

INTERWEAVING HISTORY: THE TEXAS TEXTILE MILL

AND MCKINNEY, TEXAS, 1903-1968

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Texas textile mills comprise an untold part of the modern South. The bulk of Texas mills were built between 1890 and 1925, a compressed period of expansion in contrast to the longer developmental pattern of mills in the rest of the United States. This compression meant that Texas mill owners benefited from knowledge gained from mill expansion elsewhere, and owners ran their mills along the same lines as the dominant southeastern model. Owners veered from the established pattern when conditions warranted.

This case study focuses on three mills in Texas that operated both independently and as a corporation for a total of sixty years. One mill in McKinney dominated the economy of a small town and serves as the primary focus of this paper. A second mill in Waco served a diversified economy in the center of the state; and the third mill, built in Dallas was concentrated in a major city in a highly competitive job market. All three of these mills will illuminate the single greatest difference between Texas mills and mills elsewhere, the composition of the labor force. Women did not dominate the mill labor force in Texas nor did children, except in limited cases, make-up a large portion of the workers. Today mill studies of southern mills have found only scattered textile factories with a preponderance of male employees, but in Texas this was the norm. This study demonstrates the unique features of McKinney's textile mill and its similarities to other mills in Texas and in the southeast.

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By

Deborah Katheryn Kilgore

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

The history of the United States is, in part, the history of the Industrial Revolution. The young American republic embraced a second revolution when, in 1790 at Pawtucket, Rhode Island, Samuel Slater, a recent English immigrant employed by the firm of Almy and Brown, built from memory a spinning frame. By December of that year Almy and Brown opened the first spinning mill in the United States. A small concern employing children to operate a version of the English Arkwright water frame, it was successful enough in supplying yarn to local weavers to merit expansion within three years, and within seven years the workforce expanded from nine children to over one hundred employees.¹

As the Industrial Revolution progressed in the United States, the establishment and development of textile mills helped transform rural labor into an industrial workforce. As the nation grew, industry followed and wherever cotton, wool, or other fibers could be raised, mills of some kind followed. The history of American textile mills has been the subject of inquiry for a century or more, with serious analysis conducted for regions and for specific mills located in New England, the Mid-Atlantic, the Midwest, and the South. Reviews of the textile industry west of the Mississippi, however, have languished. Research of textile mills range from business and economic papers, urban publications, labor and union reports and the most prevalent, regional analysis. There are still gaps, however, in the history of textile mills; regions where mills did not flourish

¹ Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 15-16.

or dominate business still had an impact on a town, city, or state. Texas mills have not been subjected to formal study since textile mill history began.

Beginning in 1921 with the publication of Broadus Mitchell's *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, textile mills in the South have been subject to evaluation.

Subsequent mill reports focus on a geographically limited selection of mills, serving as a sample then applied to the mills of the entire South as established by Mitchell's selection of mills in South Carolina and North Georgia. But the South, as W. J. Cash observed, is both many and one, and this approach to mill studies must be re-evaluated in light of recent scholarship.² It is the purpose of this thesis to examine textile mills in Texas, specifically 3 mills located in 3 different cities, McKinney, Dallas, and Waco. Texas mills offer substantial differences in mill history. One important finding demonstrates that the state's mills were more advanced in their labor relations than other textile plants in the South. Another conclusion may be drawn from the experience of southeastern textile manufactures. Some Texas mills were negatively affected by industry choices not suitable to the state, while others benefited from models in the Southeast. Texas mill owners and investors used mill histories and experiences outside of the state to guide them, consequently, this thesis begins with an examination of recent mill studies.

Historians and writers frequently use and define the term "the South" when referring to the geographical area composed of the eleven states that formed the Confederacy. Writers as diverse as Wilber J. Cash, Don Doyle, Broadus Mitchell, and C. Vann Woodward have used the "Confederate" definition when discussing the South

² Wilber. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), viii.

and its developing industries after 1865.³ Texas falls under this umbrella term because of its history as part of the Confederacy and its location. For the purpose of this paper, therefore, Texas will be considered part of the modern South as developed by Walter L. Buenger. He argues that southern historians have tended to ignore Texas, leaving it to studies of the American West, yet politically Texas resembles North Carolina, as it is agriculturally tied to the cotton culture. His thesis that Texas began to redefine itself as part of the West in 1900, could do so in part because of its history as an independent republic. This led Texans to see themselves as successful and progressive, eschewing their part in the “Lost Cause.” Buenger finds that this move towards an emphasis on Texas history allowed the state to promote business and growth as part of a winning tradition as well as part of the wide-open West instead of associating with a defeated Confederacy.⁴ Texas, Buenger argues, began the transformation towards a modern South before other southern states. He finds that economically Texas began to diverge from the South before the Great Depression and the advent of the Second World War

³ Ibid. Cash defines the new South as modifying the land by industrialization and commercialization after 1865 with little corresponding change to southern ideology based on the agricultural tap root of the Old South. Cash believes in continuity from Old South to New South as more a matter of potential rather than reality (x, 179). This view is supported by C. Vann Woodward in *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960). Woodward describes the New South as “Yankee progress and industrial civilization,” after 1865 (108), the “Bulldozer Revolution and the advance agent of the metropolis” wiping out old landmarks as a result of the New Deal,” (6) and the “new ruling class of industrialists and businessmen” occurring during the 1890s (152). Broadus Mitchell in *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), vii-viii, sees the period after 1865 as one of rising industrialism leading to a larger role in the nation’s destiny a view supported by Patrick J. Hearden. Writing in *Independence and Empire: the New South’s Cotton Mill Campaign 1865-1901* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1982). Hearden finds the rush to build cotton mills a form of economic warfare practiced to overcome colonial status and “undermine Northern industrial supremacy.” (39) He describes the “New South as a quest for economic independence (from a single crop economy) and commercial empire.” (1) Don Harrison Doyle maintains that the New South was built not by the old planter class working in a new reign of King Cotton but by merchants, manufactures, and financiers who made up the emerging urban business class that shaped the modern South. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 17, 19, 87.

⁴ Walter L. Buenger, *A Path to the Modern South: Northeast Texas Between Reconstruction and the Great Depression* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001). xvi-xxiii.

altered the economies of the rest of the South to align with the nation at large. Additionally Texas leaders were quicker to embrace federal aid during the Depression and snap up industries during World War II. In this thesis the reader shall discover examples of the use of federal aid to keep the mills running during the Depression while the mill owners worked with other southern mills to defeat labor unions and block Federal involvement in textile mills.

Texas textile mills comprise a part of this modern South for several reasons. The bulk of Texas mills were built between 1890 and 1925, a compressed period of expansion in contrast to the longer developmental pattern of mills in the rest of the United States. This compression meant that Texas mill owners benefited from knowledge gained from mill expansion elsewhere, and owners ran their mills along the same lines as the dominant southeastern model. Owners veered from the established pattern when conditions warranted. As noted by George B. Tindall in *The Emergence of the New South*, the textile industry was the first in the South to have its practices, especially labor issues, fall under government review. This was due in part to the heavy reliance on women and children as workers.⁵ One of the major differences between Texas mills and southeastern mills was in the greater numbers of men working instead of women and children prior to the federal labor laws of the 1930s. As this thesis will demonstrate, using the history of mills located in McKinney, Waco, and Dallas, this male dominated labor force was in stark contrast to mills in other states. Using oral histories, census data, state economic reports, textile publications, and local newspapers, this thesis will endeavor to put Texas mill studies into the mainstream of evolving

⁵ George Brown Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 323-325.

scholarship on textile mill workers. This early industrial expansion fits within more conventional southern mill studies as will be shown below. As history is in part based on what has been published by other scholars, below is a short summary of the development of textile mills in New England, the southeastern mills of the Piedmont, and the early female workforce.

Background

With the success of the first mills by Slater, and Almy and Brown, spinning mills began to spring up along New England rivers from Pawtucket to Providence, giving rise to an industrial workforce known as the Rhode Island system. The labor force was family based with a heavy reliance on families with numerous children to tend the spindles. These early spinning mills carded or combed the raw material, whether wool or cotton, and then spun it into thread or yarn that was sold or put out to local weavers to make cloth. This meant that the mills, while providing employment to families did not disrupt the local economy still based on farming. Essentially spinning mills took a low tech task traditionally done by women while minding children, cooking, or other household tasks, and turned it into mass production. As a consequence of the success of these small mills and a growing demand for yarn along the eastern seaboard, finding and keeping workers proved increasingly challenging for businessmen building mills.⁶

In 1813 in Boston, Francis Lowell and Paul Moody began to build a power loom based on machines Lowell had observed in operation on a recent trip to England. Once they had a prototype, they formed a manufacturing company in Waltham, Massachusetts, on a scale not seen before in the United States. The Boston Manufacturing Company was 10 times the size of the Rhode Island spinning mills and

⁶ Dublin, *Women*, 28, 42, 49.

was the first integrated factory where the raw material entered and finished cloth emerged. It achieved this by bringing the cleaning and preparation of raw material into the mill from local producers and by using power looms to weave yarn spun on site into finished cloth ready for sale. Because of the increased use of machinery, the labor force at Waltham was not child dependant or family based but relied instead on large numbers of young adults, mostly young women. As a result of requiring a fixed workforce trained to use increasingly complex machinery, Waltham innovated further by offering cash wages and constructing housing for workers to reside in. The system of producing the entire product from start to finish, using large numbers of workers residing in company housing or in company towns, is known as the American or Lowell system. The growth of the American textile industry and the role of women as part of the workforce in New England's mills was central to Thomas Dublin's, *Women At Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1820* published in 1979.⁷

It is the evolution of this workforce that is the focus of Thomas Dublin's study of American textile workers in New England. In *Women at Work* he shows how the early industrial transformation of cities and towns revolutionized women's roles at work. As young women between the ages of thirteen and twenty-two moved out of the home, they left behind the tasks involved as homemakers as their sole source of status to take up a new role as a productive earner. Dublin finds that as women moved into industry, they forged new images of women that influenced social and economic models in profound and unexpected ways. In so doing, Dublin reveals women as agents of their own expectations and goals, molding the very shape of industrial development and

⁷ Ibid., 17.

American competitiveness in local, national, and world markets.⁸ In New England's mills the transformation from home and farm work to factory work created a bond between women that extended into living arrangements, mentoring new workers, letter writing, publication of mill stories, and promotion of factory work as a positive good.⁹ Women's labor was assigned a monetary value based on production. As wage earners, women saved or spent their wages according to their own needs. Some wanted to purchase clothing, others saved for schooling or for their dowry. As the women gained skill and accumulated money, they began to take an active interest in improving their working conditions as mill owners began to work in concert to control prices, markets, and labor. A clash of interests inevitably led to rising levels of activism. Dublin finds that this activism in scattered instances of women led to early labor actions in the 1830s with strikes designed to shape either their work or living conditions.¹⁰

In the 1820s the United States moved from an agricultural nation producing raw materials for a fickle world market to an industrial nation producing lucrative finished goods for local consumption and foreign markets. The largest demographic group to experience this change directly was made up of young women moving from family farms to small towns where factories offered employment and a wider circle of relationships. The development of textile mills and other factories led directly towards urbanization, supporting Dublin's conclusion that women's response to industry and their social transformation played a larger role in American labor history than originally

⁸ Ibid., 2-3, 35-38.

⁹ Ibid., 82-83, 91, 122-123, 187.

¹⁰ Ibid., 31, 89-92, 95. Dublin used census records, limited mill records, and local publications as sources. To give the women's perspective on their lives and work in the mills, Dublin used personal correspondence later published in *Farm to Factory: Women's Letters, 1830-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

thought.¹¹ Dublin's findings of agency among working women, though confined to antebellum New England mills, is important because the workforce in southern mills would be heavily dependent on women's labor. In the studies discussed next, more recent authors have looked at the community that served the mill, known as the mill village and the lives of mill workers.

The original Rhode Island mills were locally owned and relied on using entire families as a workforce with jobs tailored for the skills and strength of each family member. Workers were paid in company scrip instead of hard cash, making it impossible to leave without sacrifice. The Lowell mills featured ownership outside of the immediate area with cash wages that could be spent in town and housing provided for single workers in a closely supervised living situation.¹² Both types of mills used increasing numbers of women and children as workers while owners piously maintained that it was in the public interest to educate and employ those most in need of ready cash without heavy labor. When textile mills began to spread south after the Civil War, the southern business model combined elements of both of these systems. Southern mills would offer company housing and cash wages to entire families with numerous children that could no longer make a living farming. In the 1880s as cotton prices declined, farmers had a choice between sharecropping and debt or guaranteed wages in a modern industry.¹³ As chronicled by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall in *Like a Family: the Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*, many farming families made the pragmatic choice, bringing the family labor system to the factory and transforming farm women into factory girls while men continued to farm following the pattern of New England

¹¹ Dublin, *Women*, 5-6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 17-18.

¹³ Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 8.

mills.¹⁴ The Texas mills used for this study followed the same pattern as southern mills initially, but unlike the vast industrial workforce that grew up around Lowell or Dalton, Georgia, Texans failed to build the same large settled labor pool.¹⁵

New England textile mills began using raw materials found locally, generally wool. But it is the cotton textile mill that dominated the industrial transformation of the American South in the years after the Civil War. Cotton was the leading cash crop in much of the South with a ready market in New England and English mills before the Civil War. As England expanded its empire to its maximum size after 1860, improved transportation by steamship and rail opened new markets to increased consumption and increased competition. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 meant that the American cotton farmer had to compete for sales to English mills with Indian and Egyptian cotton. Because this cheaper cotton arrived at British docks at the same time as did American cotton, there was a continual depression in prices over time. Overproduction of cotton meant that farmers and planters in the South saw declining prices for their crops while cotton mill owners in the North enjoyed double-digit returns on their investment.¹⁶

As the nation recovered from the Panic of 1873 and the global economy picked up after 1878, the demand for cotton products began to increase.¹⁷ New England mills were at maximum capacity due to the power limitations based on free-flowing streams or low-cost steam power needed to provide energy for the machinery. Therefore the

¹⁴ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 51-52.

¹⁵ Why Texas mills failed to establish a large industrial workforce will be explored in Chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁶ L. Tuffly Ellis, "Revolutionizing the Texas Cotton Trade, 1865-1885," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 73 (April 1970), 480-482.

¹⁷ *Reports of the United States Commissioners to the Paris Universal Exposition 1878* vol. 1 (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1880) 317-347. Also Hearden, *Independence*, 42, 73.

promotion of mill building in the South with its untapped rivers, wealth of raw material, and underemployment made economic sense. Patrick J. Hearden in *Independence and Empire: the New South's Cotton Mill Campaign 1865-1901* found that the building of cotton mills to reestablish the southern economy was designed in part, to attract more industry, offer employment to whites, and diversify the economy.¹⁸ Hearden found limited evidence of both New England mill profits during the depression of the 1870s and southern investors' response resulting in the cotton mill crusade of the 1880s.¹⁹

The promotion of cotton mill building began with the Cotton Exposition of 1880 in Atlanta, although mills existed in the South even before 1870. Edward Atkinson, a Boston textile promoter bent on demonstrating why northern mills needed better cotton, hit on the idea of building an entire mill to exhibit how cotton was used in a mill to produce yarn and fabric. The principal building of the exposition was a cotton mill powered by a Corliss steam engine, which was one of the marvels of the industrial age and a regular draw at expositions since the Centennial in 1876.²⁰ The impact of the Atlanta fair was so great that within eleven days of closing, Georgia businessmen and investors bought the entire site, including buildings and machinery, to establish a mill running 10,000 spindles and a sufficient number of looms.²¹ This began the first and most powerful mill building surge in the South as "mill fever" swept through cities and small towns alike. Lacking an exposure to industrial practices, southern investors

¹⁸ Hearden, *Independence*, 38, 42.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 90-92.

²⁰ Mildred Gwin Andrews, *The Men and the Mills: A History of the Southern Textile Industry* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

followed the lead of northern mill men in designing factories around location and labor.²² Early Piedmont mills were built near to towns that offered fast flowing water for power, rail connections, lumber for construction, and struggling farmers in need of work.

When Broadus Mitchell published in 1921 the first study of southern textile mills, *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, he echoed the views of 2 generations of mill men influenced by English and New England mill practices on the need to employ women and children at reduced wages in order to remain competitive.²³ Mitchell believed that the experience of English mills during the Industrial Revolution was replicated in the American South a century later.²⁴ His work repeated both the boosterism claim of investors and civic promoters as to the benefits of mill building and the pro-management views found in publications like *Textile World*. In this view the workforce was based on a proud, hard working, American-born native white man providing for his family. This representation of a local workforce was employed by the city of Dallas in 1926 in civic publications designed to promote and attract industry, including textile mills. This played against the evolving workforce found in New England mills that was urban and progressively more immigrant based. Mitchell chose to ignore the high numbers of young women who labored in southern mills, and he followed the same argument as many other mill publications of the time that instead insisted children only labored in the mills at the request of their parents. He also opined that the number of women laboring was really very small, facts refuted by women's and children's labor reports predating

²² Bess Beatty, "Lowells of the South: Northern Influences on the Nineteenth-Century North Carolina Textile Industry," *Journal of Southern History* 53 (February, 1987), 39, 55-56. Hearden, *Independence*, 72.

²³ Mitchell, *The Rise of Cotton Mills*, 95. Hall, *Like a Family*, 46-47.

²⁴ Mitchell, *The Rise of Cotton Mills*, vi.

the first report to the United States government by the Children's Bureau in 1914.²⁵ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall found that Mitchell represented part of a trend towards romantic celebration of southern capitalism that believed industry would rescue white society if it practiced the paternalism of the slave owners. By 1927 the scales had fallen from Mitchell's eyes as he began attacking mill owners for child labor abuses and opposing labor unions.²⁶ Patrick Hearden also promotes the view that southern industry evolved in opposition to northern practices, falling victim to a public relations campaign designed to reassure southern whites that industry would not overturn their way of life. The reprinting of *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South* in the late 1960s demonstrated the persistence of Mitchell's management-centered view of southern industrial history, however. A reader will find that Mitchell's study used a limited range of sources, including only scattered Carolina and Georgia mills based on the route of the Southern Railway, mills selected by interviews with men in owner-management positions, and a heavy reliance on the *Baltimore Journal of Commerce and Manufacturers Record* for 1882 to 1884. His model of telling the mills' story from a booster point of view established many business-oriented studies of mill companies that promoted the workers as satisfied and well cared for as noted below.²⁷ Wilber Cash used Mitchell's happy workforce model as a *raison d'être* for his savage attack on southern

²⁵ A. J. McKelway, "Child Wages in the Cotton Mill: Our Modern Feudalism," *Child Labor Bulletin* 2 (May 1913) *Child Labor and Poverty* published by (New York) National Child Labor Committee, 8-9, 11.

Richard K. Conant, "The Textile Industry and Child Labor," *Ibid.*, 91-92.

²⁶ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Broadus Mitchell: Economic Historian of the South," in Glenn Feldman, ed., *Reading Southern History: Essays on Interpreters and Interpretations* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 26-31.

²⁷ Marjorie A. Potwin, "Societal Engineering: A Discussion of Industrial Relations," *Textile World* 73 (May 26, 1928), 104-105. Andrews, *The Men and the Mills*, 13-15. J. Borden Harriman, "The Cotton Mill a Factor in the Development of the South," in *Child Employing Industries Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the National Child Labor Committee* (Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1910), 47-49.

industrialists, whom he saw as nothing more than masters of wage slaves grinding a desperate, illiterate people into poverty.²⁸

Mitchell's book served as a model for southern mill studies until the groundbreaking publication in 1987 of *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*. Writing about the Carolina Piedmont and the textile mills that developed in a geographical area touching four states, the authors sought to counter the works of writers like Mitchell and Cash who saw the mills either as successful with little social cost or as contributors to a crippling industrial poverty marching under the banner of progress. The book separates mill history into two eras, 1880 to 1920, and 1920 to the Great Strike of 1934. The authors used the First World War to divide the regionalism of the first era and the New Deal for the national and cultural trends of the second.²⁹

The authors of *Like a Family* used business histories of a series of mills as a springboard for a different kind of labor history, one based on extensive interviews with employees. By focusing on the workers, their family relationships, and the communities that developed in mill villages, instead of the well-documented business history of the mills, a new chapter in textile history developed, one that looked at how those who lived in mill villages coped with industrial life, segregated communities, and hard times. Based on how the workers, especially women, responded to industrial labor, the researchers discovered that the family metaphor as understood by Mitchell and others to mean paternalism really described the solidarity felt by the workers to each other. This ties the experiences of southern mill families to Dublin's findings of a sisterhood or family feeling among early mill girls. Using extensive oral histories of mill workers, *Like a*

²⁸ Cash, *Mind*, 211-212, 357-358.

²⁹ Hall, *Like a Family*, xix-xxiv.

Family weaves a complex history of families and individuals shaping and being shaped by the industrial revolution represented by textile mills. For *Women at Work*, Dublin relied on company records for 2 New England mills, the correspondence of women who worked at the mills and their families, published reports, statements by businessmen, and government documents. Broadus Mitchell used interviews with the men who built, ran, or invested in southern mills; industry publications; and newspaper coverage of mill building and operations. Jacquelyn Hall and the authors of *Like a Family* combined government reports, published accounts and over 200 oral history interviews to provide a foundation for their work.

Historian Don Carlton also countered Mitchell's argument regarding placid native mill workers uplifted by textile labor when he recounted the history of "propertyless white wage earners" in *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920*. His goal was to relate the industrialization of a single southern state to the larger socioeconomic changes of the modern South as posed by C. Vann Woodward in the 1950s.³⁰ Carlton argued that men in the New South would find their future in the factory, not on the farm as their fathers had done. The rise of the textile industry in the South would engender the transformation of southern urban society into 2 new social classes, "mill people" and "town people."³¹

Carlton defined town people as the social group often spoken of as the bourgeoisie in other settings. Professional and business people in the South after the Civil War began to identify civic growth with personal or private profit and increasingly

³⁰ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 110, 112-113, 143-144, 222-223.

³¹ Don Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 5-8.

regarded the town as a form of corporate property. Jacquelyn Hall noted this comingling of civic and corporate interests in her analysis of Mitchell's romantic view of mill development.³² The original southern agricultural society was based on large landed owners and small farmers served by small towns and a few large cities. Carlton replaces that view with hierarchical divisions of class and labor based on the arrival of factories. As the new business elite promoted their own corporate image, mill fever swept the South. Each town needed physical evidence in the form of smokestacks and shift whistles to claim success in the competition to modernize.³³ This mirrors the boosterism found in Mitchell, Andrews, and others as the underlying impulse to bring cotton mills south. It flies in the face however, of traditional southern histories published in the same era as Mitchell that praise the South as different from the rest of America, especially the industrial North and Midwest. C. Vann Woodward was addressing these traditionalists when he wrote *Origins of the New South*, pointing out the close ties between textile men in the North and the Piedmont.³⁴ Recent scholarship, such as Buenger's and Flammig's, suggest that the South began to industrialize on a larger scale well before 1900 and Texas had a role in this early level of development.

Reinforcing Carlton's argument that southern men found their future in the mills and the new towns that served the mills is George C. Waldrep's *Southern Workers and the Search for Community: Spartanburg County, South Carolina*, published in 2000. Focusing on mill towns and labor activism in a single county in South Carolina, this study demonstrates that the families that made the choice not just to move from rural self-sufficiency to industrial urbanism but to embrace unions and the same community

³² Hall, "Broadus Mitchell", 29.

³³ Ibid., 8-9.

