deacon tried to get me out of the church, didn't agree with wearin no swimsuits, but you had to vote for the beauty pageant, and the pastor asked, he said to the deacon, "You voted for them?", the deacon did vote, so the pastor said, "You just as guilty", and left it at that.

I used that red swimsuit anyways, for swimming, since I got third place, I got to swim in the Bibb pool, it was 10 cents a swim, I got to swim in it for free all summer. People say, 'Well, that wasn't no big deal', but I say, no listen, when you made 10 dollars a week, that was a real big deal, for me to get to go for free

(Focus moves back to John)

John (Gwen/Katie): It wasn't just like families, but tended to be related. The Bibb Hotel sat where the parking lot is today, facing first (avenue). And one of the things they did with it is a place where the single girls could come and live there and sort of be chaperoned. We talked about improving those girls and making sure nothing happened to them, nothing happened to their virtue. And they could guarantee their parents they would be okay, because there was somebody ran the hotel, there was a woman who ran the hotel. Then I think at the time it became just a hotel, and both males and females were there. The Bibb had several different mills across the state, so they had corporate offices in Macon so they could stay there and that sort of thing. [The village being rough?] It's just the nature of textile villages everywhere. They were ostracized from so called middle class and upper class. They were seen as rough, and they were rough houses.

(Focus shifts to Wendell)

Wendell (Katie/Gwen): I'm from back home. When I was uh eight momma, daddy and I moved to Bibb city, Cause daddy got a job in the mill ok, and uh it was really nice cause we were the first people to live in our house in the village, and on the farm we didn't have electricity or runnin water, but uh in the house in the city we had one light in every room and a bathroom. We could only live there cause of daddy's job you know cause some of your people had to work in the Bibb mill ok.

(Jean and Jeri join in.)

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): Back then, the streets were not paved. It was red dirt. No cars. They had tractors that would plow the roads.

Jeri: I would even go tell the people who had the cars when the tractor mowed the roads. That didn't take long because there weren't that many.

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): And our parents never bought us bicycles because of the sharp curves and high banks. But we could really skate. Also, a fair came and I went with Jeri, Pat and Mike, her siblings. We would ride the bus downtown, then change buses down to where the Civic Center is now. One year, we couldn't get the bus, so we walked.

Jeri: Enough about that. It was a very close-knit community. If we got caught in a rainstorm, we could stop at any house. Consequently, if we did anything wrong, our parents knew about it by the time we got home.

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): 2nd avenue and 38th street, we had everything we needed. There was a new movie everyday at the theater. We would go on double dates.

(Other actors full back toward "screen" as though watching a movie while Hattie speaks.)

HATTIE (Carrie): The movie "Birth of the Nation". You ever seen it? It's one of the first full-length movies, and it has an enormous impact on the American society. It's the first thing that just shows this impact of the media, as we call it now. It was just horrible, horribly racist. And it shows this very perverted view of reconstruction that the Blacks were out in mobs trying to kill the Whites. Absurd. The movie is so racist it doesn't even

use Blacks. It uses Whites in Black Face. It's got thousands of these Black Face people, running around. So the book it's based on, they had these girls reading. I guess everybody in the South was reading it, it's what they had the Girl Reserves reading. *The Clansman*, which became the basis for the movie "Birth of the Nation".

(Beginning with John's speech, actors move back their previous places.)

John (Gwen/Katie): Also, soldiers weren't welcome there, they didn't want soldiers comin in a datin their women. Well, they just didn't like outsiders. It probably, maybe, comes from the sense of community with the mills. We are a community, we are a mill. You talk to old soldiers in this town and they were harassed by everybody. I mean no neighborhood likes outsiders, nobody likes someone comin in to steal their women. At least not in the old days.

(The focus shifts back to Jeri and Jean who are standing USC this time.)

Jeri (Crawley): My husband was in the Navy. He was the Pastor's son. I asked Jeanette to be my maid of honor.

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): I cried at the wedding. He was taking my best friend away. Then I got married to Curtis. He was the police chief. Later, he ran for Sherriff for the town of Bibb City and failed miserably. He went for his doctorate degree. He is 85 and still teaches at the college.

