10-9-1947

Spartanburg County's Peach Industry. (WSPA Radio)

Strom Thurmond
GOVERNOR THUMOND: It's a distinct pleasure for me to be in Spartanburg today. There's something about your city and your county which refreshes me every time I come here. Driving through the countryside, I notice that the farms are neat and well-kept. I see a good many cattle in the fields. The crops look heavy. The city of Spartanburg has an air of progressivism. Just walking around, I get the feeling that big business is going on. I have always liked Spartanburg.

As a matter of interest, I looked up some information yesterday which makes me proud that I am governor of a State which includes your county. No other county in the State of which I have knowledge has a better balance between agriculture and industry. In both fields Spartanburg is a leader.

You are/eighth largest South Carolina county in area and the second in population. You have increased your natural advantages by work and ability. In the value of crops harvested, I found
that you rank fifth in the State. You have more capital invested in manufacturing than any other South Carolina County. You produce more manufactured goods than any other county. And you pay more wages than any other county.

Because I have been a farmer, I was particularly interested in Spartanburg's relative rank in the State in agricultural and dairy products. You have 7,282 farms, the second largest number of any county. You do well on those farms, too. You rank first in milk production. In 1945, you produced 4,760,000 gallons. Your hens produced 1,249,000 dozen eggs that year, making Spartanburg third in South Carolina. Only two counties led you in raising chickens. You threshed more wheat than all except two counties. Only one county raised more apples than you did.

You rank seventh in the production of strawberries and eleventh in sweet potatoes and yams. Of all counties in the State, you are the first in paved and bituminous road mileage. These good roads enable your farmers to bring their crops to market in all kinds of weather. They earn more money than all except farmers of three other counties.
Prosperous farmers make a prosperous community. Spartanburg certainly proves that. You rank fourth in bank deposits, and third in buying income. In the two hundred leading cities of the United States, Spartanburg ranks 154th in general retail sales and 149th in wholesale sales.

There is money in Spartanburg county, and it did not come here by accident. I would like other South Carolina counties to follow your lead.

ANNOUNCER: Governor, do you know that Spartanburg raises more peaches than any other county in South Carolina?

GOVERNOR THURMOND: I know that very well. To the best of my knowledge, it raises more peaches than any other county east of California. What I would like to ask you is why the people of Spartanburg County have been standing for the arrogant boast of Georgia that it is the Peach State. Every time I have seen a Georgia automobile, I have begun brooding over the gall of my good friend Governor M. E. Thompson of Georgia. Yesterday, my patience became exhausted. I wrote Governor Thompson this letter:
"Dear Governor Thompson:

You were unwary enough to interject yourself recently into the controversy between Governor R. Gregg Cherry of North Carolina and myself relative to the birthplace of President Andrew Jackson. North Carolina, as you will remember, is erecting a statue to that distinguished son of South Carolina. Doubtlessly, you saw our proof, in the words of President Jackson himself, that he was a South Carolinian.

You know that it is dangerous to trifle with South Carolina, as Governor Cherry learned to his sorrow. Georgia's turn to feel our wrath has now come.

Ever since I became Governor of South Carolina last January, I have noted with increasing rage Georgia automobile license plates. They carry the words "Peach State" upon them. You know just as well as I do that Georgia is no longer entitled to say that. The words are empty and vain. The foundation for that boast has long since gone with the wind.

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Your position of supremacy in peach production in the East ended in 1945. In 1946, South Carolina produced 6,000,000 bushels while Georgia produced only 5,600,000. In 1947, South Carolina raised 6,600,000 bushels to your measly 5,800,000 bushels. This spread will continue to increase in our favor. You have been hopelessly far behind. Furthermore, our peaches taste better than yours.

I hereby make demand upon you to take the words "Peach State" off of Georgia license tags forthwith and in the name of the sovereign State of South Carolina, and as Commander-in-Chief of its militia, I call upon you to cease and desist from your larcenous usurpation of the title to which South Carolina has earned full ownership. We admit that California grows more peaches than we do, but Georgia — Never!"

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