³⁴ Woodward, *Origins*, 132, 306.

pride that local mill owners evinced played a large part in the development of mill towns. Waldrep finds that among mill people there were those who moved on and those who stayed and fought for their community. He finds that being part of a community based around the mill village, defined as a spatially distinct and residentially segregated entity in the shadow of any mill, offered a collective family tradition that endured through good times and bad.³⁵

Limiting his study to the years before the Second World War, Waldrep portrays residents of mill villages as dependent on the textile company for civic services, including police, schools, churches, and entertainment. This situation arose because southern townspeople “ritually segregated residents of the mill villages from the larger community.”³⁶ On the surface this plays into the view of southern industries as industrial plantations with workers serving as little more than wage slaves to paternalistic mill owners as expressed by W. J. Cash.³⁷ Waldrep, however, is looking deeper than glib phrases and finds, like Dublin, a strong vein of worker autonomy and self-interest expressed in the mill community. Waldrep, also like Dublin, finds the strongest support for worker autonomy in labor actions and their impact on the mill in the future.

Daniel Letwin in “Labor Relations in the Industrializing South,” agrees with Carlton, Hall, and Waldrep, finding that most southerners shared the goals of dignity, material comfort, civic esteem within a community, and a stable future. Mill workers like tenant farmers joined labor unions to buttress these goals and were met with savage counter attacks by management tied to a social hierarchy that drew strength from

³⁵ George C. Waldrep, *Southern Workers and the Search for Community: Spartanburg County, South Carolina* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 2000), 15, 20, 130-131.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁷ Cash. *Mind*, 205-06.

racism.³⁸ Letwin bridges the gap between Douglas Flamming's older study of a single mill with a town and business perspective to Waldrep's bottom-up view of the business and town viewed by the mill employees.³⁹

Of the works mentioned above, the majority examined mill history through sharply defined time periods ending before 1940. These writers have used as the subject for study multiple mills within a geographic region. Douglas Flamming in *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884-1984* chose to study a single location with multiple mills over a longer span of time. In essence a local history of town, business, and mill village, Flamming's book undermines the standard views of mill workers held by Mitchell, Cash, and Tindall. He concludes that organizing and unions were more frequent than has been generally understood, which supports the findings of Dowd, Waldrep, and Carlton, yet the workers suffered a longer period of delay in maintaining a union due to the undermining power of state government and corporate interference.⁴⁰ He accomplishes this by bringing in the impact of state and city government on mill workers using a mix of oral history, company records, newspapers, and scholarly studies.

Flamming's argument, that workers were restrained by legislative action supports what will occur in Texas after the Second World War. This is in opposition to writers who theorize that mill workers were too independent to work collectively over a long period. The impact of state government and city ordinances on organizing industrial workers will have a role in this study of Texas mills. The city of Dallas maintained an

³⁸ Daniel Letwin, "Labor Relations in the Industrializing South," in *A Companion to the American South*, John Boles, ed. (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002), 424-427.

³⁹ Douglas Flamming, *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884-1984* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 91, 225, 254, 286.

⁴⁰ Flamming, *Creating*, xxv.

open shop office in the Chamber of Commerce building and promoted in national advertising a native-born white workforce, yet the mills in this study organized and maintained their union even after the state moved to support right-to-work laws after 1945. In Texas, labor actions have a more limited impact due to action taken by the legislature and city codes to restrain unions. In this thesis the struggle for unions at the company mills will be limited to the sharp split between women who supported the union on behalf of their own interests and male workers who took pride in the union but as elite workers often worked to reduce labor actions that might decrease their privileges.

Why have Texas mills been overlooked in the last 30 years of southern historical research? Numerically, the southeastern states of Georgia, Alabama, and the Carolinas had the greatest number and variety of mills. By the 1920s, Texas had over 24 cotton mills in operation, producing items ranging from bed sheets to jute twine, and including medical gauze, tire cord, shirting material, and awning fabric that made summers bearable before air-conditioning. By 1925 Texas was the largest producer of cotton in the United States, whereas the South as a whole dominated industrial textile production. Texas mills, however, were mentioned infrequently in the publications of the time, though Texas once dominated the Southwest in government reporting for textiles.⁴¹ In the 1950s, after 70 years of mill building, Texas reached its maximum number of mills in operation with 67. In comparison, Georgia had 73 cotton mills in operation by 1900,

⁴¹ *Wage Structure Cotton Textiles 1946*, Series 2 # 37 (Washington D. C.: Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1946), 8. The Southeast was composed of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. The Southwest was composed of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas. Faye Dehn Bible, "A Study of the Texas Cotton Mills and Their Products" (M. A. Thesis, Texas Woman's University, Denton, 1933), 2. Mary L. Sullivan & Bertha Blair, *Women in Texas Industries: Hours, Wages, Working Conditions and Home Work* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1936), 2-3. Chamber of Commerce, *Industrial Survey of Dallas* (Dallas: Industrial Dallas, Inc., 1927), 11. Mark E. Wood, *Cotton Textile Industry Survey for West Texas* (Lubbock: Bulletin of the Texas Technological College Research Committee, September 15, 1948), 7, 21.

barely 20 years after the start of the South's mill building campaign.⁴² Lacking a strong presence in Texas, the lagging analysis of Texas mills is easily understood.

This case study focuses on 3 mills in Texas that operated both independently and as a corporation for a total of 60 years. One mill in McKinney dominated the economy of a small town much as mills discussed in the works of Flamming, Carlton, and Dowd in the Piedmont region. A second mill in Waco served a diversified economy in the center of the state; and the third mill, built in Dallas was concentrated in a major city in a highly competitive job market. All 3 of these mills will illuminate the single greatest difference between Texas mills and mills elsewhere, the composition of the labor force. Women did not dominate the mill labor force in Texas nor did children, except in limited cases, make up a large portion of the workers. Rather, in Texas men took most of the jobs at every level. Today mill studies of southern mills have found only scattered textile factories with a preponderance of male employees, but in Texas this was the norm.⁴³

The textile mill model, which included owner control over the workforce through the establishment of mill villages, did not function in Texas as it did in the Southeast. Mill owners provided housing and promoted expressions of company pride through ball teams and bands, but they did not provide schools or control churches. As will be shown, segregated mill communities with few ties to nearby towns failed to develop fully in Texas, and unions found few followers. It will be shown in this study that not all mill towns were so clearly segregated, yet mill workers did exercise a level of control over their environment within the mill village that matches Waldrep's findings. The mill

⁴² Mary J. Oates, *The Role of the Cotton Textile Industry in the Economic Development of the American Southeast, 1900-1940* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 14.

⁴³ Flamming, *Creating*, 98, 100. Waldrep, *Southern Workers*, 18, 22.

village did not house the greater part of the workforce, making Texas mills resemble northern mills where housing was part of the urban landscape. A workforce drawn from elsewhere, instead of from local farms unable to prosper, offers a particular Texas twist to the history. As shown in chapter 3, mill workers from other southern states provided the bulk of the workforce.

Unions were active in Texas through the 1910s when a harsh backlash began. Businessmen began promoting the “open shop” idea with Dallas as a statewide leader in this effort. Thanks to the growth in Texas population, the pace of industrialization and the compressed timeline for developing Texas mills, the labor problems that racked southeastern mills, did not occur in Texas. Of the 3 mills in this study, none was successfully unionized until 1943 thanks in part to ownership closely tied to dominant Dallas business and political organizations. The role of Clarence R. Miller as a successful mill owner, business spokesman, and failed politician will be explored throughout the history of the mill.

Texas mills were financed, built, and promoted by local businessmen of diversified interests, mirroring the studies of Doyle, Woodward, and Buenger. In the promotion of mills these men looked to the Southeast for guidance, yet changes in the market and world events meant this pattern drained Texas mills of vitality. This notion will be explored through the various materials produced by the three mills and market needs in each chapter. Few mill studies have looked closely at the materials produced by the mill and the market that rendered each mill a success or failure.

In a textile mill, once the fabric comes off the loom, it is sent to the cloth room for final inspection. Unfolded, the cloth is examined for flaws and irregularities that might

reject it from being sold. While not completely discarding these views of the industrial South as presented, this thesis argues that Texas mills do not fit the portrait of the South as understood by current southern scholarship. Historians seeking to revise the history of textile mills in the South have been inspecting the same cloth since 1987. By changing the location to Texas and by using state data, contemporary publications, mill papers, oral histories of mill workers, and publications concerning mill villages in three Texas cities of varying populations, the findings will be quite different from other mills in the South. The inspection of this cloth begins in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

EARLY TEXAS TEXTILE MILLS, 1854-1903

Before weaving cloth, cotton bolls must be combed or carded so they are clean. Then the cotton fibers must be twisted so that yarn can be spun. The yarn can then be used, based on its weight, to support the finer threads that reveal the full range of the design in the cloth. Not unlike weaving cloth, the history of McKinney's textile mill brings together the raw materials of mill building, money, cotton, transportation, energy, and labor. In this chapter financing in the form of banking laws and local investors will be introduced. Transportation in the form of railroads will be discussed, as will the differences in Texas labor laws and labor in southeastern mill states. Interlacing these threads will be the history of mill building in Texas from 1854 through the first attempt to bring a cotton mill to McKinney in 1903.

The first textile mill in Texas was the Comal Cotton and Woolen Mills, built in 1854 in New Braunfels. A small family-owned mill that used the Rhode Island system for labor, it produced yarn for local use. After the Civil War, the Comal Mill boasted 900 spindles and twenty-one looms, using equipment from Pennsylvania. The first full ten-hour shift was in 1865 with forty workers, mostly girls and children. From October 1865 to October 1867, the mill produced 160,000 yards of grey goods, 35,000 yards of osnaburg, and 35,000 yards of common yarn. The mill management bought raw cotton for 10 cents a pound for clean fiber and 4 cents for spotted while it sold thirty-inch osnaburg for 18 cents a yard, quality yarn for 45 cents a pound, and knitting yarn for 80 cents a pound.¹ Economically the mill made money. A second Texas mill, the New

¹ Texas Legislature: Natural Fibers and Textile Development Committee, *Texas Natural Fibers: Progress Through Unity* (Austin: Joint Legislative Committee, 61st Regular Session, 1970), 30. Note: "Grey goods"

Braunfels Manufacturing Company, began in 1859 and ran successfully until 1880.

Both were primarily woolen mills but some cotton may have been spun. Both mills used waterpower to run the spindles and machinery; both mills supplied local needs and ran only part time due to shortages of raw material outside of seasonal harvests. Additional mills were located in Bastrop and Bexar counties between 1850 and 1870.²

After a Confederate reunion in Dallas in 1925 the *Dallas Morning News* featured the tale of another mill. This mill was built under the authority of the Confederacy in 1863 near present-day Hearne to provide blankets for soldiers. The Texas government and cotton growers formed a joint stock company and built the mill by pledging bales in lots of 50 to raise money. Because of the Union blockade of Texas ports, the British-built mill machinery was hauled by ox-cart from Matamoros to Hearne over a period of 6 months. Local slaveholders lent 1 slave in 10 to work both the rock quarry and on-site brick kiln needed to produce building materials. Once the mill was complete First Lieutenant Charles P. Salten of the quartermaster corps was put in charge. This nameless mill had a short life that ended with the war. Also serving the needs of the Confederacy by producing cloth until 1865 was Barron's Mill at the Waco Manufacturing

refers to unfinished cloth or yarn lacking color, bleaching, sizing or any type of finish. Many southern mills produced grey goods and sent the cloth or yarn to a finishing mill to be completed. See John Hoye, *Staple Cotton Fabrics: Names, Descriptions, Finishes, and Uses of Unbleached, Converted, and Mill Finished Fabrics* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1942) 1-2. Hoye defines osnaburg as plain woven, coarse-yarn, medium and heavy weight cloths of low construction made of waste cotton mixed with low-grade cotton known as PW (part waste). Using all short staple white cotton (as grown in Collin County) produces low-grade stock known as clean osnaburgs (33). In the grey state this is used for bags, plain or with colored stripes. In a world before cardboard or plastic packaging, cotton bags were very important to commerce.

² Wilmon H. Droze, "Rise of the Cotton Mill Industry in Texas, 1850-1933," *Cotton History Review* 2 (April 1961), 71. H. Allen Anderson, "Textile Industry," *The New Handbook of Texas*, ed. Ron Tyler (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996), 6:453.

Company. This mill was later confiscated by the federal government as a Confederate enterprise and shut down.³

In 1868 the largest textile mill in Texas was the Houston City Mills Manufacturing Company in Houston with 2,288 spindles. A second smaller mill also operated in Houston, and mills had opened in Gonzales, Tyler, Hempstead, and Waco for a total of eight operating in the state. Mills turned out both yarn for the home market and finished cloth and were operated on the Lowell system of using women and children as the principal labor source.⁴ By the end of the nineteenth century the minimum size of a successful southern mill would be 5,000 spindles. Due to the Panic of 1873, none of these small Texas mills would still be in operation when “mill fever” swept the South after 1880.⁵

This was the pattern of early mill building in Texas through the 1880s. Local businessmen would put up the money for a small mill using local materials with the expectation of expanding and shipping to wider markets only to be run out of business when those same expanding markets brought cheaper products to town on the rapidly expanding railroads. Historian William Droze named the building of Texas mills from the

³ *Dallas Morning News*, August 23, 1925, section 7 p. 3. J. B. Bagley, “Cotton Mill Operation and Opportunity in East Texas,” *East Texas: Official Publication of the East Texas Chamber of Commerce* v.2 #8 (June 1928), 11. Note: Mr. Bagley maintained that the first cotton mill in Texas was at Huntsville, an argument not supported by others. The prison at Huntsville did have a cotton mill that produced products used by the prison and at times sold on the market. Because this prison mill was rarely included in state or national data, it is not part of this study. Roger N. Conger, “Waco, Texas,” Ron Tyler, ed. *The New Handbook of Texas*, 6:777.

⁴ William F. Harris, “Textile Industry,” Ron Tyler, ed., *The New Handbook of Texas*, 6:453. Clara H. Lewis and John R. Stockdale “Manufacturing Industries,” Ron Tyler, ed. *The New Handbook of Texas*, 4:496. Note the cotton textile industry measures size by spindle count, the more spindles the larger or more productive the mill is no matter what is produced yarn, cloth, thread, twine, or the raw material used.

⁵ Alice Galenson, *The Migration of the Cotton Textile Industry from New England to the South: 1880-1930* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985), 14-15. Beth English, “Capital Mobility and the 1890s U. S. Textile Industry,” In *Global Perspectives on Industrial Transformation in the American South*, Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie, eds. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 175.

Civil War to 1880 as the “first phase,” marked by undercapitalization and failure.⁶ After 1880, Texans began to edge closer to the goal of a New South based on economic growth brought by railroads, industrialization, and ultimately urbanization. Because railroads and banking were integral to the textile industry, a short summary of Texas railroads and capital prior to 1895 follows.

Even as king cotton reigned in East Texas and the cattle empire of hide and horn pushed north from the high plains after 1870, a vast network of railroads spread from the southeastern part of the state to the North and West. Between 1870 and 1890, 8,000 miles of track was laid by 672 chartered railroad companies in Texas.⁷ Railroads made shipping cotton from North Texas to the inland cities of Chicago, St. Louis, and Kansas City viable. In 1872 St. Louis received 36,421 bales of cotton. After the Missouri-Kansas-Texas railroad, popularly known as the Katy, reached Denison, Texas, and the St. Louis, Iron Mountain, and Southern Railroad reached Texarkana, the number of bales shipped to Saint Louis rose to 244,598 by 1876.⁸ By 1890, almost every town larger than 4,000 had at least two railroads, serving the needs of businesses locating in towns and spurring population increases. The growth of railroads fostered the growth of the East Texas lumber industry that supplied not only the ties needed for new tracks but also the surge in building that sprang up to serve new farmers and businessmen attracted by the spreading rail network. In McKinney in 1892, four lumber

⁶ Droze, “Rise,” 71.

⁷ Charles Zlatkovich, *Texas Railroads: A Record of Construction and Abandonment* (Austin: Bureau of Business Research, 1981), 4-7.

⁸ Richard G. Boehm, *Exporting Cotton in Texas: Relationships of Ports and Inland Supply Points*. (Austin: Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas, 1975) 14. The Iron Mountain railroad began in St. Louis and traveled south through Arkansas to join the Texas and Pacific RR in Texarkana. The Katy began at Fort Riley, Kansas and traveled south to Denison in 1872.

yards and three railroads served a town of barely 2,500. Ten years later the number of lumber yards had dropped to two as the boom swept westward.

As railroads arrived, town populations soared, provided the railroad passed through town. Those towns unlucky enough to miss being near a rail line either moved or withered away. After 1890 cities began to build power plants, telephone exchanges, and streetcar lines to serve businesses and workers. These improvements in turn attracted new residents, new enterprises, and created new employment patterns for women.⁹ The railroads linked Texas to the rest of the nation and to the world. The four leading products of Texas in 1900 were, first cotton, followed by cattle, corn, and lumber. Corn was a local commodity whereas the railroads turned cotton and lumber into national and international commodities integrating Texas into the industrial world. All of these commodities, however, meant that Texas between 1870 and 1900 had become a colonial economy based on exporting raw materials outside of the state for finishing. Textile mills, as an early sign of industry and the shift to a manufacturing economy, were supported in Texas as eagerly as they were across the South.¹⁰

Mill fever did not sweep into Texas until the late 1880s slowed by state laws that restricted the growth of banks. Cities and businessmen could not get the capital they needed in order to grow because large banks in the Northeast had little faith in Texans' ability to grow and produce or to pay off debt. State law banned state chartered banks in 1845, 1861, and 1876. A bank could be only be chartered based on the population of

⁹ Diana Davids and Roger M. Olien, *Oil in Texas: The Gusher Age, 1895-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 10. *McKinney City Minute Books*, August 1892 n.p.; *Daily Gazette's Directory of McKinney*, 1902 (n. p. n. d), 9-16. Randolph B. Campbell. *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State*, (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2003), 306-309. Note: Women could work on telephone switchboards or ride streetcars to shops and factories located miles from their homes.

¹⁰ Edwin Caldwell, "Highlights of the Development of Manufacturing in Texas, 1900-1960," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 68 (April, 1968), 405.

the community in which it was located and provided a set minimum of capital was available. The first chartered bank in Texas was established in Houston in 1866 with capital of \$100,000. By 1880 there were 14 national banks but 85 private banks. Because national banks had a higher level of capital and could print money, the national banks grew faster than the smaller, local private banks. By 1893 there were 222 national banks but only 133 private banks in the state. McKinney banker Jesse Shain served as both a private banker and as president of the Collin County National Bank, a state bank.¹¹ In 1905 Texas finally established a state banking system with lower capitalization levels. The Panic of 1907 wounded the remaining private banks so deeply that most either closed their doors or converted to state banks.¹²

Once mill fever spread to Texas, investors and bankers resumed building mills. William Droze named this the “second phase” of Texas mill building, from 1880 to 1907. The mills built during this period were larger and more successful, despite the economic turmoil of the times. The first mill built in Texas as a result of mill fever was the Dallas Cotton Mills Company, which began operating in 1888. Originally a woolen mill like many early mills in Texas, this mill switched to cotton in 1890. Additional cotton mills opened in Galveston and Corsicana in 1890, and the Sherman Manufacturing Company

¹¹ *Daily Gazette's Directory* 1902, p. 1.

¹² Walter L. Buenger and Joseph A. Pratt, *But Also Good Business: Texas Commerce Banks and the Financing of Houston and Texas, 1886-1986* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1986), 16-17. Also Buenger, *Path to a Modern South*, 106-107. Note: Between 1865 and 1908 there were three types of banks in the United States. National banks alone could issue government currency and receive federal deposits, state banks chartered by state legislatures, and private banks that ranged in holdings from J. P. Morgan to local saloons. The Texas Constitution prohibited state chartered banks except during Reconstruction when ten were created. Each decade brought a few more national banks as the need for capital increased. In 1904 the state constitution was amended to allow state banks. Lawrence L. Crum, “Banks and Banking,” Ron Tyler, ed. *The New Handbook of Texas*, 1:371. Also Robert F. Bruner and Sean D. Carr, *The Panic of 1907: Lessons Learned from the Market's Perfect Storm* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007), 57.

began operating in 1891.¹³ Each of these mills was profitable, and the future must have appeared bright to local businessmen when two events, one national, the other at the state level changed the fortunes of Texas industry. The Panic of 1893 and the opening of the Corsicana oilfield in 1894 altered the direction of investments and industry in Texas.

The Panic of 1893 began in 1890 with the slow drying up of British investment in American businesses and the failure of banks on both sides of the Atlantic, but strong exports of agricultural commodities, including cotton, kept the markets up. By 1889 Texas was the leading producer of cotton in the United States, and Dallas was taking the first steps towards becoming the largest inland cotton market in the nation. Farmers and businessmen increased their debt to respond to falling prices brought on by overproduction, leaving both groups vulnerable to falling markets. Over expansion of industries nationally, including railroads and textile mills, meant that investors saw declining returns leading to increased selling of company stock. By the winter of 1892 all the elements of a panic were in place; declining prices due to over production, tightening credit, and over investment in very competitive businesses like railroads and mills. Investors began dumping stocks, causing company failures, and banks began cutting back on loans and selling gold to shore up their own holdings. In April 1893, the federal gold reserve fell below the level used to support the currency. Fear that the United States would go off the gold standard led to falling investor confidence, resulting in a stock market crash in May 1893. By the end of 1893, an estimated 16,000 businesses and more than 500 banks had been forced to close nationwide. By 1897 an estimated 20 percent of the American workforce was out of work and one-fourth of the

¹³ Faye Bible, "A Study of the Texas Cotton Mills and Their Products," 2-3, 6. Droze, *Rise*. 72.

railroads were in bankruptcy.¹⁴ This drying up of credit had a ripple effect on the building of textile mills in Texas, leading to a gap in the building and operating of mills between the first onset of mill fever in 1886 and its resumption in 1899-1903 with the opening of mills in Denison, Bonham, Weatherford, and Itasca. At this point industrial history in Texas diverges from the rest of the South. Across the South after 1890, new mills were built and old mills expanded as money from New England mills poured south in search of cheap, non-union labor. This money flow would be diverted from building mills in Texas by a small oil field discovered as the result of a textile mill.¹⁵

In 1894 businessmen in Corsicana realized that the declining profits on growing cotton coupled with rising tenancy rates of farmers pushed out of ownership by debt would not sustain growth above the level already achieved. Since successful businesses, like the new cotton mill, offered year-round employment, and the promise of developing an industrial manufacturing base less dependent on agriculture needed water, a group of businessmen formed a water development company. As the drilling progressed around town each well hit oil around 1,000 feet before locating water. Disgusted, the water company moved outside of town, while a few local men sent the oil off for quality testing, chartering an oil company just in case. When the tests indicated high quality oil, these inexperienced men began developing wells that by 1895 produced a whopping 2.5 total barrels of oil from five wells. The Texas oilmen brought in outside investors, including units of Standard Oil, to provide the investment and expertise that

¹⁴ Mark Carlson, "Causes of Bank Suspensions in the Panic of 1893," Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (2002), under series Finance and Economics Discussion Series no. 2002-11, <http://www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/feds/2002/200211/200211pap.pdf> (accessed May 30, 2008).

Robert A. Calvert, "Nineteenth-Century Farmers, Cotton, and Prosperity," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 73, (April 1970), 509. Char Miller and David R. Johnson, "The Rise of Urban Texas," In *Urban Texas: Politics and Development*, eds. Char Miller and Hayword T. Sanders (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1990), 19.