Both: Then we lost contact with each other.

Jeri (Crawley): Columbus was what brought us back together.

Billy (Jackie). Ohh yeah, that was the best thing about Bibb, that is was community, it was such a strong community. That was also the worst thing about Bibb, for some, that it was a community. You catch my drift?

(Bessie and Fred enter USL to comment on Billy's remark, then sit/stand on SL platform.)

The Bibb Company: Socializing a Mill Town
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Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): I guess you can tell I like the Bibb Company, they did so many nice things for us.

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): From cane to cane, as we use to say. It really just depended on the season. During school I was the athletic director or as you could call it the physical education instructor.

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): But, but working in the mill was one thing, ok, but there was a very large social side of the mill.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): They had girls reserves, that is a Christian organization for the girls, and they made trips to cities like New York, Washington, and I think they have gone to Florida to the beach, and several places like that.

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): ...the Library had reading programs. We had a band director, organized sports for both children and adults, the ladies of the community put on Halloween carnivals every year. And we had the Grand Ole Opry there once, there was a big country music festival and Minnie Pearl, Patsy Cline, and Hank Williams were there. And Gene Autry brought his trick horse, uh, what was his name, oh yeah, yeah, Champion.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): A golf course, ball parks for the boys, Comer Auditorium where they could shoot basket goals. And they had an attendant, who cared for the children, you know, and kept order down there. And she was so good with them, they all knew her first name, she was very firm. She didn't let anything happen to them, they all loved her.

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): I mean, you had, uh, like the Pastime Theatre. You know, and that theatre was your life as a child. Every Saturday morning, as long as I can remember, that was what you did, went to the Pastime, and stayed there all day.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): Oh! Yes, and I believe it was on Friday nights they would show a movie, in front of the mill, and they could watch it from there, sit on the steps and watch it.

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): There were all kinds of things. There were women's clubs and men's clubs. And they organized all kinds of activities, or at least the women's club did.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): The Womanless Wedding, they had that right after I came to Columbus, and I thought it was so funny. (laughs) The bride was a real tall guy, I think the tallest guy in the mill, and he, he cried all the way down the aisle. You know, he would be wiping his eyes (she mocks) and it, her daddy well supposedly her daddy he was a guy, the bride was, but he had a gun behind himself going down the aisle to make sure the groom took her. (she laughs)

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): The other time the men wore dresses was when the boys played the girls in softball, the men put on dresses and the girls wore their uniforms. I played. We had a guy who umpired. Paul Watson. The girls uh got together and got them a tub of water. And Paul Watson called a strike or something, and they jumped all over him, and they grabbed him and dunked him down in that thing. In that water, (laughs) and that uh messed up his plan because he was going to drop his britches or something. (pause) And we played donkey ball one time. (laughs) Well it is where you hit the ball, and then you jumped on the donkey and run to first base.

(Laughter)

Each person had their own donkey. You would get on that donkey, and it would start going, and then all of a sudden it would stop and you would fall off. And then sometimes you'd get on them and you couldn't even get them to go. I mean they were trained to do things. (shakes his head and laughs) and you couldn't get him to go. (laughs) This is what the community did for entertainment.

Minnie (Brittany). We'd all go to the ball games, I sold hot dogs at the ball games, I really enjoyed sellin' hot dogs, and then we'd all go swimmin, in the river, me in my red swimsuit.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): Well [the supervisors] lived uh closer to the mill, because they provided what was called bosses row, which is the south side of the mill. And a few of them lived up in here. I don't recall them having any problems with people, but uh if that was the case. Well, I never did hear anyone say [anything bad from other mills], but uh, I think that if I had been one of them, I would have been a little bit jealous. (smiles)

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): Bibb looked after your yard, and kept everything nice. They had these nurseries, the kinds that look after kids, and ones where you could take your plants for the winter.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): Mowing of the lawn, pruning of the shrubbery, they kept the streets cleaned.

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): They painted your house inside and outside and everything, every four years, whether or not your house needed it.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): The Bibb, it was more of a family type corporation.

(We move back to Jeri, Jean, Wendell and John.)

