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Conservation	Music	Transportation	

sawmill community thought to have been one of the larger in the United States in the early 1900's. The house, which is unusually elaborate for this area of the state, was built for entertaining and was an important social center for South Central Alabama in the early 1900's.

Poley was a town of some 1,000 to 1,500 people, complete with hotel, two boarding houses, an ice house, a barber shop, a very large commissary, a church, school, cemetery, and entertainment center.

The main feature of the town was the Miller-Brent Lumber Company which employed some 600 to 750 men. It consisted of a large saw mill, a large planter mill, a large boiler (steam power) plant for each of these two, a large machine shop and a complete railroad system that extended some 25 miles in all directions from the mill. As far as can be determined, a sawmill was operated in this location since 1856.

In the early 1900's William T. Shepard, originally from Pensacola, Florida, bought 50% interest in the operation and moved to Poley. His house, constructed in 1908, was large and unusual for the area and soon became the social center for the surrounding counties, with balls and orchestras imported from as far away as Montgomery.

The mill hit its peak in the early 1920's and began to decline for lack of available timber. The operations ceased and the mill equipment, even foundation bricks were sold. There is nothing left of the town except the Shepard House, which was occupied by the family until 1972. At that time, it was sold to the newly formed Opp Historical Society which plans

to restore it as a museum and headquarters.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Unpublished materials in possession of John Burgess, Chairman, Opp Historical Society, c/o The Opp <u>News</u>, Opp, Alabama.

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