¹⁵ Galenson, *Migration*, 10-11. English, "Capital Mobility," 175.

local men did not have. This led to a boom that saw Texas' first oil field producing 829,559 barrels of oil from a five-mile-long field on the east side of town. Even as this field peaked in 1900, drilling was underway outside Houston at Spindletop where the wells would gush oil in 1901. This experience demonstrated to investors that in Texas industry could be profitable, and it persuaded state government towards a more favorable view of business, provided it was local, not "foreign" or out of state.¹⁶ National firms and larger banks began to look favorably at Texas for development, and local businessmen began to dream of new industry, including textile mills to bring wealth and development to small Texas towns. Henceforth there would be intense pressure to build mills in Texas until 1930. Since mills drew on local populations for capitalization and labor, it is essential to understand the role of local city leaders in the building of textile mills. To discuss the growth of cities and towns across the South and the relationship between growth and capital, consideration of recent scholarship on urbanization in the New South must be considered.

For his study of growth in *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910*, Don Doyle defined an urban area as having a population of over 2,500. He found that prior to 1860 the population of the South did not need large cities except as river or seaports. "Plantation agriculture...required only minimal urban development," and the few cities had stronger links to cities outside the South than to each other.¹⁷ Doyle illustrated that as farmers shifted from subsistence farming to a cash crop system based on cotton, rural poverty rose, encouraging farmer migration to towns and cities. The mill studies examined in the introduction, especially

¹⁶ Campbell, *Gone to Texas*, 326. Olien, *Oil in Texas*, 4-6.

¹⁷ Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 2-3, 8, 13, 17, 19.

those by Hall et al. and Flammig, detail how impoverished farmers who worked in the mills, even part-time, could generate the hard cash they needed. As farm families came to work in the mills and other industries, towns grew and the South began to reach urban population levels found in the North before the Civil War.¹⁸

It is Doyle's argument that city building was a "major capitalist enterprise of the nineteenth-century" guided by leading businessmen who used every possible resource including local and state governments to achieve civic success. Businessmen used the tools of urban growth: city planning, railroads, water systems, roads, newspapers, and power systems to boost their city. In the process, they became the new elite, creating a class that replaced the large landowners as the source of leadership in civic and government affairs. The men who built the mills were either themselves leading businessmen or closely allied with entrepreneurs across the South.¹⁹ In Texas the urban, business elite emerged from banking, railroads, and mercantile interests. The small town of McKinney followed Doyle's pattern in the development of a new urban elite.

McKinney, Texas, was established in 1848 as the seat of Collin County when the state legislature required that county seats be located in the center of a county. The town began its existence in 1849 when a local farmer donated 120 acres to establish the town, and residents dragged the few buildings of the former county seat of Buckner 8 miles east to the new location. This put McKinney equidistant from the tiny settlements of Dallas, Denton, Sherman, and Greenville. By 1859 the city incorporated, only to be the site of local disagreements ending in gunfire and a lynching during the

¹⁸ Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 31-33. Flammig, *Creating*, 100-104.

¹⁹ Hall, et al., *Like a Family*, 26-30. Also Carlton, *Mill and Town*, 46-55; and Buenger, *Path*, 39-40.

Civil War.²⁰ As with many Texas towns, the arrival of the first railroad transformed McKinney from a center solely for agricultural products to a rapidly expanding commercial nexus. In 1872 the Houston & Texas Central Railroad, known as the H & T C, linked McKinney to Dallas and to the growing city of Houston with connections to the major port of Galveston. In 1882 the narrow gauge East Line & Red River railroad connected McKinney to Greenville, Jefferson, and to the timber of East Texas and Louisiana. The powerful Missouri, Kansas & Texas (Katy) also pulled into town in early 1881, linking McKinney to St. Louis and the markets of the Midwest.²¹ McKinney was now linked by rail to the cotton markets in Dallas, Galveston, and St. Louis, as well as to the lumber, coal, and gas industries of East Texas.

The rhythm of the rails, moving goods and people, introduced a powerful new energy into the small town. Trade and money began the transformation of the town. By 1874 McKinney was able to build a two-story brick and stone courthouse with twin three-story towers in the fashionable French Empire style. By 1885, three flour or corn mills and three cotton gins clustered around the tracks and along the freight platforms. In addition, the H & T C built a switchyard and oil works for servicing engines. Three lumberyards supplied the raw material used for the fine homes and stores that began to surround the square. In 1892, the cotton business count rose to five gins and a steam compress. John S. Heard developed the McKinney Cotton Oil mill to convert the discarded cotton seeds into oil for cooking and industry.²² Industrial diversity continued with the addition of a planing mill to process lumber for building material and an

²⁰ David Minor, "McKinney, Texas," Ron Tyler, ed. *The New Handbook of Texas*, 4:421. Vargo, *McKinney, the First 150 Years*, 43-44.

²¹ Zlatkovich, *Texas Railroads*, 18-19, 21, 67, 74, 78, 86. Also Buenger, *Path*, 40-42. The East Line would be widened to standard gauge in 1884.

²² Vargo, *First 150 Years*, 67.

electric light company that quickly closed due to expenses outrunning paying customers. By 1898, city leaders claimed the population reached 7,500 residents, and the town boasted a bottling plant, coal company, and an ice factory, along with three newspapers, numerous stores, hotels, and thirteen saloons.²³ Officially between 1890 and 1900 the city's population nearly doubled from 2,489 to 4,342. By 1902, the city had 2 flour mills, 5 cotton gins (producing both round and square bales for shipping), 2 ice factories, 2 daily and 4 weekly newspapers, and 3 banks. It also developed 2 schools of higher learning, the McKinney Business College founded in 1899, and Hawthorne College, which was co-educational. Serving with Shain on the Collin County National Bank board of directors were George Wilcox of Wilcox Lumber, publisher Thomas B. Wilson, as well as merchant John S. Heard, and banker William B. Newsome.²⁴

By 1902 McKinney leaders, businessmen and women could look with pride at their thriving little town. The United States postmaster had agreed to build a post office and allow delivery directly to homes once the city finished numbering all structures. Concern about McKinney's continued growth was a problem for the city's leadership. They worried as resources stretched thin between rapidly expanding Dallas to the south and rail towns of Denison and Sherman to the north. Frank Johnson caught this tension when he described Collin County in 1914 as a "tributary to the great commercial city of Dallas."²⁵ The first mention of a cotton mill occurred during this period as mills were built in surrounding communities. The population of McKinney had reached 8,500, according

²³ *McKinney Texas [Map]* by Sanborn Fire Insurance Company (Dec. 1892). Sheet 4 available at <<http://sanborn.umi.com/tx/8635/dateid-000007.htm>> (accessed March 2006). Also *McKinney Texas [Map]* by Sanborn Fire Insurance Company (Dec. 1897). Sheet 1,6,7,8 available at <http://sanborn.umi.com/tx/8635/dateid-000002.htm> (accessed March 2006). *McKinney City Minute Books*, August 1892-June 1906, n.p.; *Daily Gazette's Directory of McKinney*, 1902, 2, 9-16.

²⁴ *Daily Gazette's Directory* 1902, p. 2. Frank W. Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans* vol. 2, Eugene C. Barker, ed. (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1914), 862.

²⁵ Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans*, 862-863.

to city boosters, while the 1900 census suggested 4,342 was a more realistic figure.²⁶ A 1902 business directory lists five gins, the cotton oil mill, cotton factors (buyers), and a steam compress as businesses directly involved with processing cotton in McKinney. The arrival of the telegraph meant that local cotton buyers could stay in touch with the market, creating the possibility of making the sale of cotton even more lucrative. At this stage of its development, McKinney resembled the larger towns and cities examined by Doyle. The town leaders were self-made men who either came to Texas as young children just before the Civil War, or they came on their own after the war in search of opportunity. Short profiles of a few of these leaders will serve to illustrate their similarity to Doyle's "New Men". Bankers Jesse Shain and William Newsome, farmer Elbert Kirkpatrick, businessmen J. Perry Burrus, and the Heard brothers, along with investor William Boyd, all played a role in building and promoting McKinney and developing the textile mill.

Banker and railroad president Jesse Shain was one such business elite. Born October 8, 1849, near Brandenburg, Kentucky, this son of a blacksmith arrived with his family in McKinney in 1851. His father gave up smithing and tried farming for a few years before returning to McKinney as a deputy sheriff only to be killed in 1860 while arresting a thief. Shain worked as a grocer before joining a bank in the 1880s. By 1902 he was the director and president of the Collin County National Bank, owned a block of stores on the square, ran a dry goods store, and served as city alderman in 1891 and again from 1893 to 1898.

²⁶ *Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide* (Dallas: A. H. Belo Publishing, 1926), 56. According to city publications McKinney was always twice the size the government claimed.



Figure 2.1. Shain block of red brick built after a fire in 1887 was the location of Duke & Ayres Dry Goods and the city library after 1900. Smith drug store was located in the same location for over 100 years. The bank served as the home of Collin County National Bank after 1938. Photo by the author.

In 1902 he was serving as a city alderman from the second ward. He also served on the boards of the Collin County Mill and Elevator, McKinney Compress, and the cotton oil mill. He founded Shain Packing Company with J. Perry Burrus. The weekly jabs by newspapers, announcing that Denton or other nearby towns were “moving on a mill” or that nearby Gainesville was talking to the Rock Island Railroad, signaled to Shain that he should be devoting more time to broadening McKinney’s business base. On June 12, 1902, the *McKinney Democrat* announced the creation of the McKinney Board of Trade with Shain as President. This organization would evolve into the Commercial Club in 1907 and finally the Chamber of Commerce in 1913. Its purpose was to promote McKinney as a place to do business. Over the course of the year, Shain ventured north to Chicago with Elbert W. Kirkpatrick, founder of McKinney’s first flour and corn mill, to counter businessmen from Dallas and Sherman all trying to attract the Rock Island Railroad to their cities. He traveled east with other businessmen to St.

Louis as a representative of the Texas committee for the 1904 World's Fair. As the president of one of three McKinney banks, he would have been involved in pledging \$10,000 dollars in a successful bid to attract Texas Presbyterian University to McKinney, though he was a member of the First Christian Church. Making headlines on October 16th was the formation of a committee with Shain as president of a proposed electric railroad from McKinney to Blue Ridge, Texas, to eventually connect to Bonham and points northeast. Freight shipments that passed through McKinney were described as totaling 1,365,000 pounds, offering an attractive and growing market to draw more railroads and businesses. Framing the Blue Ridge railway news was a series of articles detailing the efforts of the McKinney Board of Trade to buy cotton bales in order to attract more farmers to McKinney instead of to nearby local gins. News from Greenville detailed the need for a cotton mill to increase business and provide employment to Hunt County. Bonham was building a mill, while Sherman, Denison, and Dallas already had mills up and running. Clearly, McKinney needed to look into building a mill.²⁷

To bring a mill to McKinney, someone anonymously donated two five-acre lots adjacent to the railroads for building the factory. On October 30, 1902, Dr. J. C. Edwin, John S. Heard, and J. Perry Burrus, all prominent businessmen, reported on mills in the South in a meeting with town leaders. By the end of the meeting Shain, Burrus, and Heard each pledged \$5,000 dollars in a stake to develop a mill for \$150,000. Reports from mills in Georgia and the Carolinas suggested that 150 loom mills with 24 tenant houses and all machinery could be brought in at \$131,000. Attendees voted to fund the

²⁷ *McKinney Democrat*, October 2, 1902, p.1; October 9, 1902; October 16, 1902. Vargo, *First 150 Years*, 131.

mill at \$150,000 in stock and began to solicit around town and across the county for investors. In addition to the three largest pledges noted above, Elbert Kirkpatrick joined the committee, adding \$1,000. Others pledged amounts ranging from \$625 to \$100 with the total reaching \$20,000 after only a single meeting.²⁸ One week later, a series of news articles in the *Democrat* began making the point locally that Texas needed to stop shipping so much cotton and jobs out of the state and develop textile mills at home. The proposed mill was to offer employment year round to 100 workers and consume 2,600 bales of cotton. The plan was to introduce to local farmers, laborers, and businesses, a factory that was based on local products for the improvement of the city. This sales tactic repeated what had been used across the South to promote mill building. While the following businessmen resembled Doyle's model of the emerging business elite of the New South, they shared a Texas twist also present in the general labor force: they were immigrants from other southern states. As demonstrated by photographs of their homes and businesses, these men expressly built for the times and the positions they occupied and not from notions of a romantic antebellum South.²⁹

The Heard family came to Texas in 1862 from Van Buren, Arkansas, to open a farm implement business. John Spencer Heard was born July 8, 1841 in Van Buren, whereas his brother, Stephen Dudley Heard, was born November 1, 1847 in Crawford County, Arkansas.

²⁸ *McKinney Democrat*, October 30, 1902, p. 2. Those involved included H. A. Finch, Drs. Abbott and Wiley, Ben Estes, J. S. Dowell, R. E. Carpenter, W. J. S. Russell, J.L. Franklin, Robert Dorsey, J. M. Pearson, Jonas Bass, J. A. Barnett and three newspapers, the *Courier*, *Democrat* and *Daily Gazette*.

²⁹ *McKinney Democrat*, November 6, 1902, p. 1; November 20, 1902. November 27, 1902, p.1, 3. Carlton, *Mill and Town*, 60-63. Hearden, *Independence*, 38, 77, 84. Edward L. Ayres, *Southern Crossing: A History of the American South, 1877-1906* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 38-39.



Figure 2.2. Stephen Heard's 1900 house. Photo by the author.

Stephen began selling farm equipment in 1863 while John served in CSA Brown's Company 3rd Regular Arkansas Troop as clerk and quartermaster. After the war Stephen attended nearby Carlton College, in Bonham, Texas, for a year. The brothers established Heard Mercantile Company, selling farm equipment and home furnishings while expanding into flour mills with Elbert Kirkpatrick. They helped bring the railroads to town, built the first electrical plant, and allowed the upper story of their store serve as McKinney's Opera House in 1880.



Figure 2.3. Heard store. The Opera House was on the second floor. Photo by the author.

Stephen Heard became a partner with Jesse Shain, Elbert Kirkpatrick, and real estate dealer L. A. Scott in bringing Southwestern Bell Telephone to McKinney in 1902.

Stephen Heard also served as director of the Collin County National Bank, McKinney Ice and Coal, McKinney Cotton Mill Co., Collin County Mill and Elevator Co., and the Burrus Mill and Elevator Co., of Ft Worth.³⁰ John S. Heard served in 1881 with William L. Boyd on the city's first school board. His interest in education continued with the establishment of the McKinney Collegiate Institute in the 1880s. The Heards helped bring the Houston & Texas Central Railroad to McKinney. They also led the drive to bring the Texas Traction Company from Sherman to McKinney and then south to Dallas in 1908.³¹

While Jesse Shain and the Heard brothers fit the mold of Doyle and Carlton's "New Men," Elbert Wiley Kirkpatrick would fill the minority role of large landowner involved in town building and industry. Kirkpatrick described himself as a farmer, but as his 1900 home demonstrates, his success was not that of a conventional southern planter.

³⁰ *Heard Family Research Catalog 2000-2008*, compiled by Barbara Johnson director, Heard Craig House, Heard-Craig Museum, McKinney, Texas (hereafter Heard Family Research catalog). Note: the McKinney Cotton Mill Company was a cotton oil mill, not a textile mill. An oil mill removed oil from cottonseed producing a clear oil used for cooking and "cake," the dry pressed seed material used for animal feed. Dallas led the nation in producing machinery for cotton oil mills. Carlton College opened in Bonham in 1866 but was known as Bonham Seminary until 1881. It was affiliated with the Disciples of Christ Church. Deborah K. Kilgore, "Carlton College," In *The New Handbook of Texas*, ed. Ron Tyler 1:979.

³¹ *Heard Family Research Catalog*. Vargo, *First 150 Years*, 33, 54, 136.



Figure 2.4. Kirkpatrick home, built 1900-1901. Photo by the author.

Born in Tennessee in 1844, his family came to Texas and Collin County in 1854. Three years later his father died leaving Elbert Kirkpatrick and his brother to care for their mother and seven sisters by running the family farm. Elbert served in Martin's Regiment, Texas Brigade in the Civil War and was wounded at the Battle of Cabin Creek, Indian Territory. After the war he returned to McKinney and resumed farming with a focus on developing better fruit and nut trees. During the 1870s he built the first flour mill in town, established the Texas Nursery Company to market his improved trees, served as county land surveyor, taught in the first free public school in the county, edited the *McKinney Democrat* paper, and ran unsuccessfully for county superintendent

on a better schools platform. Finding that public office was not for him, Kirkpatrick served his town and farm community for the next thirty years as investor in local industries, organizing the Texas State Nurseryman's Association in 1885 and the Texas Nut Growers Association in 1906, leading the Collin County Good Roads Committee in 1903, and serving as the president of the Texas Industrial Congress from 1908 to 1909, president of the Texas Farmers Congress, 1908, and vice president of the State Fair Association. In addition he became the Lieutenant General of the Trans-Mississippi district of the United Confederate Veterans. His membership in these organizations, plus the Masons, Odd Fellows, Elks, and Rotarians, gave him ample opportunity to observe business conditions around the state and county. A loyal southern Democrat, Kirkpatrick, nonetheless, had a progressive streak. His mill, which dates to 1875, was sometimes described as the Farmers' Alliance Mill, while during the 1904 election cycle his name was mentioned for governor on the Progressive party ticket. He did not, however, accept the honor and run.³²

Also among the "New Men" was John Perry Burrus, born in Bunceton, Missouri, March 10, 1873. His family moved to McKinney in 1875 where he attended public school. At age seventeen he went to work for Elbert Kirkpatrick at the Alliance Flour Mill. Within a decade he was buying and building his own flour mills under the Burrus or Tex-O-Kan brand in Dallas, Ft. Worth, Sherman, Galveston, and other major cities in Texas and Oklahoma.

³² *McKinney Daily Gazette*, March 25, 1924, p.1 and April 1, 1924, p. 2. City Minute Book, 1903 in "McKinney City Minute Books, August 1892-June 1906." Typescript, McKinney City History binder, 1980s, Roy and Helen Hall Memorial Library, McKinney, Texas, n. p. *McKinney Democrat*, Feb. 27, 1908, p.1. Vargo, *First 150 Years*, 144. Ayers, *Southern Crossing*, 117.



Figure 2.5. Burrus flour mill in McKinney built in 1900 after fire destroyed the Farmers' Alliance Mill owned by Kirkpatrick. Photo by author.

Like the other businessmen profiled, he had interests in banks and railroads.

Burrus built this home in 1914 in McKinney and in 1923 he moved to a new home in Dallas's Highland Park, closer to a second textile mill he would build in Dallas in 1924.



Figure 2.6. J. Perry Burrus home built in McKinney in 1914. Photo by author.

Burrus served as a chairman of the Board of Directors of the Mercantile Bank and Trust of Dallas as well as director of the Katy Railroad and two insurance companies. He became chairman and director of the United States Chamber of Commerce, the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, and chairman of the Dallas Manufacturers' Association. He also served as president of the Texas Cotton Manufacturers Association, the Texas State Manufacturers Association, and as director of the Texas Industrial Committee by appointment of Governor Daniel Moody. The International Order of Odd Fellows lodge in McKinney was named the Burrus Lodge. He was also a sportsman, belonged to the Elks, and was active in the Baptist Church. When he died in 1933, Burrus was the managing director of the Waxahachie Cotton Mill, the Brazos Valley Cotton Mill of West, Texas, and the Mexia Cotton Mill.³³

Last among the McKinney elite William Barnes Newsome was born in Columbia, Mississippi, July 23, 1851. His family moved to McKinney in 1852. His father, Isaac, was a merchant and capitalist, serving as a private in the Texas Partisan Rangers, CSA. Newsome was educated at the Muse Academy, a local boarding school in McKinney. He began working for his father in the family retail and wholesale grocery while also working for the Collin County National Bank, founded in 1883 by Governor James W. Thockmorton, Jesse Shain, and others. When Jesse Shain was president of the Collin

³³ *Dallas Morning News*, January 27, 1933, pp.1-2. Emory E. Bailey, ed., *Who's Who in Texas: A Biographical Directory Being a History of Texas* (Dallas: Who's Who Publishing Company, 1931), 62.

County National Bank, Newsome was his vice-president.



Figure 2.7. William Newsome's home in McKinney reflects the sensibility of the business elite of the New South. Once a grand Victorian house, the family remodeled it in the 1920s for an "updated" look. Photo by author.

After Shain's death in 1906, Newsome became bank president. He was a business partner with Burrus and ranched in West Texas. His next-door neighbor was William L. Boyd, cashier at the bank in the 1880s. When Dallas landed the Federal Reserve Bank, Newsome served as both a director and chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank board. He was a Mason, a Knight Templar, a Shriner, and he supported the Dallas Scottish Rite Hospital. With his father and brother Newsome built the First Christian Church in McKinney and served as an elder.³⁴

As demonstrated by their businesses and homes, these men were interested in improving McKinney by developing industries to serve the needs of the town and surrounding farms. Their building choices reflected the current style, not the older Greek and Roman architecture of the antebellum South. Investing in or building a textile mill was a natural progression of interests for all of them.

³⁴ *Dallas Morning News*, July 13, 1929. p. 1. Bailey, *Who's Who*, 64.

The largest surge of mill building in Texas occurred after 1900, when nine mills opened. The bulk of the mills, started between 1900 and 1903, were located in North Texas, opening in Bonham, Gonzales, Itasca, Denison, Waxahachie, West, and Hillsboro. Mill fever spread further with mills opening in Celeste and Cuero in 1901, and mills were proposed in Paris, San Antonio, Brenham, Navasota, Plano, Jefferson, Weatherford, Bowie, and Beaumont. Dallas reported a second mill opening, the New Century Cotton Mill with 2,500 spindles.³⁵ Had McKinney's mill been built during this surge, it surely would have failed due to the small amount of land set aside for it. The two largest hurdles for a McKinney mill would have been a lack of capital and the competition from nearby Sherman, Denison, Dallas, and Bonham for the scarce resource of mill labor. The struggle to find funds to grow a textile industry dependant on local money troubled mill builders even in the Carolinas as described by Daniel A. Tompkins, a prominent North Carolina publicist for mill building.

In most places where a new mill is proposed, an idea is prevalent that if half the money is raised at home, then somebody from somewhere will furnish the other half. Builders of the machinery would take shares [in the mill] or commission houses in the north that sell cloth would [take stock shares]. The distant capitalist is not disposed to risk money to prove whether a new locality and a new people are successful.³⁶

Finding capital to encourage mills to locate in a given area would become less of a problem as the decade progressed. The labor issue across the South and in Texas in 1900 however, would be a source of growing concern. Labor and specifically wages

³⁵ Droze, "Rise," 72. Bible, "A Study of the Texas Cotton Mills," 25. "Annual Report of New Mill Construction during 1901," and "Projected Industries," *Textile World and Industrial Record* vol. 22 #1 (January 1902), p. 65. "Mill News," *Textile World and Industrial Record* vol. 22 #5 (May 1902), 946-949.