The Bibb Company: Educating for Life

Jeri (Crawley): We lived in North Highlands. Oh, and every year we would go to the Coke Bottling company near where the John B Amos center is. Each kid got a ruler, a tablet, a free coke, and a pencil. The schools were good because they were subsidized.

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): One interesting thing about the teachers is that they all had to be unmarried. And they lived in a sort of hotel.

Jeri (Crawley): Eva Gardner was the principle. And she left her scrapbooks of Bibb City to my father.

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): He then gave the books to Jeri.

Jeri (Crawley): No, he gave me the books when Eva gave them to him. So, he never really had them. He wanted to me keep them and not give them to Columbus College (that's what it was at the time) but I waited until he passed and then he couldn't do anything about it.

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): The scrapbooks started in 1927. It told you who died, who married, and whose baby was born. Anyway, grammar school was K-7 and high school was 8-11. They did not include the twelfth grade back then. Goin from Bibb to Baker was like being sent to Bedlam. We graduated from Baker High school. It was the only high school in the county at the time. Mayor J R Allen was in our graduating class.

Jeri (Crawley): He died in a plane crash.

Jean (Wolfe/Gwen): Well, yes. He did, Jeri. We graduated in '49. Then they consolidated the schools.

(The action freezes and comes up on John again)

John (Gwen/Katie): That's one reason why that school was so good. If, and I'm sure that other people will get this. If a kid in school was really a behavioral problem then all the teacher had to do is tell the principle, the principle would tell the mill superintendent, mill superintendent would tell the parents of that child, ah you're out of here if you don't straighten that child up. So that child would, ya know that kid could get the whole family removed from job and from the village. So that's the sort of discipline they had, the sort of control they had

(The scene shifts to Mr. Hogges)

Mr. Hogg (Wolfe/Crawley): I was there three years and in three years, I never knew of anything in the way of a...the students...such as...um...well, they never had nobody shootin anybody. I mean there were no fights. Stuff like that just didn't exist. And you didn't have to go far away from that for where that did happen. When the students left Bibb City and went to Columbus Jr. High, it was an entirely different environment for em...um...but I always expected ...everybody to behave, and they knew I expected it and that's it; I didn't do any bad thing. In other words, they knew that when I say no, it's no, and that's it. Discipline problems were just about non...existent. I guess uh...haha! One of these fellas over there goin acting like grown-up ran and told somebody and he said, "Mr. Hogg, somebody goin beat up on me" Haha! He was fightin there with another boy who's in the bathroom. I went in and I whopped one of em, my arm was around one of em, I shoved him toward the doh', then I whopped the other one and shoved him toward the doh. And he handled that for a long time. He was upset about it and he finally, when...I don't know, uh, a few years ago he said, he told me, "I wanna apologize when I acted up and got popped." I did what I was doin to get it done. And uh...I wouldn't last long out there today.

(The scene shifts to Wendell, who crosses downstage to speak with Bessie, who joins him.)

Wendell (Katie/Gwen): Bibb city was a real city with its own mayor and its own school; I started goin there in the third grade and graduated from there when I was twelve. I also spent a couple of hours in jail that year, momma and daddy got me a B-B gun for Christmas and uh there wasn't anything to hunt in the city and uh so I shot out some of the lights in the lampposts and got caught by the Bibb city police. Daddy took my gun away and I never saw it again.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): (laughs at Wendell's story) They had such wonderful schools, Well, they had two—and I say this with all the love I can muster up—old maid teachers. One was principal and the other was uh assistant. And they were sisters. And they taught them, oh so much, they taught them manners, how to set a table properly, and um, they required them to learn so much scripture, they had to learn at

least a verse a day. And now when you meet up with any of those students, even though they didn't like it back then, they are so proud that they had to learn it. And for their report cards, this use to be a little community, we had a little a theatre, 2 drug stores, 2 restaurants, a department store, Hirsche's Department Store, and Hirsche's use to give all the children who made As and Bs. Well, they would give them a dime for an A and a nickel for a B. And needless to say all the children use to swarm up there, that made those grades. (smiles)

(WILLY enters singing “(Way Down Upon the) Suwannee River”—happy, upbeat style.)

