



# **The Unexpected Exodus: How the Cold War Displaced One Southern Town (Southern Classics (Univ of South Carolina))**

*Louise Cassels*

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In late 1950, amid escalating cold-war tensions, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission announced plans to construct facilities to produce plutonium and tritium for use in hydrogen bombs. One such facility, the Savannah River Plant, was built at a cost of \$1.3 billion at a site that encompassed more than 315 square miles in South Carolina's Barnwell, Allendale, and Aiken counties. Some fifteen hundred families residing in small communities within the new plant's borders were forced to leave their homes. The largest of the affected towns was Ellenton, in Aiken County, with a population of 760 residents. Detailing the period of evacuation and resettlement from 1950 to 1952, *The Unexpected Exodus* recalls in words and pictures the dramatic personal consequences of the cold war on the American South through the narrative of one uprooted family. Louise Cassels touches on such enduring historical themes as southerners' sense of place and antipathy toward the federal government as she struggles to maintain equilibrium through life-changing circumstances. Throughout the text her extreme pride and patriotism are set against profound feelings of bitterness and loss.

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