³⁶ Daniel A. Tompkins, *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features: A Textbook for the Use of Textile Schools and Investors* (Charlotte: Observer Printing House, 1899), 39. Daniel Augustus Tompkins was an engineer and owner of a savings and loan association in Charlotte, North Carolina. Beginning with the publication of *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features: A Textbook for the Use of Textile Schools and Investors* in 1899 he actively promoted both the building of mills and the establishment of textile training programs at land grant schools across the South.

were the most significant cost item to a mill (after the cost of cotton) as well as a source of frequent strife.³⁷

In New England the labor force gradually changed from local farmers' daughters, as elucidated by Thomas Dublin, to a primarily immigrant based work force after 1860. This was due to both a high turnover rate by the native workforce and increasing competition for labor as the mills expanded rapidly. In New England, the rise of an immigrant workforce with a high proportion of skilled hands meant that wages increased along with labor unions and strikes. These changes led northern mill owners and investors to look south for dependable labor with lower costs. Textile mills served as a gateway industry for many new workers because the skills needed were so easy to learn. Once trained, workers could move up within the industry if opportunity allowed, but many could move to more skilled work in other industries. Alice Galenson found that the turnover rate could range as high as 50 percent during the early years of a mill's existence. By 1910 in New England, 69 percent of the textile workforce was foreign born, whereas in the South only 1 percent was foreign born.³⁸ Immigration played no role in the development of the southeastern mills at the shop level, and once mill management programs were underway in the South, the immigration of experienced men from New England mills slowed by 1900. During periods of scarce labor southern states attempted to attract immigrants, but these efforts were short lived and unsuccessful. Southern mills prided themselves on what they named "native, Anglo-Saxon labor" or alternatively "plentiful, docile, local" labor. The southern labor pool had

³⁷ Oates, *Role of the Cotton Textile Industry*, 115. David L. Carlton and Peter Coclanis, "Southern Textiles in Global Context," 162.

³⁸ Dublin, *Women at Work*, 246-248. Galenson, *Migration*, 120-121, 126. Carlton and Coclanis, "Southern Textiles," 157.

a profound role in the development of the local textile industry and must be understood before the Texas labor force can be explored.³⁹

Agriculturally the dominance of cotton in much of the South led to a tiered labor force with white landowners at the top and black tenant farmers and sharecroppers at the bottom. Occupying the middle ground were white farmers, either small landowners or those already serving as tenant farmers. The dividing line was race, not income. Declining prices for cotton, tight credit, and periods of economic ruin meant that between 1870 and 1930 an ever increasing number of white farmers found themselves forced into tenancy or even sharecropping to support their families. In Texas the number of tenant farmers rose despite the opening of lands west of Fort Worth after the Civil War. In 1879 Texas had 2,176,000 acres in cotton. By 1900, acreage had increased to 6,961,000 and cotton came to dominate Texas just as it did across the South. In 1880 only 37.6 percent of farmers were not landowners, rising to 52.6 percent by 1910.⁴⁰ More farmers were producing increasing amounts of cotton on land they no longer owned. Collin County was not immune to this pattern; the number of farms declined slightly between 1900 and 1910 while the number of acres in cotton expanded. Benefiting textile mills, the price of cotton went from 13 cents a pound in 1874 to 4 cents in 1894. Wages for cotton textile workers in 1869 averaged 13 cents an hour. Wages dropped to 11 cents by 1876, bounced up to 14 cents in 1893, then dropped back to

³⁹ Agricultural & Mechanical College of Texas (now Texas A & M University) had such a mill management training school in 1904 and by 1925 Texas Technological College had a test mill built to study mill operations, according to Jim Little, "Correlation Between Pilot Plant and Commercial Mill Operations," *Report on the First Annual Cotton Merchandising Clinic* (Austin: Cotton Research Committee, 1948), 35. For an extended treatment on the New South campaign for Anglo-Saxon immigrant labor in the Piedmont see Erin Elizabeth Clune, "Black Workers, White Immigrants, and the Postemancipation Labor Problem," in Delfino and Gillespie, eds., *Global Perspectives on Industrial Transformation*, 199-228.

⁴⁰ Carlton and Coclanis, "Southern Textiles," 155. Keith J. Volanto, *Texas, Cotton and the New Deal* (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 2005), 5.

between 11 and 12 cents an hour until 1900.⁴¹ It would be a poor mill that could not make a profit when wages and raw materials both dropped in cost while markets expanded. This steadily increasing pool of white farmers unable to make a living raising cotton provided the large labor pool that textile mill owners desired.

In deciding upon the kind of goods a new mill should make the foremost consideration should be the kind and amount of labor available. While the South possesses the most tractable native laborers in the world, they have not the experience and skills of those in the North and East.⁴²

If southern mill owners had wanted to use the least expensive labor available, black workers would have filled the mills, however, that was a rare occurrence.

Tompkins noted that “negro labor [was of] doubtful efficiency” with mills using blacks for fireman, draymen, and for other jobs providing little contact with whites. Mills using both blacks and whites of both sexes were not successful. Interestingly, Tompkins did see a future where blacks would take over the making of coarse cloth when southern whites advanced to the fine cloth types made in New England.⁴³ Keeping black labor out of the mills did not make economic sense, but it did meet a social need. Mills and the labor force they created kept whites above blacks in the hierarchy of the South. “It is important to re-establish as quickly as possible respectability for white labor” was how Tompkins expressed it while discussing labor costs.⁴⁴ The need to provide employment

⁴¹ Calvert, “Nineteenth-Century Farmers,” 512, 519. Frank Johnson found that Collin County was well settled by 1870, but the only industry was the steam powered flour mill in McKinney. By 1909, 15,082 acres were in wheat but 164,956 acres were in cotton. Cotton was beginning to drive the economy as the mill was being built. See also Robert A. Margo, “Wages and Wage Inequality,” in Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch and Galvin Wright, eds., *Historical Statistics of the United States, Volume 2: Work and Welfare* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 267.

⁴² Tompkins, *Cotton Mill*, 57.

⁴³ Oates, *Role*, 121-121. Tompkins, *Cotton Mill*, 109-110.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 110. Oates, *Role*, 118-119, 123.

for whites played a role in the social, economic, and political arena at the turn of the century in the South.

Mill owners made the deliberate choice to exclude black laborers from working inside the mills while at the same time keeping wages low to attract business away from the northern mills and increase market share. By 1900, Mary Oates found that in the South wages for textile workers averaged two to three dollars per week lower than New England mills for both sexes in the same job classification. Throughout the Piedmont area she found that whites moved towards employment and the textile mills while blacks did not.⁴⁵ As labor shortages spread, mill owners responded by sending recruiters as far as 250 miles away according to Gavin Wright. The employment of women in southern mills began to rise as men found more remunerative work while farmer's daughters, sisters and wives could work in the mill. The employment of women and children in the mills helped keep a lid on wages.⁴⁶

The manufacture of yarn and cloth had been a traditional task for women and the arrival of industrial production did little to shift the perception that textile work was women's work. However as the machinery grew in size, complexity, and speed, greater roles for men were created. Thomas Dublin described the evolving nature of the gendered workplace. Tradition assigned supervisory roles to men, and the demands of some of the machinery required the physical strength of men. Because men could find a wider range of employment, wages for males were higher in an effort to retain them in the mills. Women had fewer opportunities outside of farm or domestic work and filled semi-skilled positions at the mills. Their wages could be lower both as a matter of

⁴⁵ Oates, *Role*, 126. Ayers, *Southern Crossing*, 61.

⁴⁶ Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 135-137, 139. Flammig, *Creating*, 99, 102.

tradition and because of a lack of competition.⁴⁷ David Carlton and Peter Coclanis looked at the evolving global market not only for textiles but also for the machines used in the mills, finding that the chronic lack of skilled labor led American engineers to design machines that were skill or labor saving devices. The ring spindle and the automatic loom were devices that pointed towards a workforce relying more heavily on women and children with “democratizing potential” for new immigrants. The high turnover of women and young men meant that the machines found in mills had to be easy to use. The development of simple, faster machines, and the rapid adoption of these machines by southern mills helped the South eclipse the Northeast in textile production after 1900.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Dublin, *Women at Work*, 65-66. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 15, 33, 67-69.

⁴⁸ Carlton and Coclanis, “Southern Textiles,” 157, 161. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 51-52.



Figure 2. 8. *Outgrowing a Rival* cartoon by John Knott. Courtesy Dallas Historical Society, Dallas, Texas. Used by permission.

Southern mill owners could intensify productivity by increasing the speed of these same machines, which led to a reduction of employees. The development of these machines gave the South an important edge over New England mills in the 1890s, but in a global market the level of competition in textiles increased as mills in India, China, Japan, and Brazil began producing the same materials that dominated the southern mills. Faye Bible found that the mill in Corsicana produced sheeting material for export to China until 1900 when it began producing a course material called duck for local markets. With the bulk of Texas mills coming online after 1900, the shrinking overseas

market for completed goods may have restricted further the growth of Texas mills compared to those in other states in the South.⁴⁹

The Carolina mills of the 1880s relied first on local farmers, then impoverished mountain people for labor. Finally by 1910, mill owners resorted to recruitment drives across the South to keep the mills at full strength. Labor needs in Texas were different from those in the southeastern Piedmont. Texas was a destination state populated with folks on the hunt for economic opportunity.

Table 2.1. Texas Population changes.

Year	Texas Population	Collin County Population	Dallas County Population	Urban residents in Texas	Percent of population in Texas cities
1900	3,048,710	50,087	82,726	520,759	17.1
1910	3,896,542	49,021	135,748	938,104	24.1

Sources: Richard L. Forstall, ed. *Texas Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900 to 1990*, <http://www.census.gov/population/cencounts/tx190090.txt> (accessed March 10, 2008). Francis B. May and Florence Escott, *Economic Statistics of Texas, 1900-1962* (Austin: Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas, 1964), vii, 1.

The shift to urban counties occurred during a surge in Texas mill building. The vast majority of residents in any town or city in 1900 came from elsewhere looking for a better future. The arrival of the boll weevil after 1903 increased the labor requirements for cotton farming while decreasing the potential crop, discouraging farmers and increasing those in debt.⁵⁰ The workers, like the investing elites were also “New Men in the New South.” In McKinney the majority of heads of household were born in other

⁴⁹ Carlton and Coclanis, “Southern Textiles,” 159-160. Wright, *Old South*, 134-135. Faye Bible, “A Study of the Texas Cotton Mills,” 6.

⁵⁰ Frank Wagner, “Boll Weevil,” in Ron Tyler ed. *The New Handbook of Texas*, 1: 628. Calvert, “Nineteenth-Century Farmers,” 509-511. Hall, et. al., *Like a Family*, 33-37.

southern states- Alabama, Arkansas, and Tennessee the most frequently cited. The town also attracted German farmers like Henry Ottenhouse from Bavaria, Ono Peterson, a Danish carpenter, and A. H. Myers and family who came from Wisconsin to run the new creamery in 1910. Farmers in Collin County originated from Ohio, Wisconsin, and New York.⁵¹ McKinney therefore did not resemble the Piedmont in the origins of the workforce. It is possible that because of the rapid growth of urban areas, the development of the oil industry, and the existence of a Mexican labor force, Texas did not require a large industrial workforce designed solely for whites.⁵²

The accepted system of white hierarchy kept blacks from working in the mills, except in certain jobs like warehouseman and janitor. However, in Texas there was a significant immigrant workforce from Mexico that occupied the lowest wage level. Mexican men could have been hired in mills, but they built and maintained the railroads, tended cattle, served as deckhands, and replaced black male labor wherever there were insufficient numbers of blacks for traditional tasks in the cotton industry. In Collin County a woodcutting camp composed of Mexicans appears on the census rolls for 1910. The men arrived between 1888 to 1891, whereas the women arrived after 1900. As the cotton fields moved on to the high plains of West Texas in the 1920s, black labor failed to follow, increasing the demand for Mexican field workers in those areas. While the men labored in remote locations, Mexican women, living in cities and towns in South Texas occupied traditional female jobs, including work in textile mills and in garment industries. Textile mills in San Antonio, and El Paso used Mexican labor instead of white

⁵¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Manuscript Census Returns, 1910, Collin County, Texas, Precinct 1, McKinney microfilm reels 1539 and 1540.

⁵² Olien, *Oil in Texas*, ix, 12-14.

in the 1920s and 1930s, but this practice did not spread north.⁵³ The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor in the 1930s found that one-fifth of the workers in Texas industries were Mexican born or of Mexican parentage. McKinney had 1 Mexican resident in 1910.⁵⁴ Texas mill owners claimed that wages for whites must be lower in Texas to compete with other southern mills, an echo from the Piedmont competing against New England mills. Southern mills could have undercut northern mills by using black labor, and Texas mills could have done the same to southern mills by using Mexican labor. McKinney's mill owners followed the labor pattern of the South, preferring to hire white men. The labor choice remained race based. To achieve the cost savings needed to battle with northern mills, southern mill owners turned to the lower wages of white women and children. Texas mills, opened during the second phase of mill fever after 1900, encountered labor laws designed to regulate the work of children and women. The passage of these laws would reduce the exploitation of women and children in mills, therefore, Texas mills employed a greater number of white men. Mill owners in McKinney chose not to hire white women and children except for the spinning room. They did not hire Mexican women or advertise for Mexican women.

Child labor laws were not unknown in the South; Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia passed such laws in the 1890s, but under pressure from mill owners the laws were overturned. Progressives, led by club women involved in civic improvement, continued to gather information, publish their findings, and lobby state legislatures to enact labor laws protecting children. Elizabeth Davidson reported that in

⁵³ Charles J. R. Grossman, *The Possibilities of Cotton Manufacturing in Texas* (Austin: Bureau of Business Research, Monograph #1, University of Texas Bulletin 2832, 1928), 29-30.

⁵⁴ Mary L. Sullivan and Bertha Blair, *Women in Texas Industries: Hours, Wages, Working Conditions and Home Work* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1936), 13. Denison, Texas, thirty miles to the north of McKinney, had a sizable Mexican workforce servicing the railroads.

1900 the top southern states for employing children in textile mills were, in order of magnitude, North Carolina, Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia. Texas was not part of her study. At issue was the accepted practice of children accompanying parents, especially mothers, to the mills and “helping” to work without pay. Between 1900 and 1920 Progressive politicians and women’s groups continued to put child labor reform before each state legislature across the South. Mill owners fought all attempts, as they portrayed it, to challenge the role of parents and fathers to rule over their children. Society supported the mill owners based on tradition, and families followed suit thanks to the need for child wages to supplement the family paycheck. Behind this argument lay the desire by southern mill owners to undercut northern mills on price and to undercut the rise of effective labor unions. Children, noted John Golden president of the United Textile Workers of America, do not organize. Reformer A. J. McKelway observed that child labor meant cheap labor with the family wage dragged down to the level of child wages.⁵⁵ A comparison of wages paid in the Dallas mill in 1909 between boys and men shows that an adult carder earned \$1.35 a day whereas a carder boy earned 75 cents a day. A similar wage difference existed between men and women. A male draw hand could earn 90 cents a day while a female draw hand could earn as little as 18 cents based on production runs.⁵⁶

Compromise led to age restrictions or limits on the hours worked but did not stop the employment of children until the 1930s. Patricia E. Hill found that the Socialists

⁵⁵ John Golden, “Children in the Textile Industry,” in *Child Employing Industries: Proceedings of the 6th Annual Meeting of the National Child Labor Committee* (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1910), 42; “Follow up Remarks” by McKelway, 213. Ayers, *Southern Crossing*, 177.

⁵⁶ *First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Texas 1909-1910* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., Printers, 1910), 200.

began a free night school for textile mill employees in Dallas by 1901.⁵⁷ As a result of the Dallas night school, pressure arose to write a state child labor law. In 1903 Texas passed a law restricting children younger than 12 from working in industries, including mills.⁵⁸ Mill owners, borrowing the strategy used to weaken labor laws in Alabama, fought back by endorsing compulsory school attendance, an expense southern states rarely supported. Without educational opportunities, children could either work or wander the streets, a point made by mill owners. Labor unions united with Progressives to counter this argument by supporting mandatory schooling. Nineteen cities supported the American Federation of Labor in 1903 by calling for free textbooks and 9 months of schooling for all children.⁵⁹ Texas had allowed cities and towns to develop their own school districts and responded to the pressure from industries and farmers by developing a system of rural schools supported by the state. Once the state created the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1908, reporting and enforcement of child labor laws began in earnest. By 1910, over 100 children under age 16 had been found working in over 300 mines and factories surveyed, including cotton factories.⁶⁰ The support the Texas legislature gave to cities and communities for schools prevented the development of mill

⁵⁷ Mary M. Thomas, *The New Women in Alabama: Social Reforms and Suffrage, 1890-1920* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 93-96, 104-105. Elizabeth H. Davidson, *Child Labor Legislation in the Southern Textile States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 238. Patricia E. Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 48.

⁵⁸ The law read: "Any person or any agent or employee of any person, firm or corporation, who shall hereafter employ any child under the age of 12 years to labor in or about any mill, factory, manufacturing establishment, or other establishment using machinery, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction shall be fined not less than 50 dollars...each day shall be a separate offense." Section two stated that children between the ages of 12 and 14 who could not read and write simple sentences in English could not be employed unless supporting an incapacitated adult like a widowed mother. Even then children could not work between night shifts. *Second Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics* (Austin: Von-Boeckman-Jones, Printers, 1912), 114-115.

⁵⁹ Ruth Allen, *Chapters in the History of Organized Labor in Texas* (Austin: Bureau of Business Research in the Social Sciences, 4143, University of Texas Press, 1941), 123-124. A. L. Garrett, "Report of Commissioner of Labor Statistics," *Second Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics* (Austin: Von-Boeckman-Jones, Printers, 1912), 246.

⁶⁰ *First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics* 12, 200.

paternalism which had occurred elsewhere through the establishment of company controlled schools. Once the law was passed without enforcement, “the powerful textile industry found the law unworthy of a public fight...[they could] render impotent through amendments.” By 1917, the Texas legislature increased school support by paying the salaries of teachers in rural districts and providing textbooks to all students.⁶¹ Because of the growing support for education in Texas, mill owners followed a second route to keeping child labor in southern factories. They amended the law based on gender, the size of the community, and the type of industry. They allowed local judges to grant work permits based on family need.⁶² Chapter 3 will cover how these laws affected the mill in McKinney and the support of local legislators in amending the labor laws.

Early Texas mills were developed by men who followed the pattern of southern mills but with a twist due to the arrival of railroads prior to building industries. Mills in the Piedmont were built before or concurrent with the arrival of rail transport. Because of the discovery of oil and the late development of strong state banks, Texas textile mills struggled to gain a foothold in the cloth market. With the passage of child and later female labor laws, Texas mills failed to follow the southeastern model for mill labor. Each of these points helped make Texas textile mills different from the southern mill model. When McKinney’s business leaders tried again to build a mill, these differences would lead to a unique pattern. As early as 1902 McKinney leaders were able to see that the future would lie in developing improved transportation, a diverse industrial base, and superior education. Limited local capital, stretched between competing demands to

⁶¹ *History of Public Education in Texas*, Texas Education Agency under “History,” <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/tea/historyoverview.html> (accessed March 8, 2008). *Dallas Morning News*, October 25, 1910, p. 5.

⁶² Hill, *Dallas, the Making of a Modern City*, 48-49.

build factories, railroads, and schools, led to the failure of the first stock sale for the textile mill. In order to successfully build a mill in McKinney, local business leaders would find a novel source of capital, one not used by other mills in the South.

CHAPTER 3

BUILDING THE TEXAS COTTON MILL, 1909-1919

Failing to finance a mill in 1903 did not dampen city businessmen's enthusiasm for bringing industry to McKinney, especially industries that depended on the rise of larger cotton farms in Collin County. Cotton gins, storage warehouses, and cotton oil mills however, could and would be built in every town with a rail stop. McKinney still needed something that would draw business to the city. Growth depended on attracting businesses that generated employment for both men and women. The model set by Dallas and Sherman, a textile mill which fed finished products to clothing, knitting, and bag factories, would be the goal rather than the development of multiple mills as found across the Piedmont. To achieve this McKinney would unite the commercial interests of the city, from attorneys to shopkeepers, and not just the big businessmen and the bankers. McKinney's entrepreneurs allowed a new group of investors to aid in building a successful mill--women.

Nineteen hundred and eight brought renewed vigor to McKinney, positively influencing the building of a mill. The boll weevil pushed Collin County farmers to diversify their crops and livestock.¹ Raising onions, dairy cattle, and chickens opened new markets to be shipped on the Texas Traction Company, or Interurban, an electric rail service that began operating in 1908 running north and south serving towns between Dallas and Sherman. Powered by McKinney's electric plant, the Interurban was the greatest success of the McKinney Commercial Club, formed in 1907 by over

¹ The boll weevil crossed from Mexico into Texas in 1894. By 1903 it had reached into East Texas and north to the Edwards Plateau spreading west to the high plains by the 1920s. Crop reduction ranged from 6 percent in 1910 up to 34 percent in 1921. Frank Wagner, "Boll Weevil," in Ron Tyler, ed., *The New Handbook of Texas* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996), 1:628.

one hundred businessmen.² This club, a forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce, replaced the Board of Trade and other groups of local businessmen trying to attract industry in earlier years. Each year the club focused on a single business that the city needed and worked to bring it to McKinney. Partnering with local newspapers, the club produced pamphlets full of glowing descriptions of McKinney's climate and industry, larded with wildly optimistic population figures. Every group that held a meeting in McKinney, from the Woodmen of the World, the Elks, the United Confederate Veterans to local teachers, received copies. Besides attracting new investments such self-promotion effectively kept other towns from siphoning off business by developing competing industries. Meeting in December 1908, club membership rose to 160 members who rapidly made plans to bring a creamery to encourage local dairy development and a natural gas plant to McKinney to provide power and heat to industry. Meeting in 1909, the club dusted off the mill idea and began to visit local mills and talk to county businessmen. This time they would be successful.³

Instead of a tiny spinning mill proposed in 1903 crammed onto 10 acres in a tangle of rail lines, freight platforms, and the rapidly expanding African American neighborhood of Lewisville, the new mill would occupy 30 acres outside of town, to the south.⁴ Both the H & T C and Katy railways would serve the factory but not the Sherman, Shreveport and Southern (old East Line RR) or the Interurban. The land the

² By the 1920s the Interurban had fifty-five cars passing daily through McKinney. Unique to McKinney, it also ran a small streetcar line of two cars beginning in 1911 over several blocks to the north and west of the square for use by cotton factors and capitalists living just off the square. The Heard, Wilcox, and Burrus families who invested in the cotton mill were among its patrons.

³ *McKinney Democrat*, February 6, 1908, p. 1. *McKinney Democrat*, Nov. 25, 1909, p. 1.

⁴ Daniel Tompkins supported locating mills outside of city limits to avoid lawyers, lawsuits, and paying taxes. Other benefits to locating outside of the city limits included running a company store to help the bottom line and to ensure a good night's sleep. Tompkins, *Cotton Mill*, 34-35. Before 1920, McKinney's black neighborhood was known as Louisville after the first name of one resident. After 1920 the spelling changed to Lewisville.

owners selected had a slight roll to the southeast, providing drainage to the Elm Fork of the Trinity River for the tremendous water usage the mill's 2 wells would generate.