WILLY (Melissa): “Way down upon the Suwannee River

Far, far away

That's where my heart is turning ever

That's where the old folks stay

All up and down the whole creation

Sadly I roam

(Susan enters and begins speaking—overlapping WILLY singing)

Still longing for the old plantation

And for the folks at home—“

Susan (April/Katie): I came home from school one day and I was singing. I was singing (WILLY continues from before and SUSAN joins in):

“All the world is sad and dreary everywhere I roam

Oh brothers, how my heart grows weary—“

(DAD/Crawley suddenly appears upstage right in a spotlight)

DAD/Crawley: (Cutting her off) What did you say?

Susan (April/Katie): (Continues to face audience) And I said I was singing “Suwannee River”. And he said...

DAD/Crawley: No—what did you say? “All the world is sad and dreary everywhere I roam...”

Susan (April/Katie): “Oh brothers, how my heart—“

DAD/Crawley: (Cutting her off) Who taught you that?

Susan (April/Katie): Ms. Schullar, the music teacher.

DAD/Crawley: Let me see that music book. (Spotlight out)

Susan (April/Katie): Oh he threw a fit. He was a Stephen Cauley Foster fan. He had his records, he loved his music. He wrote his songs in Negro dialect. And it was “Oh darkies, how my heart grows...” He went to my teacher. He said...

DAD/Crawley: (Spotlight up on DAD and TEACHER, both facing audience, SUSAN in between them.) Where do you come from changing the words that are copyrighted from an author that didn’t write them this way?

Susan (April/Katie): And I’m hiding.

TEACHER/Melissa: We just can’t use those words now.

DAD/Crawley: Why? That’s how it was written. He didn’t write “Oh brothers”. They weren’t his brothers, they were darkies. He had a passionate love for them. But they didn’t call each other brothers, they called themselves darkies. (Spotlight out on DAD and TEACHER. Susan is alone with WILLY and HATTIE watching.)

Susan (April/Katie): Oh he had a fit. You know what? At that time I was so embarrassed, but he was right. He was right. You can’t take a song and change how you want it to be. That’s not how it was depicted and it wasn’t that time. And it wasn’t Stephen Cauley Foster’s; it’s not what he would have written. And yet, his name was on there. He was absolutely right. But it was his little girl that was scared her music teacher was going to snatch her up and slap her the next time she came to class. But my dad was like that. He was a very cozy figure. He had 100s of people that worked under him at the mill. He had to make sure he met his quota. He worked seven days a week. He was in that mill at least a couple of hours every Sunday. We went to church every Sunday morning and Sunday night. Wednesdays, we had church Wednesday, but he brought us home from church and would go back to the mill for the shift change.

In my life I have discovered four things that helped me with how I am. And it’s exactly how God has a set pattern. First, is your home. Your home is where your trainin’ should start; it’s where it should end. It’s not up to the school to train children. And the next is your church. The third is your school, then your community. And those four things are what shaped my life. And for me, that was Bibb City. Now I don’t think it’s that way in any school now, and that’s really sad. I’m very blessed to be a part of that era.

(Lights go down on Susan, WILLY addresses the audience.)

WILLY (Melissa): I never heard many grown-ups talk about blacks other than, “We don’t have too many blacks come through Bibb City.” It was white. They was all white mill people. And, and the mill workers, the machine operators were white. Uh, and I

think that the blacks that did work in the mills for a long time were probably workin' in the pickin' warehouses. Shuffin' bales of cotton—big, huge bales of cotton! Bibb didn't, they didn't take to it very easily at all. Why do you think that is, Hattie?

HATTIE (Carrie): I can't really give ya a good answer for that, Willy. Things like that's hard to explain. And people don't too much like talkin' about it.

WILLY (Melissa): Why's it always the things I need help with most you can't explain?

HATTIE (Carrie): Take this broom and help me out, now. Or I'm 'bout to help shape your life.

(Hattie chasing Willy with the broom; he takes it and goes. Hattie stays.)

