The original historic town of Claiborne was one of Alabama’s earliest settlements and served as Monroe County’s first county seat. Once a bustling commercial center for trade along the Alabama River, Claiborne lost popularity when the railroad brought on the decline of riverboat transportation.

After almost a century of dormancy, economic prosperity has again returned to this community. Claiborne has received worldwide attention as the site of one of the world’s largest pulp and paper making complexes.

In 1976, Parsons & Whittemore, a recognized leader in the implementation of pulp and paper mill projects worldwide, announced its decision to locate a mill at Claiborne. P&W has completed 60 pulp and paper mill projects in 28 countries and is involved in every financial and operational aspect of the production of pulp and paper products.

November 1978 saw the Alabama River Pulp Company produce its first hardwood pulp for a world market. The success of this project brought about the second phase of the operation in 1990, when the Alabama River Newsprint Company was dedicated and operation began.

This second mill was a joint venture with Abitibi-Price, Inc., a company employing some 16,000 people throughout the United States and Canada, engaged in such activities as logging, forestry, manufacturing, marketing, distribution, research, and administration. The first reel of newsprint was made on Friday, July 6, 1990 and the mill’s production capability will be 220,000 tonnes of newsprint each year. The $400 million facility employs more than 150 men and women and operates 24 hours per day 365 days each year with the exception of approximately 12 scheduled preventive maintenance days. A world-class, highly computerized, state-of-the-art mill, it brought even more economic growth and world renown to Alabama. Its product is used in newspaper printing in the southern and midwestern regions of the United States. To accompany this mill and with a concern for the environment, the company opened a $55.6 million recycling facility in late 1991.

Completing a $1.4 billion investment at Claiborne, P&W added the Alabama Pine Pulp Mill to the complex in late 1991 and produced the first pulp on December 7, 1991. The technology utilized in the pulp mill and bleach plant at APP is considered some of the most environmentally sound available and allows the mill to produce fully bleached softwood kraft pulp with no elemental chlorine.

The two pulp mills combine services for a more efficient and economical result. Over half of the total production of pulp is sold to customers in export markets, with about 500,000 tons of pulp moving through the Port of Mobile, making it the leading pulp handling port in the world.

The total Claiborne complex has a maximum water demand of 50 million gallons per day, employs some 850 people with annual payrolls exceeding $50 million. Alabama River Woodlands supplies the five million tons of wood required annually by operations at the complex, all from privately owned forests.

From major service industries to the local grocery stores, the Alabama River Group Companies Complex has had an astounding impact on the local and state economy and recognition. The engineering effort that resulted in this complex is among the finest in the world and stands as an example of what can be accomplished with hard work and vision.