Originally proposed as the Lone Star Cotton Milling Company, the directors had to shift gears slightly when El Paso's mill men refused to give up that name. So the Texas Cotton Mill Company was born on September 21, 1910. J. Perry Burrus served as first president and largest stockholder. The board of directors was composed of Thomas B. Wilson the county's largest landholder; Louis Alfred Scott, who moved to McKinney in 1900 as manager of McKinney Electric Company; William B. Newsome, banker and the wealthiest man in the county; George Wilcox, owner of Wilcox and Son Lumber; James Rowland Gough, abstract lawyer, banker, and former state senator; Elbert W. Kirkpatrick, leading businessman and horticulturist; Stephen D. Heard, capitalist; and 5 others, including a businesswomen, Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Boyd. The stockholder list had more than 30 additional members, including 4 women.⁵ Many names appeared on the original list of pledges of support in 1902. All were local to the county, which meant that no commission agents or outside investors were involved. McKinney's history therefore closely follows that of New South historians who analyze the composition of mill owners and backers in factory building. These men shared multiple business ventures and practiced involvement in church, local civic associations, and secret societies. It is the appearance of a substantial number of women as investors that makes McKinney's mill unusual. Profiles of 3 of the women mill investors follow.⁶

⁵ Charter of the Texas Cotton Mill Company, Document no. 22307, Box 27, book 17. Photocopy provided by Office of the Texas Secretary of State Austin, 1910.

⁶ *McKinney Daily Courier-Gazette*, Nov. 26, 1910, p. 1. Doyle, *New Men*, 19-21. Ayers, *Southern Crossing*, 58-60. Hall, *Like a Family*, 27-31. Flamming, *Creating*, 80-81. Carlton, *Mill and Town*, 52-55.

The most prominent female investor in the Texas Cotton Mill Company was Mary Elizabeth Crane Boyd, born in Clifton Springs, New York, in 1860. She arrived in McKinney in 1876 and resided with her sister, Mrs. Kate Belmont for 2 years. She married Captain William L. Boyd, a Union officer and widower with 2 children in 1878. At the time he was the owner of the general merchandise firm West & Murray, purchased in 1870.⁷ Mary started Sunday school classes at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in 1883. The only other mention of Mary before 1906 occurs in a history of McKinney's oldest women's organization, the Owl Club, listing her as a new member in 1895. When William Boyd died in 1906, Mary continued in business as a moneylender. After her husband's death Mary Boyd began taking a larger role in city affairs. In 1908 she gave the city a \$1,000 fountain for the courthouse. At the same time she was buying stock in the textile mill, she sold land to the city for a new city hall, carrying the note for 2 years. In 1914 when the city could not afford to complete the new high school, she donated \$3,000 to furnish the building that afterwards bore the name Boyd High. A scholarship fund established after her death continues to support high school students attending college. She was described as well educated and a traveler to Europe and the British Isles. Mrs. Boyd continued her husband's interest in Dallas's Scottish Rite Hospital for children, donating both land for building and funds. By 1917 she was writing a weekly

⁷ *The Daily Courier-Gazette*, November 15, 1906, p. 1. *The Democrat*, July 3, 1884, p. 2. Vargo, *First 150 Years*, 31. William Boyd was born in Illinois in 1833, married Emma O'Hara and buried two children before moving to Missouri where he joined the Union Army. After the war he brought Emma and two more children to Texas, boarding with the Cloyds. Emma passed away June 30, 1876 at age 36 before Boyd achieved success. In 1876 he joined 4 other families to establish St. Peter's Episcopal Church. By 1883 he was working as a cashier for the Collin County National Bank, selling West & Murray to T. J. Cloyd in 1882. Collin County National Bank was organized in 1883 by Gov. James W. Throckmorton, Thomas B. Wilson, Isaac D. Newsome and others. Boyd served on McKinney's first school board in 1881 and again in 1885. In 1887 he retired from the bank as vice president and went into business as a money-lender. The Boyds lived next door to W. B. Newsome through 1913. Captain Boyd died age 76 on November 14, 1906. Like his many friends and fellow businessmen Boyd was a Knight Templar and an Elk, however, a Dallas Episcopal bishop conducted his funeral service after Masonic rites.

column for the *Courier-Gazette*. Upon her death she left her home to the women's club library association to use as a library. The sale of it allowed the ladies to move the library out of the second floor of Dukes & Aryes dry goods store on the square and begin a fund-raising drive for a new library building.⁸

Willie Emma Proctor Marshall, another stockholder and independent businesswoman, owned a millinery shop for decades at 108 West Virginia Street over a dry goods shop. Educated locally she married W. W. Marshall in 1879.



Figure 3.1. Mrs. W. E. Marshall Millinery. The ghost sign (paint below the windows) on the building now numbered 110 places her store just steps from the Interurban line. Photo by the author.

⁸ *McKinney Daily Courier-Gazette*, May 24, 1937, p. 1. *Minute Books of the City of McKinney*, July 7, 19-1910 to December 29, 1924, 24. [repository cited formerly]. Bowen & Irma Clifton Williamson, *History of the Owl Club, 1893-1963* (n. p., n. d.), 16-17, 20, 25. Judith Crever, *The Owl Club of McKinney* (n. p., n. d.), Helen Gibbard Hall, *The Way it all Began McKinney Texas, A History* (McKinney: Collin County Historical Society, Inc., 2006) 13. Vargo, *First 150 Years*, 53. The 1917 *Bison* yearbook states the money Mary Boyd gave was used for the science lab, domestic and manual arts training rooms and the auditorium recitation rooms. Whereas girls in domestic science learned about the process that led from cotton field to cloth, the young men in manual arts spent 4 years learning wood cabinetry skills. There is no indication that the mill influenced school courses.

In 1910 she lived with an older widowed sister, Maud Powell, who did not work, a younger sister Flora, and brother-in-law Willie who kept the store books. The shop was prosperous enough to employ Allie Blakely, a widow age twenty-four. Willie Marshall fits Sarah J. Deutsch's description of a female entrepreneur of a hundred years ago as a "self employed woman."⁹

Mary Martha (Minnie) Houston Nelson was born March 22, 1856 in Abbeville, Mississippi. She attended public schools in Abbeville then attended art school, including Union Female Seminary in Oxford, Mississippi. She married John Albert Nelson of Abbeville, a merchant and landowner and bore two daughters before his death. She arrived in McKinney in 1887 in the company of her parents; her father, B. F. Houston was a farmer. Unlike Mary Boyd or Willie Mathews, Minnie did not go into business or continue her husband's business. She was a leader in the McKinney Methodist Church and served as secretary of the Women's Missionary Society. Unlike the male business elites, these women did not share the same level of overlapping activities. An interest in education appears to be the unifying factor.

Although newspaper reports state that the mill was capitalized at \$200,000, the state charter shows that as of September 1910, the amount of stock paid for was \$111,650.00. These same newspaper reports list additional women as stockholders, Mrs. E. E. King, the wife of the minister of the First Baptist Church, as well as the widow of W. C. Newsome, to name two. But these women were not original stockholders.¹⁰

⁹ *McKinney Daily Courier-Gazette*, October 17, 1940, p.1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Manuscript Census Returns 1910*, Collin County, Texas, Precinct 1, McKinney microfilm reels 1539 and 1540. A conversation with Professor Sarah Deutsch, March 5, 2008, Denton, Texas. Willie Proctor was born March 17, 1861 in McKinney to W. B. and Menerva Proctor.

¹⁰ *The Dallas Morning News* published a few more women as stockholders when the mill was proposed as the Lone Star Cotton Company, Mrs. Burrus, Mrs. L. M. Greer, Mrs. E. E. King, and the J. P. Dowell estate, in addition to Miss Blevins and Mrs. Nelson. *Dallas Morning News*, November 25, 1909, p. 11.

Mary Boyd held 200 shares worth \$10,000. Willie Marshall had 10 shares worth \$500, as did Mary Nelson, Sallie Blevins and Mrs. M. F. Matthews. Each woman appeared as *feme sole* or sole owner thanks to a new law in Texas allowing women to own property without a male supporter. Because of her large block of stock, Mary Boyd was made a director of the company.¹¹ By asking women to participate in developing industry for the town, McKinney's mill steps outside of the established history of southern mill towns. The presence of active civic minded businesswomen as investors, paired with men and women who supported education, would lead the mill down a road different from most southern mills-one that sent mill children to the same schools as children named Newsome and Burrus.

Incorporated for \$200,000, the mill cost \$225,000 when completed in 1911. The owners broke ground on February 7, 1910 and construction began in March. The proposal was for 5,000 spindles and 160 looms requiring 100 employees. A three-story brick building, 154-feet long by 101-feet wide housed the spinning, carding, picking, and slasher rooms. A massive Corliss steam engine and sixteen-foot flywheel for transferring power to all the textile machines were located on the first floor, sunk several feet below the grade of the ground floor carding room. The weaving room measured 112-feet by 106-feet, and the cloth room 65-feet by 57-feet. Two outside warehouses were built with an attached opening room along the Houston & Texas Central rail spur just south of the main buildings.

¹¹ Copy of the Charter of the Texas Cotton Mill Company, McKinney Texas, September 21, 1910, file 22307, Box 27, record book 17, p. 506.



Figure 3.2. Picker/slasher room looking south with elevator for moving stock. Photo by author 2006.



Figure 3.3. Ruins of the original cotton warehouses from rail spur. Photo by author 2006.

With an eye towards the future, the main buildings were built with wood plank on the east and west ends instead of brick for easy expansion. Breaking the roof line would be two wooden water tanks providing water to the spinning and weaving rooms through a system of overhead pipes and tiny applicators that dropped water on the cotton to maintain the 70 percent or greater humidity required for spinning. A larger tank provided

gravity-fed water to the employee restrooms inside the factory. These restrooms were a point of pride for the owners who advertised completely sanitary or tiled restrooms for both men and women. The owners built 2 large reservoirs, one for fire protection close to the building and a larger holding pond for the wastewater, thick with dye that drained into a nearby creek.¹²

South of the factory, the mill owners built a mill village of 20 cottages. Floor plans offered three-, four- or five-room houses with front and back porches, stoves, and outhouses included. Added for the comfort of the employees, the village offered tree shaded back yards, screened windows, and a park for the children with swings and a see saw.



Figure 3.4. The last mill house in the mill village, now demolished. Mill is in the background. Photo by author, 2006.

¹² *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, October. 6 1909, p. 1. October 13, 1909, p.1. *The Democrat*, February 7, 1910, p. 1. March 1, 1910, p. 1. Tullos, *Habits of Industry*, 114.

The mill had a 35 kilowatt generator and a steam powered electric plant separate from the city system. This powered the machine tools and also offered street lighting to the mill village. The factory floor had power lines encased in iron pipes for safety and was the first cotton mill to use tungsten lamps. Nineteen-hundred-and-ten was a dry year, and the city of McKinney was delighted when the wells at the mill were connected to the city water system for fire protection.¹³ It was reported that residents of the mill village had water piped to their back porches, a real benefit at the time. As will be shown later, however this was not true of every cottage. It is possible the water went only to the homes of overseers living in the village. City residents, eager to cash in on the mill, began building 3 room cottages in the area north and west of the mill for \$300 to \$600 each. These would then be rented to those employees not living in the mill village. With the original staff level of 100 newly arriving hands and only 20 cottages, it can be clearly seen that McKinney's mill workers would always be a large part of the town and not just a separate industrial area though the mill was located outside city limits. This carried over into the schools, where the mill children originally attended the city's South Ward (now Fanny Finch) school, only 2 blocks away for grades 1 to 6, and Boyd High for secondary levels.¹⁴

Originally the mill was to open on November 1, 1910, but by October 13 that seemed unlikely as machinery coming from Philadelphia was not yet on hand. By October 20, the looms were being installed, including a Dobby Fancy loom for the

¹³ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, December 2, 1910, p.1. Water was an issue for the mill from the start. J. Perry Burrus appeared before the City December 21, 1909 to announce the purchase of the land and to ask for a water line to be built to the mill. In April 1910 Burrus and R. L. Waddill appeared again to ask for a city water line. City Ordinance 182 was adopted as an "emergency," to build a line. By June after a "study," the water line would serve the mill without charge. By September a growing drought meant that the mill well was as important to the city as it was to the mill. *City Minute Books, 12-29-10909 to 12-28-1914*, Roy and Helen Hall Memorial Library, McKinney pp. 45-46.

¹⁴ Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 119. *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, November 26, 1910, p.1.

purpose of weaving fabrics and patterns of all kinds. Dobby looms produced all over figured fabrics. They required a skilled weaver indicating that McKinney's mill owners had an eye for higher value products from the start. These fabrics were made on looms having a Dobby attachment with narrow strips of wood instead of Jacquard cards. Dobby weaves were limited to simple, small geometric figures, with the design repeated frequently, and are fairly inexpensive to produce. Interested parties were directed to the Agricultural & Mechanical College of Texas to see the only other example of a Dobby loom in Texas. McKinney would be the only mill west of the Mississippi to make colored cloth by dyeing the cotton first before spinning.¹⁵



Figure 3.5. Remains of the dye room on the right. Photo by author 2006.

The plant would also finish all cloth instead of sending raw stock to a second factory for this purpose. McKinney's mill would be an "integrated mill" that purchased raw materials, produced textiles and related articles within the establishment, and sold the finished products. Most of the mills built in Texas produced "grey goods" or raw cloth

¹⁵ Hoyer, *Staple Cotton Fabrics*, 1-2, 175. Hoyer states there are three foundation weaves-plain, twill, and satin. For most of its history the McKinney mill produced twills, all cotton with multicolored striped designs. The Dobby would have been used for pin checks and small repeating patterns popular with farm wives who used cloth bags for clothing. A photograph of fabric produced at the mill appears in chapter 5.

sent to other markets for finishing. This was also the pattern for many mills across the South during the development of the textile industry thirty years earlier. By installing a Dobby loom and a dye shop McKinney's stockholders were going straight for the cutting edge of southern textile mill innovation.

Due to delays installing and testing the machinery, the mill opening was reset 3 times. Only on Friday, November 26, with the completed city water hook-up and the publication of a special Saturday paper describing the mill, could the Texas Cotton Mill Company be considered close to completion. Sixty employees were reported on hand and 5,152 spindles were set up. The general manager was announced as Paul K. McKenny, who was not a local McKinney resident but had grown up in the business. Running the dye house would be S. H. Jenkins from Winder, Georgia, with 8 years experience at the Winder Cotton Mills. Presiding over the carding, spinning, spooling, and picker rooms would be J. H. Roe who started as a boy at the Crown Cotton Mills in Dalton, Georgia, but had also worked at mills in St. Louis, Kansas City, and locally at the Cuero and Denison mills. The slasher, weaving and cloth rooms would be under F. E. Liche, a graduate of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas cotton mill business course with experience in colored cloth mills in the Carolinas. Liche had been employed most recently at the Bonham mill. As demonstrated by the list of talent brought in to establish the mill, the directors and stockholders had gained by delaying the establishment of the mill. They could afford to bring in experienced hands, robbing two competitors of skilled staff at the same time. Mill management was drawn from traditional southern mills. Droze states the McKinney mill began in 1911; this seems

likely as the first looms were reported as turned on for testing on December 9, 1910, and “open” is defined as producing a completed product.¹⁶

Opening the mill brought a change to the city’s footprint. Rental housing was built first to the north and then to the west of the mill. Even as the mill opened in January, additional housing was needed for the workers, so the mill company built 5 additional 4 room houses. Across the street from the mill, boarding houses, groceries, and ice houses would go up. Mill village streets would be later graded and named for company directors, Wilcox, Burrus, Clark, and Amscott.¹⁷ City growth had been to the north and west of the square, now it moved south towards the mill. By 1914, Mayor Finch and Edwin Kirkpatrick both stockholders would donate 9 acres for a second city park located south of the square and north of the Interurban line but within a mile of the mill. Joe Finlay’s family photographs show a beautiful park with flower beds maintained by the Garden Club and a swimming pool all used by white mill families and city residents in the 1940s. After 1919 the city would build the first hospital overlooking Finch Park and within reach of the mill workers.¹⁸

¹⁶ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, November 1, 1910, p. 1; November 15, 1910, p. 1; November 26, 1910, p. 1. The original general manager was not a trained textile man but J. L. White of Collin County National Bank. This contradicts several recent publications that give November 1, 1910 as the opening. Melissa LaPrelle, “The Life and Times of Cotton Workers in Collin County: A Brief History of the Texas Textile Mill, McKinney, Texas 1910-1945” (Professional Paper, Texas Woman’s University, 2000). Steven J. Lackie, “McKinney’s Old Cotton Mill: Back in Bloom,” *McKinney Living* 16 (October/November 2005), 6-13; *Dallas Morning News*, November 23, 2004, Metro Section 1. The source of the incorrect information was a series of articles published in 1940s in the *McKinney Courier-Gazette*.

¹⁷ According to Jacquelyn Hall, McKinney’s mill village resembled those found in larger urban settings with water, lighting, graded streets, trees, and land for gardens. Since the mill had to attract workers often from other mills, it made sense to build for a competitive market. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 119. Louis Scott’s son, Alfred, served as a stockholder and company director beginning in the 1920s. Amscott Street was farthest from the mill with houses built after WWII.

¹⁸ Lisa Love Harris, “Lessons in History and Horticulture,” *McKinney Living* 19 (April/May, 2006), 6-7. *Dallas Morning News*, January 7, 1911, p. 7. Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970 The Sanborn Map Company McKinney Texas [map] by Sanborn Fire Insurance Company (April 1920). Sheet 1 et al. available at <http://sanborn.umi.com/tx/8635/dateid-000007.htm> (accessed March 2006). The hospital would be damaged by the tornado that hit the textile mill in 1948.

The tremendous impact and importance of the mill to McKinney can be judged based on population growth. In 1900 the census counted 4,342 residents. After the arrival of the Interurban, the first movie theater, the first car dealerships, the creamery, and with the paving of the square, the population in 1910 rose only to 4,714. McKinney had almost stopped growing, and as shown earlier, the county had lost population between 1900 and 1910. With the advent of the mill in 1911 the city population reached 6,667 in 1920, a gain of 1,963 or 4 percent that did not include the mill village located outside the city limits.¹⁹ The mill stopped the decline and reversed the stagnation by delivering what mill boosters promised, population, revenue, and business growth. The timing could not have been better as Collin County processed 74,978 bales of cotton in 1910 despite the drought. It should be noted however that McKinney's mill was small by national standards in 1910. The average southern mill had 20,714 spindles, 502 looms and employed 286 workers, whereas the Texas Cotton Mill Company opened with just over 5,000 spindles and 160 looms, the standard start-up size found in the South during the 1890s. According to *Textile World* magazine, mills around Texas were in the process of reorganization and or enlargement during 1910 and 1911. The small size did not prove to be an impediment to success, as the next 9 years will show.²⁰

The Texas Cotton Mill turned its first profit by 1912, earning between \$1,000 and \$1,200 dollars. It was announced that the management had just closed a contract for supplying manufactured goods from this mill for the amount of \$50,000, consuming 500 local bales. The mill was described as producing indigo denim for overalls, trousers, and

¹⁹ *Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide* (Dallas: A. H. Belo Publishing, 1926), 156.

²⁰ Martin Segel, "Interrelationship of Wages under Joint Demand: The Case of the Fall River Textile Workers," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 70 (August 1956), 464. *Dallas Morning News*, August 15, 1911, p. 12. *Textile World Record 1911*, Vol. 41 (April 1910 to September 1911), (Boston: Lord & Nagle Company, 1911), 149, 180, 287, 526.

jumpers. By September the owners announced plans to double the size of the mill.

Local contractor Jones and Cooper were hired to provide an estimated \$22,000 worth of improvements. More four- and five-room cottages of the “bungalow type” expanded the mill village for more workers. The low-cost expansion announcement proved to be just the beginning, for by December the total cost of the expansion reached \$150,000.

Owners projected that the mill would use 20,000 bales annually and employ 350 mill hands. The expansion brought the number of spindles up to 11,000 and added carding machines to process a greater volume of raw cotton. To help accommodate the extra hands, a 16 room, 40 by 40 foot boarding house was added to the mill village. Two new warehouses and an additional 114 feet added to the weave room would house the increase in production.²¹ The final estimate of the value of the expansion reached \$350,00 and employees reached 300.

²¹ Darla Lovett, Texas Cotton Mill Company Associated Insurance Company 1916 [map]. Texas Textile Mill Papers, McKinney, Texas.

young trees in the background fit with the owner's progressive bent but also match typical southeastern mills.²²



Figure 3.7. *Noon Hour at Texas Cotton Mill, I Found None Under Fifteen* by Lewis Hines, October 1914. Courtesy National Child Labor Committee Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/nclc.02863>.

Unlike other mills, the McKinney mill was found to have no children under 15 working in the mill. The lack of child labor did not make the Texas Cotton Mill Company unique among mills in Texas, but it was rare. As long as the mill remained under local control, children would rarely work in the mill.²³ Struggling farmers normally provided a labor

²² Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 116.

²³ *Dallas Morning News*, February 17, 1911, September 7, 1912, December 28, 1912, September 27, 1913. *Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Texas: Third Biennial Report 1913-1914* (Austin: Von-Boeckmann-Jones, 1914), 39, 41, 44-45, 47. Also Lewis W. Hines, photograph, "Noon Hour at Texas Cotton mill, I Found None under Fifteen," *National Child Labor Committee Collection*, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-DIG nclc-02863.

pool for textile production following the pattern from the Southeast. In Texas, however, labor laws and unions brought about different results from the typical southeastern mill.

In the previous chapter the early passage of a child labor law in Texas was briefly mentioned. By 1909, Texas had passed a law regulating the labor of women by limiting work to 54 hours, going far beyond the efforts of southeastern textile states. Mill men and city governments in North Texas trying to attract investment money for mills, began to unravel laws for child and female labor. The 1911 session of the Texas Senate demonstrates how the law regulating child labor was slowly modified to support industries, including textile mills. This follows the political pattern established in other mill states. Representatives from districts with mills would support amendments that created exceptions for textile mills yet fail to vote for final passage to avoid opposing supporters of child labor laws.

Child labor was a hot issue in 1911 thanks to the efforts of reformers across the nation as covered in the preceding chapter. Texas Senate Bill 15 was brought out of the labor committee with a favorable report on February 6, 1911 and promoted to a special order on February 9, which in effect suspended all consideration of House bills. Senate Bill 15 went to the floor out of order by unanimous consent on February 17. As presented, the bill began, “An Act to regulate the employment of children in mills, workshops, mercantile, mechanical or manufacturing establishments....” An amendment was proposed to remove all of the words after “mills” and replace them with “houses or places used for prostitution.” This effort reveals that the senators viewed mills and brothels as the sole businesses where children must be protected. Attempts to discuss,

recess, or adjourn the session due to the advancing hour were voted down as different amendments striking out or inserting words went forward.

Wearing out opponents by working late at night is a regular feature of legislative work. Senator Tom Perkins, representing District 5, Collin County and H. B. Terrell of District 11 with mills at West and Waco, voted for the suspension. Perkins was absent during the debate though he had been present earlier in the day and would return after eight o'clock from a trip "home." Once the bill had been modified to forbid the employment of children under the age 15 to labor in a mill, provided they were not supporting a widowed mother or incapacitated parent dependent on the child's wages, progress towards passage resumed. This is in line with other southeastern states that supported child labor out of "necessity."²⁴ The bill went further by requiring that children employed at mills or other industries between the ages of 12 and 14 had to be able to read and write simple sentences in English, restricting underage children from working night shifts and raising the age of those working in mines or breweries to sixteen. The rule requiring that a bill be read on 3 days was suspended due to the "imperative public necessity of passage" and was enacted into law. Senator Perkins was recorded as "present-not voting." The final vote was held February eighteen with Perkins in favor of the final language but Terrell was absent.²⁵

Senators representing mill counties shaped the bill to reflect current practice yet gave a "win" to those demanding that children be protected at work. The mill in McKinney did not employ children under age 15 in 1911, however, the mill in West did as demonstrated by the photographs taken by Lewis Hines during a visit in October

²⁴ Hall et al., *Like A Family*. 56-59. Flammig. *Creating*. 170. Carlton, *Mill and Town*, 209.