Times. They do Change.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): We had watchmen around clock in the earlier years that I was here at the mill and they had a bell in the front tower and every Sunday morning at 9:30 that, uh, bell rang to alert us to get ready for Sunday school and at 10:00 it rang again. And that just stands out in my memory, as something very outstanding. All the children and just about everybody round here went to that church in the village and uh you know there was no difference in the class of us, bosses, regular laborers, or anything they just accepted everybody, and all the children got very good training.

Minnie (Brittany). My little girl was 18 months when we moved here, moved in across from the preacher, she'd walk out the door and holler, "Hey, preacher."

(HATTIE sits on stage singing "The Crossing")

Well the women that looked after my children, well the first one I had was Mary and she was real good, you could depend on her and she was real good, the other one that I had for so long, towards the end, but I, I kept I had several, she was Tina, I had had her sister Annabelle before that and she would come back and have Christmas with us every year, but the children loved to see her, she had been with them a lot, and she would cook whatever they wanted to eat, and she kept it clean, they was always clean, and I felt comfortable with her, and was when my husband was down sick, eight years before he died, you know if you sent her away, you could trust her, and she would do exactly what you asked her to do and come back, and we just really, really she was just like one of the family and the children loved her .

Billy (Jackie). Funny, they allowed the children in the mill, but there were very few blacks in mill, especially to start with, they got menial jobs, got paid a whole lot less, was allowed in the pickin room, the loading, but.....

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): At first there was, there were very few of the black race there. But as the war progressed, it uh started in December of 41, um the boys were called out the mill and into the service. And um they began to hire more of them, and they were uh good workers, there were no problems there. Well, it happened so gradually, that nobody even noticed. No. We just accepted it. We made friends with

some of them. I had one real good, black lady friend, I think she calls me periodically, and she is in her nineties, and uh she cleaned our office. But she was so sweet to all of us, and we were to her.

Scott (Crawley): My mother spent many years in Bibb City as a young child. She lived there. And once I found that out... which was, I really, I really became aware of it, I don't know, maybe my late teens, then I had a different attitude, a different outlook about Bibb City. And I tried hard to get beyond...uh... a mass of people that had their own style of living that may not coincide with mine... and I might not agree with exactly how they lived and, and their attitude but... my mother spent a lot of time there. And she turned out to be a good person, so I knew there were a lot of good people there, and I've met a lot of good people that came from Bibb City. I still enjoy just riding through Bibb City and reminiscing and remembering what it was like back when I was a young, young fella and seein' those old houses all fixed up and the people out just takin' care of business, just doin' their thing.

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): The blacks didn't play on the ball teams, but before I left the position they did. The blacks didn't live in the communities, didn't have memberships to the men's club, didn't go to the same schools. But what you got to realize is Muscogee county schools didn't integrate until, uh, well, the late 60s.

I worked with a black lady at the auditorium, and she watched after a lot of children. The auditorium was open in the night hours and so she would have to watch after the kids and she wasn't afraid to put them in line. Hattie Monroe (he laughs) and her broom. There were no other paid employees besides the two of us, and we use to have kids who couldn't wait to help us set up for events. They were always there, and they would help us sit up a thousand chairs or so.

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): And swept it literally with a broom, one of those push type brooms, so we lived in a clean place and so we can't get use to some of the things that we are putting up with now, like people tossing out bottles and cups, I haven't seen any around here this morning, but normally you do see some (pause) out there.

(Alyssa entering abruptly from house left.)

Alyssa (Melissa): I had to put an alarm in the house. We've been burglarized here, we've had cars stolen here. You know, I have to unlock five locks just to get to the porch. I think it's getting better. I think it's seen its worst times. All these old people died off and these houses have been rented and that brought, you know... not so good people. There wasn't the police presence here that there was when it was a city. There was always a little barney cop driving around the neighborhood. It made a big difference when you only had ten blocks to cover. And I did have an affection for the mill, you know, even though I never worked there. I mean, I walk my dog by there every day... I love this place. I mean, its part of my family history, why wouldn't I love it? And hopefully there will be something nice put in. There'd be no sense in making a replica or anything. At least the façade is safe. I'm really glad the façade is safe. (Beat)

Somebody knocked down the Boy Scout house. I don't like it. They knocked it down to

the cement slab. I don't like it. And the house is way too modern to be here. I couldn't believe it. They have the best riverfront view there but it's done nothing to blend in with the rest of the town. All these old little mill houses, like little bungalows with the willow trees and moss hanging down... and then there's this modern thing. I'm glad they chose Bibb City but I don't like the house they did. They could have done so much more—that's one thing we could have done without and you can quote me on that. (Beat).