²⁵ *Journal of the Regular Session of the Thirty-Second Legislature begun and held at the City of Austin, January 10, 1911* (Austin: Austin Printing Company, 1911), 310, 507-509.

1913. As the impact of the mills increased, the laws regarding working children were modified over the decade to align with employment laws in the Southeast. An example would be the ruling from the Attorney General's office from June 1911 finding that if the factory had multiple buildings, children under the age of 14 could be employed as long as the "dangerous machinery" could not lead to personal injury.²⁶

The fight over regulating working conditions for women during the 1913 legislative session demonstrates the tension between the emerging consensus on labor in the mills dominated by southern mill mentality and the local desire to provide working women with protection. Based upon material gathered by state inspectors, Commissioner of Labor J. A. Starling recommended the legislature adopt laws regulating the hours of women over the age of 18 to 54 hours per week while children under age 18 should be limited to 8 hours per day between the hours of 7 AM and 7 PM.²⁷ The Texas Senate went on to consider such a bill. Tom Perkins had returned to publishing the *McKinney Courier-Gazette* and Ed Westbrook now represented District 5, Collin County. Senate Bill 30 began as a bill to require that seating be provided for female employees, but in committee it transformed into an hourly law limiting women to a 45 hour week. Such a limit would affect not just textile mills but also other businesses employing a high number of women--from telephone exchanges to creameries and garment factories. Thus various amendments and exceptions were offered. Each exception based on specific employment was voted down. In an effort to save the bill, exceptions based on community size ranging from 15,000 down to 5,000 were proposed. In the end the law set the workweek for women at 54 hours with a maximum

²⁶ *Laws of Texas Relating to Labor* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, Printers, 1913), 94-95.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 3-4.

of 10 hours a day. Communities under 5,000 were exempt. Senators Westbrook and Terrell voted in favor. Houston textile mill worker and labor leader, Eva Goldsmith, had been a leading proponent of the 54 hour law in 1913, and she endorsed a further reduction to a 9 hour day in 1915. Attempts to modify the child labor law during this session by limiting hours, demanding seating for women under 21, providing work permits, and establishing state inspections all failed.²⁸ Because mills elsewhere depended on the labor of women, this bill should have sent textile mills into small towns. Instead mill building in Texas halted between 1913 and 1919, resuming as part of an industrial drive in the 1920s that built mills in towns larger than 5,000.²⁹

By 1917, labor proposals that failed 5 years before were the subject of serious Senate debate. One proposal to create an industrial welfare commission for women to regulate wages and work would be passed and result in a series of reports on women's work over the next decade. Senator Westbrook had relocated from McKinney to Wolfe City in Hunt County, a town of barely 1,500 residents and a county without textile mills. Westbrook sponsored Senate Bill 63 that prohibited children under age 15 from working based on occupation, restricted children under seventeen from going into certain locations after dark, and gave county judges the power to issue work permits between the ages of 12 and 15. Local politics meant that elected county judges would be

²⁸ Judith N. McArthur, "Women and Politics," *Handbook of Texas Online* s.v., " <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/WW/pwwzj.html> (accessed May 28, 2008). *Journal of the Regular Session of the Thirty-third Legislature begun and held at the City of Austin January 14, 1913 to April 1, 1913* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., Printers, 1913), 139, 814, 831-832. Dallas, Waco, San Antonio, and Houston would have to follow this law in the employment of women in industry while towns like McKinney, West, Itasca, Bonham and others would not, giving their mills an hourly advantage.

²⁹ Mill building across the South slowed between the Panic of 1907, which ended the cotton mill boom according to David Carlton (*Mill and Town*, 213, 250-253), the growing scarcity of labor, and the arrival of new labor movements in the South. Simon, *Fabric of Defeat*, 41; and Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 105-108.

unlikely to withhold work permits for important local industries, including textile mills. Permits were to be posted by employers and data collected on child labor by the state.³⁰

Farmers and parents were concerned that family labor traditions were being encroached on, leading to a series of proposals to exempt family labor from the law. The labor committee agreed to an amendment allowing children to work in the home or on the farm. More tweaks produced a law specifically stating, “Children under age 15 shall not work in factory, mill, theater, workshop or other place even between June 1 and September 1.” This assured child labor on the family farm during the summer growing season but did not affect textile mills unable to spin what was still growing in the fields. A House and Senate conference committee produced the final bill that added 6 months in prison to existing fines of up to \$200 for each violation of the law. Those liable were “Any person, or any agent or employee of any person, firm or corporation who shall hereafter employ any child under the age of fifteen years to labor in or about any factory, mill, workshop, laundry, theater or other place of amusement, or in messenger service in towns and cities of more than 15,000 by federal census.”³¹

The use of the federal census population figures to determine the size of a community served two purposes. Town boosters could continue to use locally inflated figures while boosting their attractions to new businesses without triggering state interest in labor employment. Small farming communities and single industry towns were unlikely to top 15,000 residents, meaning most communities in Texas could ignore

³⁰ The tendency of local officials to avoid enforcing the child labor law was noted in a report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1924 when 1,162 violations of the law occurred yet not a single case was prosecuted. *Eighth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics* (Austin: Von Boeckman-Jones Co., 1923-1924), 9.

³¹ *Journal of the Senate, State of Texas Regular Session 35th Legislature Convened in the City of Austin January 9, 1917 and Adjourned without day March 20, 1917* (Austin: A. C. Baldwin and Sons, State Printers, 1917), 2, 28, 376, 792.

the law when employing children. The location of many mills outside of city limits meant that children could be employed without fear of enforcement as long as a local judge issued a work permit to each child. This law should have encouraged mills to locate in small towns wherever possible. The passage of this law brought Texas in line with other southern states. A ruling from the United States Supreme Court on the Keating-Owens Child Labor Act overturned all attempts to regulate child labor in 1918, freeing states from pressure groups trying to end cheap labor. Texas, however, kept its child labor law, adding a requirement that children under 14 must be lawfully excused from school to work in any occupation. By 1927 the hours children under 15 could work were amended to permit working until 10 at night or as early as 5 in the morning as long as the total hours did not exceed eight.³²

By aligning state labor laws with the Southeastern model, Texas mill investors were poised to expand rapidly. The 54 hour law for women was a blow to mill interests in theory, but low levels of enforcement outside of the largest cities gave mill management the room needed to run the mills according to custom.³³ The impact of both child and female employment laws on employment in Texas appeared in the census numbers before the First World War and 1920. In 1914, 64.3 percent of the textile workforce in Texas was male, 32.4 percent were women, and 3.3 percent were

³² *Laws of Texas Relating to Labor*, (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., 1923), 17, 23. The labor of children and women was a source of conflict between workers and reformers in South Carolina.

Mill workers fought against schooling and attempts to regulate child labor led by Gov. Cole S. Bleese. Simon, *Fabric of Defeat*, 29-30 and Carlton, *Mill and Town*, 208-212. *Laws of Texas Relating to Labor* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., 1927), 14.

³³ *Eighth Biennial Report*, 9. For 1923-1924 violations of the 54 hour law totaled 497 cases; 128 of these were prosecuted resulting in 55 convictions. The inspectors noted that violations of the law were "general" and blamed ambiguous wording. David Carlton found the same lack of enforcement in South Carolina. *Mill and Town*, 212.

children under the age of fifteen.³⁴ By 1919, the Texas textile workforce had changed, but considering the war and the Spanish flu epidemic, both of which strongly affected men and young adults not children, the change was negligible. Male employment had dropped to 62.1 percent, and female employment had risen to 37.4 percent. There was a drop of 2.2 percent for men and a gain of 5 percent for women. The surprise is in child employment, which fell to .5 percent or a decline of 2.8 percent.³⁵ McKinney's population in 1910 of 4,714 should have protected it from having to follow any of these labor laws. The men supervising the mill, drawn from established mills in the Southeast might have hired children and women to work in numbers that followed the southern pattern. The McKinney mill, however, did not follow the pattern of southern mills, continuing to blend new with old to create a Texas mill pattern.

After an expansion period from 1912 to 1913, the board of directors underwent a change. T. B. Wilson died and Mary Boyd stepped down. The new board was made up of J. Perry Burrus, Stephan and John Heard, F. E. Wilcox, R. L. Waddill, J. D. McKinney, E. A. Newsome, J. L. Lovejoy, J. P. Crouch, and E. W. Kirkpatrick. The company president was J. H. Ferguson; George Wilcox was vice president, and W.B. Newsome served as secretary-treasurer. Women continued as stockholders but would not appear in leadership positions again. These directors would have to lead the mill through its first down time delivered by a storm on January 17, 1915. Described as a cyclonic force, the storm halted the Interurban and damaged a cotton gin, plant nursery, and a store on the square. At the mill the second-story west brick wall collapsed and 30

³⁴ Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 60. The original Dallas textile mill built in the 1880s employed children.

³⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce. Fourteenth Census. *Manufactures Reports for the States with Statistics for Principle Cities*, vol. 9 (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 1452.

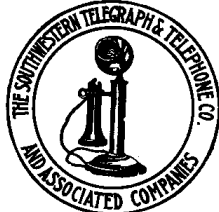
feet of the sidewalls and roof were torn off. Within two weeks repairs were under way.³⁶

The burden of the First World War was also beginning in 1915. Two hundred and seventy mills in the South shut down due to the blockade on German dyes, but this did not hurt the Texas Cotton Mill Company. Increased orders led the owners to build another warehouse in April, while in May the graduating class of Boyd High wore suits made of mill material that were tailored locally. At a Dallas meeting of mill superintendents and overseers, William Moshien and E. C. Cox represented McKinney.

Growth continued as the war increased the market for cotton goods. This in turn meant more workers and more housing. By 1917 the mill was making more than just indigo denim. According to an advertisement in the Boyd High School yearbook, mill products sold under the 'McKinTex' brand included fabrics for awnings and work clothes, as well as those made using the Dobby loom, pin checks, and pin stripes. At this time the mill also produced wool suiting material, cheviot used for overcoats possibly for the war effort.³⁷

³⁶ *Dallas Morning News*, September 27, 1913, p. 1. January 17, 1915, p. 1. January 30, 1915, p.3. *Weekly Democrat*, January 21, 1915, p. 2.

³⁷ Professor Bagley reported the Texas Cotton Mill Company continued to produce cheviots and pin checks into the 1920s. Cheviot is a white faced sheep producing wool used for tweeds. J. B. Bagley, *Cotton Mill Development in Texas* in bulletin 27 Texas Engineering Experiment Station, vol. 8 (September 1922), Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, 10.



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TEXAS COTTON MILL COMPANY

Figure 3.8. Advertisement from 1917 *Bison* annual (Perkins & Wilson Printers, McKinney, 1917).

An additional 6 new cottages were completed, bringing the total of homes in the mill village to thirty-five. As a result of growing productivity, sales, and physical expansion of the mill, the company increased the capital stock from \$220,000 to \$440,000.³⁸

Everything seemed to point towards continued growth and success for the Texas Cotton Mill Company. But growing competition and increasing labor pressures would

³⁸ *Dallas Morning News*, April 7, 1915, April 24, 1915, June 12, 1915, October 30, 1915, October 13, 1917, April 16, 1918.

change the fabric of the business. The end of the war would result in changes great and small for McKinney's mill. As an individual mill, the locally owned Texas Cotton Mill Company had delivered growth, prosperity, and success, but the growing glut of cotton and textile mills would challenge the owners and lead to a change in ownership as well as the creation of a textile corporation.

CHAPTER 4

MILL FEVER REDUX, 1920-1925

The 1920s saw remarkable changes across Texas. The First World War spurred growth in several new industries especially oil, chemicals, and the development of airfields. Roads were built to connect expanding cities as the state began to shift towards an urban profile. The establishment of Open Shop campaigns would break unions, which had been gaining ground in Texas cities. The textile industry in Texas would have its largest growth spurt yet, adding nine mills as the South captured the lion's share of textile manufacturing from the North. Yet despite this effort, Texas mills would begin to struggle, caught in the same market changes of over production, increased competition, and labor problems as other mills by the middle of the decade. The response would lead to a change in ownership and the creation of a mill corporation for the McKinney Cotton Company.

Cotton growing before the Civil War placed Texas in eighth place for United States production. Top producing counties were Brazoria, Austin, Colorado, Fayette, Washington, Fort Bend, and Wharton. Shipping was done through the port of Galveston or through the town of Jefferson to New Orleans. Jefferson shipped 100,000 bales in 1860. Cotton farming continued to expand after the war. By 1879 over two million acres were producing 805,284 bales of cotton. The introduction of a sod-cutting plow, the arrival of railroads, and the advent of growing markets led to more Texas cotton production. By 1899 an area west of the original cotton region known as "the Blacklands" had captured the bulk of cotton growing from the counties in East and South Texas. The Blacklands are a belt of rich soil extending from the Red River south

and west towards the Edwards Plateau near Austin. The most productive cotton land in Texas in the early twentieth century was found in the Blacklands. As in parts of the Southeast, textile mills would be found close to the source of raw cotton.

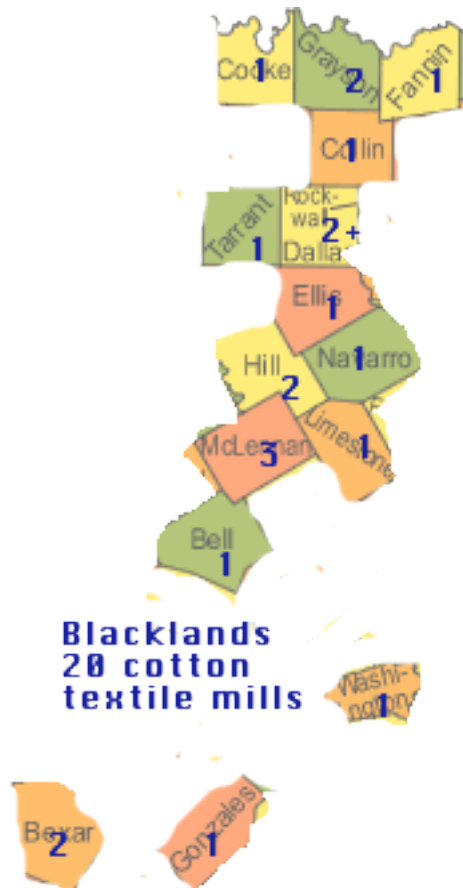


Figure 4.1 Map of the Texas counties in the Blacklands and the number of mills in each for 1920. By author.

The bulk of Texas textile mills were located in small towns and cities in this area or along major transportation hubs. Collin, Fannin, Hunt, and Ellis counties all produced more than 50,000 bales of cotton in 1899. The 1900 census showed seven million acres producing 3,500,000 bales. Along rail lines and in small towns, cotton gins and cotton

compresses were built to process and pack the cotton for shipping.¹ Despite this growth, very little cotton was used in Texas by textile mills. The destination of the bulk of Texas cotton and how it was used is addressed below.

In 1905 Texas manufacturing, including textile mills, used 29,172 bales of cotton to produce 3,130,964 bales of production including mattress ticking and fill, awnings, osnaburgs, duck, twine, and other materials. This represented less than 1 percent of the cotton grown in Texas. Most cotton was shipped out of state to mills in the North and the Southeast, but the bulk of Texas cotton was shipped overseas. The United States Department of Commerce reported increasing demand from China and Asia in 1905, whereas southern mills consumed slightly more than 15 percent of American production. By 1914, Japan was rapidly adding mill capacity, ranking ninth in spindles but sixth in consumption of raw cotton. Cotton from North Texas, including Collin County, was shipped to St. Paul, Minnesota, then to Seattle, Washington, before traveling to Japan.² The addition of new mills in the orient would continue to pressure American mills for both finished and raw materials throughout the twentieth century.

In 1900 Texas produced 26 percent of American cotton. Although the number of farms increased by over 65,000 during the decade, cotton production dropped to 23 percent of the American market by 1910. Texas regained a larger share of the

¹ Karen G. Britton, Fred C. Elliott, and E. A. Miller, "Cotton Culture" in *The New Handbook of Texas*, 1:354. Richard G. Boehm, *Exporting Cotton in Texas: Relationships of Ports and Inland Supply Points* (Austin: Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas, 1975), 9-11, 20-22. A bale of cotton weighs five hundred pounds. Individual mills fill orders in yards while government statistics are listed in bales of production. J. B. Bagley reported denim as 2.20 yards to the pound. Bagley, *Cotton Mill Development*, 35.

² W. A. Graham Clark, *Cotton Goods in Japan and their Competition on the Manchurian Market*, (Washington, D. C.: GPO Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, 1914), 7, 20-21. Also *Cotton Grown on the Blacklands of Texas* (Austin: Cotton Research Committee of Texas, Bulletin 8 n. d. n.p.), Box 45/3, Alonzo B. Cox Papers, Center for American History (University of Texas at Austin, Texas); hereafter cited as CAH. The Cotton Exchange in Dallas in 1940 had thirty-five exporting firms with brokers from France, Germany, Japan and the Netherlands. The bulk of Texas cotton went to Bombay in the 1930s. Dallas Public Library, *WPA Dallas Guide and History* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1992), 122.

domestic market by 1920 as large farms in West Texas began producing dry land cotton using irrigation. This cotton was in high demand by eastern mills, but the high water mark for cotton production for market share had been reached.³ Despite Texas' growing share of American cotton production, high sales of cotton out of state undermined efforts to build more mills in Texas. Additional cotton production did not lead to a dominant textile industry in the Lone Star State. Aside from a mill built in El Paso to produce Mexican and Indian goods for the tourist market using Mexican labor, only one other textile mill of any size would be built west of Fort Worth. In 1910 the company town owned by C. W. Post built a half million-dollar mill in Garza County. It would produce wide sheeting under the Garza brand for many years.⁴

In 1900, 64 percent of Texas cotton was being shipped out of state; by the 1920s it had reached 90 percent. Farmers, however, were under increasing price pressure, and the numbers of tenants and sharecroppers increased from 37.6 percent in 1880 to 52.6 percent in 1910, rising to over 60 percent by the end of the 1920s.⁵ In the Southeast hard times for farmers provided a steady stream of hands to work in the mills, but in Texas the workforce, while overwhelmingly white, did not come out of the fields through the 1920s. The Texas Cotton Mill workforce, meanwhile, expanded, and though the company responded with additional housing and amenities many mill hands preferred making their own housing choices.

³ Francis B. May and Florence Escott, *Economic Statistics of Texas, 1900-1962* (Austin: University of Texas Bureau of Business Research, 1964), 11,13.

⁴ *Textile World Record 1911*, p. 290.

⁵ Norman D. Brown. "Texas in the 1920s," in *New Handbook of Texas*, 6:375



Figure 4. 2. *The South's Mattress* original sketch by John Knott. Courtesy of the Dallas Historical Society, Dallas, Texas. Used by permission.

The Texas Cotton Mill Company followed industry standards and built a mill village next to the factory. When the mill grew, the village expanded, including the construction of a boarding house for single employees. City residents, however, began building homes and businesses near the mill, preventing the establishment of a company town in McKinney, although such towns did exist in Texas. The 1920 Collin County census demonstrates the striking weave this produced. A total of 221 white and 7 African American mill employees were listed as living inside Precinct 1, an area 8 miles south and 3 miles east of the mill. This included the city of McKinney and parts of Allen and Princeton. Of these, 82 were found to be living in the mill village, while 139

were scattered about the town or surrounding area. In McKinney, during the first decade of the mills' operation, only 18 percent of the employees lived in the mill village. In contrast, the Piedmont had over 90 percent of mill employees living in mill villages.⁶ Overseer John Allen lived outside of the village but ran a boarding house where single women spinners and the two male mill secretaries lived. Inez W. McComm, age 40 and from Mississippi, ran a boarding house of nine mill workers. Her entire family, 4 children, mother, brother, and two sisters-in-law all worked for the mill. This was typical of mill villages in the Piedmont where entire families worked for the mill, especially female head of households. A third boarding house was owned by Will Dennis, the night watchman for the mill. His wife ran the house accommodating 12 boarders, 7 employed by the mill. Both Dennis's son and son-in-law worked at the mill, but his daughter and daughter-in-law did not. Will Dennis provides an early example of a pattern found in McKinney, male mill employees who took pride in being able to support a wife who did not work in the mill.⁷

It was not unusual for employees making better wages such as fixers and overseers to live outside the mill village, but many were weavers, card or cloth room workers, and families with only some members employed by the mill. Joel D. Fowler and his family were from Alabama. He worked as a slasher; son Joel was a doffer, daughter Ellen a spinner, but son Eugene was a delivery boy for a grocery store at age seventeen. The children younger than 17 did not work nor did his wife, Alice. Billie

⁶ Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 114.

⁷ Manuscript Census Returns, Collin County, Texas 1920, microfilm reel 1788. Joe Finley, oral history interview, Interviewed by Deborah Kilgore, on April 8, 2006, in Anna, Texas, for North Texas History Center, McKinney Texas. Jeanette Bailey oral history interview. Interviewed by Deborah Kilgore, on April 11, 2006, in McKinney, Texas for North Texas History Center McKinney, Texas (hereinafter cited as NTHC). Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 129, 144-145, 154-155.

Hollingsworth, also from Alabama, was the overseer of the carding room. His wife and children did not work, but his brother and sister-in-law living with the family did work in the mill. Minister Watson had eight children but only one, a daughter, worked in the mill as a weaver while his sons worked as equipment salesmen and linemen. James Bogard, age 48 and born in Texas, worked at the mill, but his wife Clare did not nor did his two sons. John Bailey, age 35 was from Mississippi. He worked as a slasher, his wife was a weaver, but their oldest son was still in school and worked as a delivery boy. Fellow Mississippian and slasher, Joseph Brant had 4 daughters; 3 worked as weavers, while Gertrude, at age 16, worked as a spinner while still attending school. One son worked as a doffer, but Lillian Brant did not work outside the home. Young Oliver Frank from Oregon worked at the mill, but his wife did not.⁸ The pattern of Texas mills employing more men than women was firmly established at the Texas Cotton Mill. The twist in the thread of history is the number of employees drawn from outside Texas. Mill workers were considered foot-loose, but many remained within reach of family. What is demonstrated by these examples is the opportunity that Texas represented despite the distance from the older textile mill regions.

Mills in the Southeast traditionally recruited children as employees at an early age by allowing them to “help” their parents instead of attending school. Of all the families in the census listed as working at the mill, only a single example of a helper was found. Sammie Ford, who worked as a mechanic at the mill, had his stepson, Willie Jones, age 16, listed as a helper at the mill. Only one worker under the age of 16 was

⁸ Manuscript Census Returns, Collin County, Texas 1920, microfilm reel 1788. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 106-107.

discovered; John C. Yarbrough did not work but his two sons both worked as doffers. The youngest was 15 while the eldest was 21 and served as head doffer.



Figure 4.3. Doffers at the Texas Cotton Mill Company. Photo courtesy of Steve Powell.

Scattered examples of unemployed adults dependent on child labor were found. Seventy-year old Augie Fielder was supported by her 16 year-old grandson, Carl Abbot, who did day labor at the mill. Carl did not attend school. Josie McCollum from Tennessee was listed as a non-working widow. Her 19 year-old daughter and 17 year-old son worked in the carding room. Keeping the widow at home were 5 additional children under the age of 11.⁹ Mill worker Jeanette Bailey recalled that her mother, a McKinney native, lied about her age to go to work at the mill in 1923 at age fifteen.

⁹ Manuscript Census Returns, Collin County, Texas 1920, microfilm reel 1788. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 162-163.

Company policy wanted workers to be 16 years of age.¹⁰ Although Texas laws restricted but did not eliminate child labor in textile mills, the pattern in McKinney not to employ children under 15 continued.

Management was still drawn from outside of Texas, whereas ownership was still local. Manager Jim A. Roundtree was from North Carolina. A second manager, John H. Ferguson, was from Kentucky. Superintendent Paul McKinney had moved to a larger mill in Columbus, Georgia. His replacement Will M. Moshier had been a superintendent at the Bonham mill, Dallas Cotton Mill, and a mill in New Orleans before coming to McKinney. Born in Texas to a German American family, he was only 32 in 1920. His wife Inez was born in Mexico of Swedish parents.¹¹ The mill's chief engineer E. D. Bartholomew came to Texas from Iowa in 1881 moving to McKinney in 1911, the same year the mill began operating.¹² The majority of overseers and managers were drawn from outside the state and, strikingly there is no evidence of the impact of the school of textile engineering at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas located in Bryan, at this early date in mill history.

For African Americans in McKinney the mill played a small role. Florine Henry recalled that most worked at the cotton compress or the flour mill when she was a child.¹³ The census agrees and shows additional employment at the cotton oil mill, working on the cotton seed cake machine. Of the 7 employees listed as working for the textile mill, 3 provided labor possibly in the warehouses dealing with the baled cotton.

¹⁰ Jeanette Bailey oral history interview.

¹¹ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, September 17, 1920, p. 1. Manuscript Census Returns, Collin County, Texas 1920, microfilm reel 1788.

¹² *Dallas Morning News*, May 25, 1941, p. 2.

¹³ Florine Henry oral history interview by Deborah Kilgore on July 25, 2007 in McKinney, Texas, for the Oral History Collection, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas.

Only Payton Milligan, the janitor, was born outside of Texas. He was from Kentucky, illiterate, and at age 75 probably a former slave. Elisa Noise, age 46, and his sixteen-year-old son Matthew, along with Sam Ray, age 26, are all listed as laborers. Simon William, age 33, listed himself as a baler, working in the opening room. These were all traditional workplaces for African American men in a textile mill. Remarkably James A. Mark, age 32, listed himself as a dyer, a rare example of an African-American working in a traditionally white area for Texas mills. His wife worked as a washerwoman in the home they owned.¹⁴ Payton Milligan was the only other homeowner among African-Americans. The workers did not live in a single area, suggesting they were drawn from two of the 3 African American neighborhoods. Those with specific jobs, Milligan, William, and Mark, lived in one area while the Noise family and Ray lived in another. All of the adult African American employees were married, and all but Milligan and Ray could both read and write.¹⁵

The majority of the mill workers were from Alabama and Mississippi, followed by Georgia, Arkansas, and Tennessee. Based on the birthplace of their children, most had come to Texas within 5 to 7 years of the census. The habit of moving on in search of a better place to work outside of the Southeastern states was providing Texas mills with workers.¹⁶ At this time, 10 years after the mill had opened, it was drawing workers from outside the state, not attracting displaced and discouraged farmers from the surrounding area. Local women and farm wives were not flocking to the mill to find

¹⁴ Manuscript Census Returns, Collin County, Texas 1920, microfilm reel 1788. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 66-67.

¹⁵ Manuscript Census Returns, Collin County, Texas, 1920 microfilm reel 1788.

¹⁶ Allen Tullos, *Habits of Industry: White Culture and the Transformation of the Carolina Piedmont* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 263-265.

employment either. The African American employees in contrast, were all from Texas, tended to be slightly older and therefore established.

The situation was little changed by 1925 when the Texas Bureau of Labor Statistics surveyed 26 textile mills. The bulk of the mills were located in the Blacklands making mills in McKinney, Dallas, and Waco part of the survey. Employees totaled 5,286 with 74 doing office work; 2,197 were skilled male workers, and 1,512 were skilled women. Unskilled workers totaled 886 for men and 307 for women. The survey also found that 385 of the employees were Mexican, and 66 African-American. Because the mills are not identified, it is impossible to assign the Mexican workers to locations outside the mill in El Paso and mills in San Antonio, but the high employee count points to some Mexican workers in other mills outside of South Texas. Child labor persisted in Texas with 90 boys and 109 girls working in mills.

The workweek averaged 55 hours spread over 5 and-a-half days. For mills offering a weekly wage instead of piece work rates, the salaries of mill workers looked like this. Skilled men earned \$19.00 a week while unskilled men dropped to \$12.50. Skilled women earned only \$13.50 a week with unskilled women earning only \$11.00. Child labor paid higher wages than unskilled working women earned; boys pulled down \$11.75 and girls \$12.50. Piece rate mills did not employ children as no wages were reported for children. For skilled workers the wages averaged \$18.00 for men and \$14.35 for women. Unskilled workers earned \$12.75 for men and \$12.00 for women. Based upon a statewide survey of all industrial employers, the Labor Bureau asked the legislature to adopt a minimum wage bill for women, citing a weekly cost of living for

working women of \$15.00 which was less than half of those employed statewide could command.¹⁷

The survey found 19 of the mills provided housing in the form of a mill village, charging an average weekly rent of \$2.00 for three-and-a-half rooms. Water and electricity were included in the rent, but only 25 percent of the homes offered baths. Smaller towns provided gardens or small farms to help stretch earnings. The mill in Waco offered workers plots of land 12-feet by 12 feet near to the Brazos River, several blocks from the mill village. These plots were farmed cooperatively with families exchanging surpluses during the growing season. In McKinney, land behind the mill houses was farmed with those living around the perimeter of the village having more extensive plots. One mill worker even kept a mule instead of hiring a man to “bust” furrows each spring.¹⁸ All mills were found to offer a physician and several offered extended medical services. In McKinney, mill workers did not recall having a physician on staff, and their parents patronized several different doctors through the years.¹⁹ Nineteen mills sponsored baseball teams; additional recreation provided at various mills included basketball, croquet, picnics, parks, band concerts, club or community houses, and a scout troop. Seven mills provided no recreation facilities or opportunities.

The Bureau of Labor found that the children of mill families did not complete high school. Boys tended to drop out in the seventh grade, whereas girls left at the end of the

¹⁷ *Tenth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, State of Texas 1927-1928* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., 1928), 40-42.

¹⁸ Warren and Laura Tynes, oral history interview by Sandra D. Harvey, August 9, 1995, Waco, Texas for Baylor University, Waco, Texas. Earl Muchow, oral history interview by Lois E. Myers and Elinor Maze, August 29, 2002, for Baylor University, Waco, Texas. Steve Powell oral history interview, interviewed by Deborah Kilgore, on September 21, 2006, in McKinney, Texas for Texas Textile Mill Project, University of North Texas Oral History Center, Denton, Texas (hereinafter cited as UNT).

¹⁹ Steve Powell oral history interview. Opal Wright oral history interview by Deborah Kilgore, on November 17, 2006, in Garland, Texas for Texas Textile Mill Project, UNT.

sixth. Spinner Opal Wright followed this path because she did not have clothes to wear to the upper grades. Blaine Hall dropped out and went to work at age 14 because his family needed his wages during the Depression. Earl Muchow's sister went to work in the Waco dye shop at age 14 but quit a year later and returned to school. Earl was the fifth child in a family of 6 but the first to finish high school because, "we thought the mill was the only place you could go to work." Mill owners in Texas did not build or provide schools for the employees as found in the Piedmont, yet the children of mill workers did attend school. In McKinney students attended the South Ward city school, and for those who did not drop out, continued on to L. A. Scott Middle and Boyd High, both named for mill investors that supported city schools.



Figure 4.4. South Ward School, now Fanny Finch Elementary School. Photo by author.

In Waco, the mill village was part of Edgefield, and the Edgefield Baptist Church provided day care for mill families, yet the mill children did not attend Edgefield School. Instead they were bused by the mill to a county school, Gurley Elementary, according to Warren and Laura Tynes. In Dallas, the Dallas Free Kindergarten and Industrial Association began operating a day nursery and kindergarten in a room donated by the owner of the Dallas Cotton Mill by 1901. When the Socialists opened a free night school for the 11 and 12 year-old employees of this mill, the city decided to provide a public night school near the mill, opening the door for mill children to attend city schools.²⁰ Education illustrates another difference between Texas mill and southeastern mills.

In Texas mills, both workers and management relied on recent arrivals from outside of the state to provide a steady supply of hands. This is in tune with a rapidly growing state but does not match the experience of documented mills in the southeastern part of the United States. While some employment of both boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and eighteen occurred, evidence suggests this was limited. Once there, mill employees in McKinney chose to live outside of the mill village in greater numbers in contrast to the experiences of mills in the Piedmont. This echoes Douglas Flammings' finding for the Crown mills in Georgia and Daniel Clark's mills in North Carolina where men out-numbered women in the mills. The state mill survey reported "large numbers of men...employed at the same job between 10 and 30 years." The nativity of the small number of African Americans working at the mill follows

²⁰ *Tenth Biennial Report*, 43. Opal Wright oral history interview by Deborah Kilgore, on November 17, 2006, in Garland, Texas, UNT. Blaine Hall oral history interview by Deborah Kilgore, on November 20, 2006, in McKinney, UNT. Earl Muchow interview. Warren and Laura Tynes interview, Jacquelyn Hall, *Like a Family*, 127-129. Enstram, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life*, 119. Patricia Hill, *Dallas*, 48-49.

Buenger's findings that resident African Americans were paid with desirable employment while new arrivals were not.²¹ In choosing not to rely on child labor, McKinney's mill owners were ahead of mills north and south although in step politically and socially with the period when the mill was first operated. By recruiting male workers, McKinney's mill, like others located in Texas, resembled in their organization and employees, individual mills found in the Southeast rather than the pattern of most southern mills.

Table 4.1 Table of total mill employment for 19 Texas mills.

3 Dallas mills	Men	Women	2 Waco mills	Men	Women
January	214	222	January	75	56
February	214	219	February	162	72
March	222	213	March	185	65
April	208	186	April	173	63
May	216	250	May	197	58
June	242	275	June	194	57
July	259	278	July	184	65
August	258	299	August	192	67
September	223	214	September	168	68
October	218	200	October	174	66
November	210	195	November	185	59
December	211	223	December	175	64
El Paso mill			San Antonio mill		
January	0	0	January	109	23
February	1	15	February	109	23
March	1	15	March	109	23
April	0	0	April	109	23
May	1	6	May	109	23
June	1	15	June	109	23
July	1	15	July	109	23
August	0	0	August	109	23
September	3	25	September	109	23
October	3	25	October	109	23
November	3	25	November	109	23
December	3	25	December	109	23

²¹ Flammig, *Creating*, 107, 109-110. Buenger, *Path to a Modern South*, 169. Daniel J. Clark, *Like Night and Day: Unionization in a Southern Mill Town* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 12. *Tenth Biennial Report*, 44.

2 Houston mills	Men	Women	15 small town mills	Men	Women
January	51	95	January	1208	868
February	74	135	February	1304	851
March	74	127	March	1463	871
April	71	130	April		870
May	76	121	May		840
June	75	119	June		838
July	73	144	July		945
August	107	185	August	1441	1032
September	82	146	September	1273	844
October	82	141	October	1244	822
November	67	135	November	1236	904
December	76	135	December	1228	822

In 1921 the El Paso Mill was operating as a spinning mill. The Houston mills employed more women than men while the small town mills, Waco, San Antonio and in some months Dallas mills employed a greater number of men during the year. Texas Bureau of Labor Statistics.²²

The expansion of the cotton crop and related industries would combine with a local thirst for industry to create a second wave of “mill fever” that would contribute to the overproduction plaguing the industry. This surge in mill building would result in the McKinney mill changing ownership and becoming part of a corporation. The seeds of overproduction were sown during World War I, and statewide attempts to limit the damage gave a boost to a man who would build a corporation, Clarence R. Miller.

In the fall of 1914 as a result of the first months of the war, the British blockade of neutral ports, and the largest cotton crop produced in the United States, the price of cotton collapsed. By November, in an effort to provide some price support to farmers, Texas began a campaign to set a minimum price of 8 cents per pound for cotton. By the spring planting season, with warehouses stuffed with unsold product, Governor James E. Ferguson appointed a rising young Dallas businessman named Clarence R.

²² *Seventh Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Texas 1921-1922* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., Printers and Bookbinders, n. d.), 25-26, 30, 32, 47, 49-51, 53, 57, 59, 65. Note: In 1922 Waco had a twine mill and Miller Cotton Mill. Total employment for both mills was 178 men and 69 women. Eighty-one men made top wages of \$30-\$40 a week, but only 15 women made top wages of \$15-\$20 a week (62-63).

Miller to chair the “Buy it, Made in Texas” campaign.²³ This is the first of many Miller appointments by several Texas governors over the next 20 years, marking him as reliable when promoting Texas business interests. Miller had started in business in Fort Worth, working at the Burrus flour mill before joining with his two brothers, Bryon and Giles to form the Miller Brothers Manufacturing Company that made clothing. In attendance at the Fort Worth cotton convention, where Miller was named chairman, was Paul K. McKinney, superintendent of the Texas Cotton Mill Company in McKinney.²⁴ The possibilities represented by the cotton textile industry exerted a strong pull on Clarence Miller, who changed his path from clothing manufacture and business investor to textile mill owner and developer by 1919. Textile mills would make Clarence Miller a wealthy and respected Dallas businessman, but his first mill would be built not in Dallas but in Waco.

Waco, in McLennan County, is 70 miles south of Dallas. A manufacturing center and sixth in state population by 1900, Waco had a long and uneven history with textile mills. During the Civil War, Barron’s mill produced cotton cloth for the Confederacy as part of the Waco Manufacturing Company. During Reconstruction the government shut down both the company and the mill. After the war, Waco served as a stop for cattlemen on the Chisholm Trail and a gathering spot for settlers heading west thanks to an iron bridge across the Brazos River and the arrival of railroads in the 1870s and

²³ *Dallas Morning News*, Nov. 13, 1914, June 21, 1915, p. 1. *New York Times*, July 9, 1915, p. 14. The 1914 crop produced 16,134,034 bales of cotton, almost half a million more than the previous record in 1911. *Fourth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Texas, 1915-1916* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., Printers, 1917), 100-102. Jeanette H. Flachmeier, “Texas Industrial Congress,” in *The New Handbook of Texas*, 6:345.

²⁴ *Dallas Morning News*, June 23, 1915, p.1. *Dallas Morning News*, April 2, 1919, p.11. Note: Miller Brothers Manufacturing was established in 1903 with a single plant in Fort Worth. By 1915 plants were in Dallas, Fort Worth, Little Rock, Memphis, Kansas City, and Jersey City, New Jersey. The Waco plant would supply these clothing factories.

1880s. Though in the middle of the Blacklands, cotton was not the principal product shipped out of Waco. Wool was first, followed by cattle hides, with cotton a distant third in 1884. Yet the city soon had 2 textile mills, one producing cotton yarn and socks and the other a woolen mill, the Sladen-Kirksey, that opened in 1885. By 1898 Kirksey woolen mill was one of the largest in the South. In 1900 Waco had 163 factories, 6 banks, and 20,686 residents. In 1902, a twine mill opened in Waco then reopened in 1911, producing material used by stores, homeowners, and especially wheat farmers. Cotton began to replace cattle as a major crop, and cotton based industries followed. The Cotton Palace, designed to showcase the importance of cotton in the surrounding area, opened in 1909 as part of a fall exposition that would attract up to half a million people every year.²⁵ Miller's choice of Waco to build a mill, therefore, is in the city booster mold of most Texas mills: locate a mill where water, power, railroads, and money come together, typically a county seat.²⁶

As explained in chapter one, southern textile mills were normally built outside of small towns, allowing corporate owners the greatest control over the workers and business. Texas mills replicated this pattern before 1890 due to the lack of a reliable water power source with only a few cities with sizable populations. Mills were built in and around New Braunfels because the Guadalupe and Comal Rivers offered a steady

²⁵ Roger N. Conger, "Waco, Texas," in *New Handbook of Texas*, 6:777. William F. Harris, "Textile Industry," in *New Handbook of Texas*, 5:453. "Mill News: New Mills," *Textile World Record* 41 (April 1910 to September 1911), 172. The Waco Cotton Mill Company with capital of \$200,000 opened a 5,000 spindle twine mill. Buenger, *Good Business*, 66, 73. Edwin Caldwell, "Highlights in the Development of Manufacturing in Texas, 1900-1960," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 68 (April 1965), 405.

²⁶ As part of mill promotion in 1922 professor Bagley listed in order of importance the essential requirements for a successful mill as; adequate financial backing, a potential supply of labor, adequate and economical source of power, a trained operating organization, good and capable businessmen for executive management, a correctly designed plant, proximity to raw cotton and proximity to markets. Texas, according to Bagley, lacked only the trained operatives but as more mills opened more would travel to the state seeking the "opportunity for advancement." Bagley, *Cotton Mill Development*, 1.

flow of water. Waco developed along the Brazos River. Because Texas mill fever followed the arrival of railroads, mills were frequently located in towns that were county seats with bankers who could put up the money to attract railroads. The southeastern model had the mills built in places where water could be used for power and where no other industry competed for labor. Then they brought the railroads to the mills. The bulk of Texas mills was built after the railroads arrived, giving mill owners less control over labor as Texas towns began to modernize rapidly. Cotton gins, steam compresses, seed oil mills, and cotton storage warehouses developed around Texas towns, providing employment. By 1910, Texas was rapidly changing from a rural, agricultural state to an urban, industrial state.²⁷

The Blacklands were filled with farms increasingly tended not by the independent farmers of the past but rather by tenants working for large landowners. In West Texas, farming would develop vast dry land cotton fields, using irrigation to produce a long fiber cotton needed by high end producers in New England and in new industries like tire manufactures. Instead of employing tenants and sharecroppers, these farmers would use machinery and contract labor from Mexico in increasing numbers throughout the 1920s.²⁸ This meant the southern textile mill labor model, based on a steady supply of displaced, distressed farm families willing to move to a mill village for the only available work, was of limited use in Texas. County seats and growing cities meant a variety of

²⁷ Diana Davids and Roger M. Olien, *Oil in Texas*, 14. Clara H. Lewis and John R. Stockton, "Manufacturing Industries," in *New Handbook of Texas*, 4:494. Pamela C. Edwards, "Entrepreneurial Networks and the Textile Industry," in *Technology, Innovation, and Southern Industrialization: from the Antebellum Era to the Computer Age*, Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie eds. (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 135. Pamela Edwards has found that after 1905 new textile mills in the Southeast were built where railroads, water, and power plants all came together.

²⁸ Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 53, 119-120. Volanto, *Texas, Cotton and the New Deal*, 5. Oates, *Role*, 95.

jobs for white farmers. The construction of electric passenger systems like the Interurban meant that farmers could keep their land while family members commuted to work, as Billy Don Kanady described doing from his grandparent's Van Alstyne farm. Tenants and sharecroppers simply moved to the next county, found good jobs in the oil fields or moved to cities with growing factories. Spinner Opal Nelson Wright's father was an oil field worker originally from Alabama. When he died in 1917 in East Texas, he left a wife with 2 small children to feed. Edna May Nelson returned to her family home in Denison and worked in the large mill there. Moving to McKinney to work at "a better mill," according to her daughter Opal, provided a wage, housing, a community, and schools for the children.²⁹ Steve Powell's family moved from Mississippi to Texas.

My dad, Johnny Edward Powell was born in 1909 in Macomb, Mississippi. The family traveled to Helena, Arkansas to work on a railroad bridge gang for 3 years before moving to Corsicana, Texas about 1917. They sharecropped in Denton County before moving into East Texas. They were tenant farmers, adjacent sharecroppers with their parents around Athens, Texas. Dad came here to McKinney to work for 16 cents an hour. He was a loom fixer with his father who was a spinning machine fixer.³⁰

²⁹ Bill Don Kanady oral history interview by Deborah Kilgore October 24, 2006, Anna, Texas for Texas Textile Mill Project UNT. Opal Wright oral history interview.

³⁰ Steve Powell oral history interview by Deborah Kilgore September 21, 2006, McKinney, Texas for the Texas Textile Mill Project UNT. A fixer is the most skilled and highest paying job in a textile mill. It is possible that Steve Powell's grandfather learned his trade working at the textile mill in Corsicana during World War 1.



Figure 4.5. Spinning room at Texas Cotton Mill Company McKinney, Edward Powell is seated on the far left. Photo courtesy of Steve Powell.

In the face of such mobility Clarence Miller needed a city of some size to ensure a large pool of workers at textile wages. Dallas, his home, was an attractive location, but he was unable to find a suitable site that provided the close access to rail and water needed by a mill. Waco's industrial district located outside of the city limits but near to the Brazos River was a sensible choice.³¹

Like McKinney's mill, the Miller Cotton Mills was supported by local shareholders with three exceptions. Miller, his brother Bryon, and Dallas merchant, R. W. Higginbotham, were the largest stockholders. Albert Pick of Chicago owned 250 shares of preferred stock. Only one woman owned stock; Mrs. J. R. Baker held 200 shares.

³¹ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, September 17, 1920, p.1, noted that city and county roadwork was falling behind because men were leaving for the oil fields. "Oil brought industrial employment on a grand scale to rural Texas." Roger and Diana Olien, *Oil in Texas*, ix.

The board of directors was split between Dallas and Waco businessmen, with Bryon Miller as president and Higginbotham as vice-president of the company.³² Unlike McKinney, where the investors purchased the factory site and worked out a shared water system with the town, Waco “donated” the land next to the twine mill and the two factories shared a rail spur. The Pittman broom factory and Price-Booker pickle factory were located across the street from Miller’s buildings. Churches, small stores, even a city park already served the small working community of Edgefield that existed before Miller arrived. His costs were lower than mill investors locating in smaller towns because he did not have to maintain a mill community.³³

Jacquelyn Hall defines a “typical” mill village as “a cluster of single family dwellings, a superintendent’s residence, one or more frame churches, a modest schoolhouse and a company store.” None of the mills that would make up the Texas Textile Company ever matched that description. In Waco, the Edgefield Baptist and a Church of Christ served existing communities where the mill was built, whereas in McKinney the one church near the mill was the offspring of the largest Baptist church in town.³⁴ As the mill expanded and the town grew towards the mill, other churches served the workers, but a church was never built on mill grounds. Children attended either city or county schools, while the superintendents and the general managers lived in town,

³² Copy of the Charter of Miller Cotton Mills, Waco, Texas, Office of the Texas Secretary of State, file 33312, ledger # 11-Mi-49, May 31, 1919.

³³ John J. Madigan, *Managing Cloth Inventories in the Cotton Textile Industry* (Boston: Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration #6, May 1934, 9.

³⁴ According to the “History of the King Memorial Baptist Church,” Mrs. Lofton Barker began a children’s Sunday school in a home across the street from the cotton mill on March 19, 1914 with ten children. Once adult membership reached 35 the South Side Baptist Church, as it was known, rented a meat market nearby and began services. Because Dr. E. E. King, pastor of the First Baptist Church of McKinney helped round up seats and preached the first sermon, the church was named King Memorial in his honor. Dr. King was a stockholder in the textile mill. The first minister, E. F. Watson lived in the mill village, according to the 1920 census but no longer led the church. From the 78th Anniversary Homecoming flyer, n.d. n.p. in the private papers of Opal Wright.

leaving just a few overseers living in the mill village. Extra housing and shopping were both left entirely to the local community. By contrast, as more mills were built in a given location in the Piedmont, isolated villages changed, linking the villages to evolving central business districts in larger towns. Company control of the workers' lives as in the Southeast through the company store, church, and schools did not take root in Texas.³⁵

Clarence Miller did follow the prevailing mode in the Southeast when building his first textile mill. Instead of a nondescript brick and wood building, locally designed and built, as in McKinney, Miller hired an engineer, J. C. Hipp from the Atlanta office of the firm of Lockwood, Greene and Company, well known for textile mills in the South and New England, to design and oversee construction. A Dallas firm, W. C. Hedrick received the contract for the building and work began July 27, 1919. The resulting factory included a poured concrete main building 200 by 100 feet, three stories tall, with a glass walled cloth room, small power plant, machine shop, and a single warehouse. It had a dye room for creating the fancy denims that were its main products but did not finish cloth.