I wish there was some kind of active preservation group. I wish there were a group of people actively—you know, yearly, monthly—meeting to figure out what we could do to better Bibb City. And what we can do I just don't know. Whether it be picking up the trash or whatever. The city of Columbus may have taken that on, but I want to be more involved in that respect. I want to know at least generally what direction they're going. Who's buying the school that's for sale? What can we do to preserve and make sure the mill doesn't get knocked down? Making sure that whoever buys it keeps it preserved. Looking out for the church across from there—it's been on its last limb for a while. That kind of thing. I understand that you can't make it a mill town again. That you have to bring in some kind of tourism or commerce or something. I just want to see it alive again. I want to see good things happen here again. I would like the people of Bibb City to have a say in what happens to Bibb City, that's all I ask.

Preserving the Future

(WILLY and HATTIE have been listening to Alyssa.)

WILLY (Melissa): (who has been sitting on the side of the stage the whole time): Lots of ideas are in the works for what's left of the Bibb. What will happen to it, Hattie?

HATTIE (Carrie): shhh!

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): Well, I think the Bucks are doing a very good job, they are preserving the front of the mill. Which had a clock as you may have noticed. And it uh, it is so amazing that that part didn't burn. Burned right up to it, but it didn't get burned. (long pause) And they're, I understand they're planning a nice restaurant and maybe a hotel to replace the mill. And they are such nice people, they're uh following suit of the Bibb, you know, the example of Bibb, and that they keep everything very nice. And, that, that they have high standards.

Fred Hyder (Jimmy/Katie): Turn the building into shops and condominiums, I guess, for tourism. (shrug and a shake of the head.)

George (Carrie): Uh, well, there's not much that can happen cause its not much left.

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): It needs to be condominiums. There's too beautiful a land area there for it not to be shared with a lot of people

George (Carrie): What would you do with the people who live in North Highland now?

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley):... Leave'em there.

George (Carrie): No.

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): How would you move'em?

George (Carrie): They couldn't afford the condominiums.

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): Well they wouldn't have to live there, but you would bring in the, young professionals, you would bring those folks and that would revitalize a lot of the uh...

George (Carrie): But you have to understand what would happen there would be the same as what happened over in Peabody. They were expecting all the young doctors and nurses, so they built these apartments over there, you know, where the medical center is on... Talbotton? Would you, would you think someone who was a lawyer or doctor would live there? That was the idea.

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): But that's very...What they need to do there is very upscale condominiums, not, not that type of building.

George (Carrie): But you're saying you would keep the people that's there in North Highland?

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): Where the mill sits there's nobody there, you see, take where the mill was sitting...

George (Carrie): But think, all those people that live around there, all of them that I teach everyday, what would you do with them?

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): They'd stay there.

George (Carrie): Well [those people couldn't afford to live there]. It should be developed because...well, you have the River Walk, and you have that property, but if you develop it to where it needs to be developed, I... it would put me out of a job because it would put all of those people, they will have to relocate, the same way they did with Peabody. And... most of'em won't be able to come back.

L. Ray (Cassie/Crawley): But it should be developed. . . (is cut off by Bessie)

Bessie Bacon (Brittney/Cassie): I have never heard of a mill like it in my whole life and I am so thankful the lord sent me to this one.

(Transition)

(Susan and Alyssa enter. HATTIE and WILLY listen. Set-up should be reminiscent of sitting on a porch on a nice afternoon. Relaxed and conversational.)

Alyssa (Melissa): The beginning of the millennium was sort of the nail in the pocket. The school shut down and the city consolidated with Columbus and was no longer even Bibb City. So, I've been living here through all of that process. They've taken up the train tracks and the mill closed down—

Susan (April/Katie): --and burning.

Alyssa (Melissa): And burning. You know, it's just that my experience was very different from hers.

Susan (April/Katie): I think mine... I think yours was more... sad.

Alyssa (Melissa): It's been sad. And my grandparents have died during that time so I've seen, you know, one generation come to a close, but I'm also living here with my niece who is another generation. So I've gotten to share that with my grandparents and with my niece.

Susan (April/Katie): Yeah, my grandmother lived here for, well, my grandmother lived here for a long time.

Alyssa (Melissa): So we had great grandmother, grandmother, you, me, and my niece so that's five generations.

Susan (April/Katie): Five generations have lived in this house.

Alyssa (Melissa): I mean I really feel fortunate to be able to live here but also to do the house in a younger way and just kind of prepare it for the next generation that I hope will be livin here in Bibb City and be good neighbors. They can't get here fast enough. The mill, it was more of a loss in that it was really the focal point of the city. It was the heartbeat of the city and even though it was closed it was still there and there was that hope of revival and hope of, you know, some kind of second life to it. And when it was gone I mean, it was... it was gone. It was just gone. (Susan and Alyssa rock quietly—thoughtfully remembering. WILLY stands.)

WILLY (Melissa): What's a matter Hattie? I ain't never seen you so quiet before.

HATTIE (Carrie): (Carefully. Not saying it all.) It's just sad is all. It's like my whole life was woven up in that mill. And now it's gone.

WILLY (Melissa): Well, Hattie...can't you weave somethin' new? But keep some 'a that old pattern.

(A distinct shift. The beginning of mill sounds—looms humming, a distant train. No voices yet. The sounds are more repetitive and strangely calming. When new sounds are brought up in dialogue there may be some suggestion of them in the background noise. The sounds get more prominent as the description progresses.)

Susan (April/Katie): When I was livin' at home, when I was younger there was never a picture that hung straight. I mean, you've got thousands of looms right across—

Alyssa (Melissa): --and a train.

Susan (April/Katie): --and the looms always made vibrations. And in my bed, when I laid in my bed at night, that was comfort to me. Laying there and having my bed vibrate.

Alyssa (Melissa): Me too! Me and Meemaw would lay in that front bedroom—which is my bedroom now—facing the same way I lay now. And the windows they would just rattle. And you hear the machinery and the bell and the noise from the people getting off their shift and it was just really comfortable. She had the fan going and it was just the cold sheets—

Susan (April/Katie): --We never had air conditioning—

Alyssa (Melissa): --yeah, it was really cold sheets. And I could hear the mill and it was like I don't know it was real. It was so much a part of my childhood. I can hear the windows rattling now... hear the horn...

Susan (April/Katie): It sounded for like a whole minute. (Whistle blows—having reached full volume by now) And another would blow in like 15 minutes **(Another whistle blows. Mill workers enter from the house and backstage, gradually. As they run into each other, they talk to each other: “How's your mom been doin'?”; “Did ya hear about Minnie?”; etc. HATTIE and WILLY interact as well. Small talk that increases in volume as more workers come in.)**, and that one meant that you were late, so you better not have that second whistle blow. That's when everyone would come out of the mill, so truly for like 30 minutes you would hear, “Hey Roger! What you doing and blah blah blah...” **(By this point, Alyssa and Susan are enveloped in the crowd of workers—not interacting with them, but aware of them. They are having a great time listening. After a moment they resume dialogue; workers begin to exit backstage and into the house. It is important that people who came from the house exit backstage and vice versa—this is a shift change. Ad-libbing tapers off; workers disappear.)**

Alyssa (Melissa): Yeah...

Susan (April/Katie): The window was open right there at the sidewalk.

Alyssa (Melissa): I remember that too. And they would all have their lint caps on. And everybody, and it was black and white but predominately black when I was younger. And they would just holler out, and I like hearing all that. (Almost all workers should be gone at this point. HATTIE and WILLY are back to watching.)

Susan (April/Katie): (Watches as final workers disappear) It was my life. It was how I went to sleep and night. And it was fun. I hated it when it was quiet.

Alyssa (Melissa): There was a train that passed right in front of our porch. And that train would shake this entire house. It was like you'd think it was the end of the world. Just so loud, so you would just go out and watch just so not to be scared of it.

Susan (April/Katie): (To Alyssa) And there's a story about it that you might not know.

Alyssa (Melissa): What?

(Possible use of slides of trains. Sounds accompany the action, but not scary.)

Susan (April/Katie): My daddy drove the truck, he was the Anderson Plant, and he and his assistant were going over to the main plant and he said, "I forgot I need to stop at the house and get something." Well, he was driving beside the train—you could drive on this side of the train but not the other side. So he stopped and parked right at the step and didn't go any further. He had just gotten up three steps when the train derailed and turned over. (All sounds out.) He would have been killed. We got pictures of that train.
(Susan exits; Alyssa following.)

Alyssa (Melissa): I want to see them. I didn't know that...

(McKnights enter, setting up their own chairs.)

Fire: Weaving a New Future

Mr. McKnight (Jackie). Well, we slept through most of it, ah, honestly

Mrs. McKnight (Brittany). Saw a fire truck go by and didn't even think much of it until I saw it go by three or four times. When I got in my car and went to drive to work, that is, was when I saw it.

Mr. McKnight (Jackie). When she walked back in the door, I was surprised. Then she told me that the mill was burning.

Mrs. McKnight (Brittany). I grabbed my camera, I used to do a lot of photography, and I snapped so many pictures.

Mr. McKnight (Jackie). We went down there, there were so many people out there, it was hard to see the people, really hard, just watching, I just...

Mrs. McKnight (Brittany). There was this older woman, just bawling, and someone, who knew I was a photographer, said, "Get a picture of that, that'll win an award", or something,

Mr. McKnight (Jackie). I can't believe we slept through most of it, well ah, but the

walls are thick, and we never even....

Mrs. McKnight (Brittany). It was sad, to see all of that.

Mr. McKnight (Jackie). So much history, we have a real respect for the history, just burning to the ground.

Mrs. McKnight (Brittany). I just couldn't take that picture, not of her.

(People enter, milling about, seeing someone they know, watching it burn.)

WILLY (Melissa): (almost like a paper boy) FIRE! FIRE! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

(Ensemble enters slowly to watch mill burn.)

Bessie Bacon (Cassie): Oh, the burning of the mill, it was sad.

Alyssa (Crawley). And just crossin' that bridge from Phenix City it looked so real. It was this orange ember, huge orange ember.

Billy (Katie). Devastating. You can't imagine what it is like to watch the place you worked your whole life, your family worked, your grandparents worked, burn to the ground. Just devastating.

Alyssa (Carrie). It was like a disaster area. Everything was knocked over. There was just all these pieces of huge stuff, chunks of woods out in my yard.

Minnie (Brittany). I wasn't home when the mill burnt I was in the hospital and my daughter didn't tell me 'til we were eating breakfast the next morning, when she did...I'm glad I wasn't there when it burnt, who knows what I would have done, wouldn't have been in my right mind, myself. It was even sadder when it closed, cause a lot of them people, a lot of them was old and didn't know anything different or they was old but not old enough for social security. Never thought it would close, was even worse than the burnin...

Bessie Bacon (Cassie): And we sat on that bench and watched.

Susan (Melissa): We was devastated. I mean it was like...my whole childhood burned up.

Virginia (Liz/Katie). And one of the reasons we all are concerned with the Bibb Mill burning, ya know I'm not sure we're going to be able to retain the national landmark status....

Alyssa (Jackie). I got out and saw...the sad end of it. I took pictures.

Billy (Crawley). I just hope there is really some stuff still left to save.....

Bessie Bacon (Jackie): And it was so, it was a cool night, I think the last day of October, we didn't even need a jacket. In my house, we didn't need any heat at all.

Scott (Crawley): I was always fascinated at... how close they all lived together, and

how they all knew each other so well. They knew everybody. Everyone knew everyone in Bibb City. That fascinated me that they, right there in a big city was a small city. And it functioned. It worked. There were several mills, you know, several mills in Columbus. And that one, that burnt down, look how huge that thing was! It was floors of—huge...lot of people. (*Beat*) The old Bibb Mill. You know, I never got to go in there. You know, I'd've loved to've gone in there. That one that burned down.

(They all watch the mill burn, then slowly exit one by one.)