³⁵ Hall, *Like a Family*, 114, 116.



Figure 4.6. Miller Cotton Mills Main Building, Waco, Texas. Photo by author.



Figure 4.7. Engine Shed (power plant) at the Miller Cotton Mills, Waco, Texas. Photo by author.



Figure 4.8. Principle product of Miller Cotton Mills, fancy denim fabric. Photo by author from Faye Dehn Bible, "A Study of the Texas Cotton Mills and Their Products," plate IX, p. 42. Photo by permission of the Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University.

A small mill village was built east of the factory. The factory cost \$250,000 to build and another \$250,000 to finish out and equip with machinery. A photograph from 1924 shows a light and airy weave room with automatic looms.³⁶

³⁶ A 5,000 spindle denim mill was estimated to cost \$207,600 to build and \$224,000 for textile machinery. A mill village offering 175 rooms cost \$41,125 including water, plumbing, lighting and bungalow cottages for the workers. Tenement style housing was more costly at \$52,500 for 175 rooms. If you needed to



WEAVE ROOM—MILLER BROTHERS COTTON MILLS, WACO, TEXAS.

Figure 4.9. “Weave Room-Miller Cotton Mills, Waco, Texas.” Photo from Planters and Merchants Mill prospectus, Photograph by Lockwood, Greene & Co., Atlanta, Ga. 1921, by permission of The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

By installing automatic machinery, Miller did not need a large or highly skilled workforce and did not create wage pressure when the factory opened. Throughout the fifty years this mill would operate, rarely did it ever produce a diversified product. Denim and duck, both used by cotton farmers for clothing and bags to hold raw cotton, were the major products of this mill. John Pirtle a promoter of textile mills as a solution for Texas farm problems at this time, found that mills producing yarn, duck, and drills received

build a power plant an additional \$50,000 in financing would be required. Clarence Miller's costs were average for Texas mills. Bagley, *Cotton Mill Development*, 35.

only 3 times the value of the raw cotton used. Mills producing ticking and sheeting could earn 4 times the value of raw cotton, whereas a mill like McKinney, making cheviot and denim, and a new mill like the Planters and Merchants, making gingham could realize 6 times the profit. J. B. Bagley, a professor of textile engineering at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, found that textile mills in Texas priced sheeting at a \$1.62 per pound in January 1920, while duck sold for \$.95 and osnaburg at \$.64.³⁷

It is emblematic of Clarence Miller's adherence to the now dominant southeastern textile mill management style, that he built an up-to-date factory producing at high speed the lowest level of cloth, competing with mills around the state, across the nation, and around the world for a shrinking market.³⁸ It is a measure of the problems developing in the textile industry that Miller would settle for building a mill in an area without room to expand his own mill or attract other mills. The problems created by over production and expanding labor costs would finally reach Texas late in the decade. The opening of Miller Cotton Mill signaled the beginning of the third and largest wave of mill fever to sweep Texas. The Texas Cotton Mill of McKinney would unite with Miller Cotton Mill and a third mill to form the first textile corporation in Texas in the struggle to match the success of mills in the Southeast.

Once Miller's mill was operational, the Waco Chamber of Commerce began to promote mill building after a visit to mills in the Carolinas. The goal was to develop

³⁷ John W. Pirtle, *Industrialize Texas: Plan Originated and Outlined in 1920* (Dallas: Tardy Publishing Company, 1935), 90-91. J. B. Bagley, *Cotton Mill Development in Texas*, 39. The Postex Mill made sheeting as would the Dallas Mill at Love Field. Most Texas mills were producing a competitive, low value product, duck.

³⁸ Mary Oates found that in the 1920s only 10 percent of southern mills produced fine goods. Fine goods need 50 spindles per loom while coarse goods like duck and denim need only 30 spindles per loom. She found between 1900-1920 the South moved 19 percent of production to fine goods, then lost production 1920-1930 before regaining 11 percent by 1940. The reason for the persistence of coarse goods is the shortage of skilled labor at all levels. Oates, *Role*, 95-103.

Waco as the textile center of Texas with the first step a \$1,000,000 yarn mill promoted at a statewide cotton conference held in Dallas in September 1920. The Texas Chamber of Commerce began touting building mills around the state, working with local chambers. The goal was twofold, to stop sending the bulk of Texas cotton to New England mills for processing and build a mill in every large city to supply local needs and provide local employment. Within weeks, announcements of financial developments for new mills in Dallas, Waco, and Fort Worth suggested mills worth up to \$5,000,000 would be built. The United States Machinery Company of Fall River, Massachusetts opened an office in Dallas announcing that, "Texas was destined to become the center of the cotton manufacturing industry."³⁹ Clarence Miller joined the boosters by increasing the capital of his mill from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 by August 12, 1920 to support building a second mill in Waco.⁴⁰

In the end none of these mills were built in 1920 as the textile industry sagged under over production and slowing sales when the market for clothing, industrial and farm supplies began to chart new directions.

³⁹ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, September 11, 1920, p.1. This company provided machinery for mills larger than 5,000 spindles.

⁴⁰ Copy of the Amendment to Miller Cotton Mills file 33312, ledger # 11-Mi-49, office of the Texas Secretary of State August 18, 1920. Note while the three major stockholders paid only \$83,000 each to start the company, this increase personally cost C. R. Miller \$200,000. Bryon Miller and R. W. Higginbotham each paid \$150,000.



Figure 4.10. *Nothing to Wear*. Cartoon by John Knott. Courtesy Dallas Historical Society, Dallas, Texas. Used by permission.

Millions of automobile tires based on cotton were needed, replacing the osnaburg used for feedbags in a horse drawn world. Tires, however, needed long fiber cotton, not the short and dirty fibers that went into the rough cloth used for bags. Women's wear required less fabric, and lighter fabrics replaced the heavy denims that increasingly would be used for work clothes only. Perry Burrus was already working towards a solution for Collin County farmers and the textile mill. He built a cotton cleaning factory,

Burrus Cotton Company, on the east side of McKinney. This plant would clean the cotton after ginning but before compressing, reducing the amount of time the cotton would spend in the carding room being cleaned of dirt, leaves, stems, bugs and other materials.⁴¹ Since the textile mill included a carding room for cleaning cotton after the bales were opened, the construction of a separate cleaning factory demonstrates that the textile mill was not using all the cotton produced in Collin County.

The statewide promotion of textile mills would be the opening salvo in a prolonged promotion of mill building in Texas between 1920 and 1926. It would result in the largest single spurt of mill building, a fading echo of mill fever too late to bring the same level of success to Texas as had occurred in the Southeast. The effect would be to close mills in the other states surrounding Texas. Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma would all lose mills as Texas surged.⁴²

To augment the surge and to add to the existing school of textile engineering at the Agricultural & Mechanical College of Texas in Bryan, Texas, the legislature established the Texas Technological School in Lubbock, Texas in 1923. This new college was to provide co-educational instruction in textile engineering for the emerging West Texas cotton industry. This mirrors the establishment of textile programs in the East. Yet new mills would not be built in West Texas because domestically cotton mills were reaching saturation. The new mills built in Texas would be more diverse than the old mills, producing tire and transmission cord, surgical dressings, automobile

⁴¹ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, November 16, 1920, p. 1. Buenger, *Good Business*, 65-66.

⁴² Richard H. Edmonds, ed., *Blue Book of Southern Progress, 1923* (Baltimore: Manufacturers Record Publishing Company, 1923), 127-133. Also *Blue Book of Southern Progress, 1928* (Baltimore: Manufacturers Record Publishing Company, 1928), 206-220. The Federal government divided textile mills into regions, Texas along with Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Missouri make up the Southwest region.

upholstery, and fine dress materials.⁴³ The shareholders in the Texas Cotton mill company would join in the rush to build more mills by attempting to bring a second mill to McKinney, but first the mill had to adjust to a postwar slowdown.

A textile mill receives orders and begins work with the cotton it has on hand. With the picking season beginning in August and completed by November, mills typically began running at capacity by October. In November 1920 at the annual business meeting for the company, J. Perry Burrus announced that the mill had handled its greatest volume of business ever. A dividend of 10 cents was announced and the new cottages and other improvements extolled. A new general manager, Jim A. Roundtree was elected director and treasurer of the company. Yet sales growth had stagnated for a year, according to president Burrus, "a shortage of orders meant a curtailment of production and a reduction in wages." He pointed to cotton prices of 19 cents a pound while finished cotton goods were selling for 15 cents a yard as a sample of the problems being encountered. If reducing wages did not work, layoffs would follow.⁴⁴ A glance through the ads in the *McKinney Courier-Gazette* showed local dry goods merchant L. V. Green and Company with several bolts of McKINTEX fabric displayed in their windows, suitable for 'work shirts, overalls, and dresses' priced at 19

⁴³ Texas Tech University Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library online, http://swco.ttu.edu/University_Archive/uacollections5.html (accessed May 28, 2008). Texas A & M University began offering textile engineering courses in 1904. Bagley, *Cotton Mill Development*, 3. Faye Bible, *Study of the Texas Cotton Mills*, 18-20.

⁴⁴ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, November 13, 1920, p.1. Cotton prices had opened at 17 cents a pound on September 4. By November 16 the price was 18 cents; 45,942 bales had been ginned against 17,591 in 1919. Prices in Collin County were higher than statewide where prices fell to 13 cents by December. By March 1921 the price fell to 9 cents. Norman D. Brown, "Texas in the 1920s," *New Handbook of Texas* 6:375. Buenger, *Good Business*, 61, 67. To protect themselves from broker, storage, and shipping fees, mills bought and stored bales ahead of orders, leaving little extra cash if orders were slow to come in. Traditionally banks loaned money based on warehouse holdings, but that was being phased out by 1919 under pressure from New York banks. In 1928 Houston banks and Anderson-Clayton industries would break the fee and storage middlemen by cornering the market for cotton just as the textile industry contracted sharply.

to 32 cents a yard. With cotton prices high, farmers should have been spending, yet sales were slow with wholesale fabric prices declining due to a glut of production. The Texas Cotton Mill Company was immediately affected by the slow down in textile sales. Manager Roundtree announced, “the mill would shut down November 20 due to lack of demand.” The 250 employees would be taken care of “as far as possible” until a backlog worth \$350,000 was sold off. This would be the first time the mill had ever completely shut down since opening. Six days after announcing the mill would close because of unsold inventory, the *Dallas Morning News* reported that the mill would not close. Employees accepted a reduction in salary in return for the establishment of a commissary where they could buy goods at cost. There is no mention of the inventory problem.⁴⁵ The establishment of a commissary in return for lower wages, the promise to “take care of employees,” new cottages, and the establishment of a mill band were all typical of southeastern paternalism as a response to market forces.⁴⁶

These responses, however, had an uneven success rate in McKinney. Within a week of the commissary news, grocer A. L. Cole located across the street from the mill was advertising in the paper to “call first” for a price quote. Mr. Cole had not previously

⁴⁵ *Dallas Morning News*, November 17, 1920, p. 2 and *Dallas Morning News*, November 23, 1920, p. 1. *Sixth Annual Report of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas 1920* reported two million unsold bales of cotton, depressed livestock prices, and tightening credit from banks (n.p.). John J. Madigan, *Managing Cloth Inventories*, 6, 53. Madigan noted that in the Piedmont if the mills shutdown, the owners lost money twice because they lost business and lost rent from the mill village. Normally owners expended money to retain valuable employees.

⁴⁶ Gwin Andrews, *Cotton Mill*, 76. Flammig, *Creating*, 182-183. While the commissary did not succeed, a structure on the grounds of the mill, directly behind the office was built. Between the 1920s and 1948 it served under various names as a café for the workers. It was not, however, run by the mill but leased out. Plate lunches were a dime and hamburgers a nickel during World War II. Jack Smith recalled that his father, Superintendent Frank Smith hated the café because it lost money. The 1948 tornado did not harm the café, but it never reopened. Louise Nixon’s description of the “backroom” in the office building with Bob Bryan, shipping, Carl Buchanan the CPA, and a host of clerks doing payroll and handing orders on the Western Union machine during the 1950s suggests the cafe served as an expanded front office. Jack Smith oral history interview. Louise Nixon oral history interview.

advertised his business. In interviews with mill workers and townspeople no mention was ever made of a commissary or company store, suggesting that local businesses were able to fight off this attempt to control the spending of the mill workers. The Texas Cotton Mill and the city of McKinney did not follow the Southeastern model for mill village and town relationships. Recovery from the downturn was swift, and the stockholders decided to join in the push for more textile mill business by expanding the factory. On November 1922 capital for the mill was increased to \$1,200,000 with plans to double the size of the mill. The workforce was projected to grow to 1,000 and begin working night and day. Thirty new homes would be added to the mill village. Once the enlargements were complete, the mill was described as one of the largest west of the Mississippi. Within a few days a local builder began building 36 new homes in the mill village.⁴⁷

Two expressions of traditional mill village life did find favor with employees and with McKinney citizens, the mill band and the men's baseball team. The band began in 1920 under manager Roundtree. It was originally a 12 piece band with most members, according to the local paper, drawn from mill employees. The mill purchased the instruments and members were charged a small "good faith" deposit for use. Local professor of music, Ed W. Jarnagan from Tennessee provided instruction. This was a brass band; cornets and clarinets, slide trombones, horns, alto sax, and two drums. A waiting list quickly developed, within 15 days the band increased to 24 members. A two-story band hall was built next to the mill. Originally built for music on the second floor and women's club work on the first, the building served over the years as a community

⁴⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, November 11, 1922, p. 2,13. *Dallas Morning News*, November 26, 1922, p. 3,13.

hall, hosting basketball games, wrestling matches, roller skating, boxing practice, boy scout meetings, and other gatherings that went beyond the mill village. McKinney Sanborn maps from the 1920s through the 1940s show a building outside the fence along Millwood (Elm) Street labeled as the band hall. On April 9, 1923, the 25 members of the Texas Cotton Mill band posed for a front-page photo announcing an upcoming appearance at Pope's Theater on Kentucky Street. The band won several contests in Dallas and the surrounding area in the early twenties. The band survived the sale of the company to Clarence R. Miller as an undated photo shows a girl jazz band for C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company, but the band disappears from history before 1936 with only the city band appearing at public venues. Spinner Opal Wright was a band member as was her brother, Arlan. He played saxophone and she played the snare drum. She enjoyed the camaraderie more than the music until her mother made her give up the band because their dress was not decent!⁴⁸



Figure 4.11. C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company, Texas Cotton Mills Band (date unknown). Courtesy of the North Texas History Center, McKinney, Texas.

⁴⁸ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, September 1, 1920, p.1. September 15, 1920, p. 1. April 9, 1923, p. 1. *Dallas Morning News*, October 9, 1920. Opal Wright interview. Blaine Hall interview. Fletcher B. Pope was a stockholder in the mill and married Jesse Shain's daughter Maggie. His theater was the up-market for McKinney with the Ritz, Texas, and State theaters serving the middle-to-low market. The children of mill workers attended the Texas and State, which offered serials and westerns. Beth Stapleton recalled how exciting and special a show at the Pope Theater was. Beth White Stapleton, oral history interview by Deborah Kilgore, on December 2, 2006, in McKinney, Texas, for Texas Textile Mill Project, UNT.

The mill had sponsored a men's fast pitch softball team as early as 1915. The first playing field was behind the mill block near Prichard Street. By the 1930s, the team played in a field on the southeast corner of the South Ward School until the 1948 tornado. Jeanette Tyler Bailey's family photos show a level unadorned area with tall poles holding nets and supporting lights. The scoreboard and seating were not visible. Admission was free, but a concession stand operated. Blaine Hall, who began working at the mill in 1935, played center field for the mill. The team played in the Red River Valley League against other company and city teams. Scores for the McKinney team were reported in the Dallas papers after 1920. In later years McKinney fielded teams sponsored by the city bus line and the Veteran's Hospital. Frequent opponents were teams from Anna, Farmersville, Van Alstyne, Sherman, Tom Bean, and Little Elm. Games were played Sunday afternoons with the players being paid by the mill with a day's wages. Blaine recalled this caused some friction at work. The team, known as the Texas Tilers, held the state championship in 1915, according to the mill newspaper and the city championship in 1946 and 1947.⁴⁹ Mr. Hall remembered that gradually fewer and fewer employees showed up to play until finally the team had only 8 players around 1951.

The downturn in textile goods proved to be temporary, and the push to bring more mills to Texas gained strength as sales rebounded. Dallas businessmen, bankers, and the vice president of Texas Power and Light, John W. Carpenter, began visiting mills east of the Mississippi to pitch Texas as a prime location for new mills. In April 1922, Clarence Miller increased the capitalization of his Waco mill from \$1,000,000 to

⁴⁹ Blaine Hall oral history interview. *The Overseer*, June 16, 1944. Jeanette Bailey oral history interview by Deborah Kilgore, on April 11, 2006, in McKinney, Texas, NTHC.


\$1,750,000. All of the extra capital originated with a single stockholder, F. G. Brunner of Ft. Worth. At the same time the company changed its name from Miller Cotton Mills to C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company. Absent from the list of stockholders voting for this increase and name change is R. W. Higginbotham, principal stockholder from Dallas, J. R. Penland of Waco, and Miller's brother, Bryon.⁵⁰

Statewide, the campaign to bring more mills to Texas shifted into high gear. On April 29, 1922, a group of businessmen formed a corporation, the Texas Textile Mills for the "construction, operation, and maintenance of cotton mills... the buying and selling of cotton, spinning and weaving it into cloth and other manufactured goods." Eight of the stockholders were from Dallas, including banker Nathan Adams of the First National Bank, and John W. Carpenter, vice-president of Texas Power and Light. Two investors were from Tyler, one each from Corsicana, Houston, Sherman, and Waco. Of the cities represented only Tyler did not have a textile mill. Faye Bible described them as "bankers, businessmen, cotton mill owners and operators, farmers and textile engineers."⁵¹ M. L. Cannon of Charlotte, North Carolina, and L. W. Robert Jr. from Atlanta were also on the original board but none of the board members from either the Miller or McKinney mills were stockholders. The company's opening value was \$5,000,000. Each share was valued at \$25,000, a far cry from the \$100 shares sold by the McKinney mill in 1910. Originally the idea was to build mills around the state after a series of train and car tours of cities from East to West Texas. While citizens from towns like Abilene feted the tour group lavishly, East Texans turned a cold shoulder to the idea.

⁵⁰ Copy of the Amendment to Charter of Miller Cotton Mills Waco file # 33312, ledger 11-Mi-49, Office of the Texas Secretary of State, April 15, 1922.

⁵¹ Faye Bible, *Texas Cotton Mills*, 21. *Dallas Morning News*, October 17, 1922, p. 11.

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Figure 4.12. Advertisement from *Textile World* magazine, 1923.

The success of the Texas Cotton Mill Company led to the proposal of a second mill being discussed by McKinney leaders in 1923. Governor Pat Neff asked that the Texas legislature wave business taxes on cotton mills for 10 years in an effort to bring more to the state. A group of 8 mill owners and investors from the Southeast visited mills in North Texas in February as part of John Carpenter's tour, looking at existing mills and also sites offered in Plano, Sherman, Paris, Bonham, and Dallas. Among those visiting McKinney were M. L. Cannon of the Cannon Mills in North Carolina and L. W. Robert Jr. an engineer with Lockwood, Greene and Company of Atlanta, both were investors in Texas Textile Mills stock. Clarence Miller had hired the firm of Lockwood

and Greene to design his Waco mill.⁵² McKinney offered a choice between 50 acres and \$250,000 in stock locally to build a \$1,000,000 with Cannon managing the mill or a donation of 50 acres and majority of the \$1,000,000 in stock raised locally with local management. Both the land and money were nearly double what had been raised for the original mill. The existing mill was described as having a capital value of \$1,200,000 with 10,000 spindles. The mill was running 3 shifts and had paid an average return of 15 percent over 10 years, according to Henry Warden, local bank vice president.⁵³ A remarkable remnant of this tour by leading textile men was found under the mill recently. The bronze plaque shown below lists the community leaders involved in the original mill, respectable businessmen only. Ladies might have had the right to vote or work in the mill as employees, but as local business investors their contribution had been erased.

⁵² Faye Bible, *Study of Texas Cotton Mills*, 31-34. *Dallas Morning News*, February 20, 1923 section 2, p. 2. *Dallas Morning News*, February 23, 1923, p. 11. Note: After the deal to build the mill at Love Field was signed, the mill men returned in May for a two-week tour by Pullman train arranged by the Texas Chamber of Commerce. Texas was apparently trying to convince Robert Cannon to build a series of company plants around the state. *Dallas Morning News*, May 20, 1923, section 2, p.5.

⁵³ *Dallas Morning News*, October 14, 1923, p.1. By November 1923, J. Perry Burrus had been elected to the board of directors of a Dallas bank joining some of the investors in the Texas Textile Company.



Figure 4.13. "He Profits Most Who Serves Best. " Mill Director's plaque, 1923. Photo by author.

One reason for this success was lack of direct competition. McKinney was now producing 'cottonades' instead of the denim and cheviots it once produced and was the only factory doing so in Texas. In contrast, the original Dallas mill competed with nine other area mills to produce duck, a heavy canvas material. Miller Cotton Mill of Waco was the only mill producing fancy denim in Texas at this time. Although McKinney projected boosterism during a dinner for the visiting mill investors and likely jawboned some of the men overnight, the city could not out muscle the Dallas Chamber of Commerce. The investors decided not to build in McKinney but rather complete a new mill in Dallas near Love Field. It is worth pondering why these investors would choose an airfield in the age of biplanes over a city with an established and successful mill.

Collin County had a plentiful supply of cotton and was well served by railroads and a growing network of improved roads for cars and trucks. Unlike in 1910, financing was not a problem when considering the close ties between McKinney businessmen and Dallas banks led by W. B Newsome. The local power plant was now part of John Carpenter's Texas Power and Light Corporation so there would be an increase in business for his company if a mill were built in McKinney over smaller towns like Plano. The reason for the choice of Dallas over McKinney must lie with the 2 remaining needs for a mill, water and labor. McKinney was using well water and dumping mill wastewater down the local creeks. Dallas was building levees and dams to control and preserve water. It is possible that engineer Roberts regarded Love Field's nearby lake and power plant a better choice for building a mill.⁵⁴ Since labor represents the greatest expense in a mill, a pool of available workers at the right wage would be a major factor in selecting a site for a new mill.

As shown earlier McKinney's mill work force was drawn not from local farm communities but from emigration from other southern states. For representatives from Piedmont mills, creating new mills dependent on their own labor supply would not be attractive. A Texas workforce was dominated by male workers rather than by women and children. It is impossible to determine the experience level of these workers, but the trend of a male dominant workforce based on mature workers that had grown up around mills was a trend in the 1920s as noted by Gavin Wright.⁵⁵ There were no unions in McKinney, but according to news reports covering Labor Day activities, the

⁵⁴ Bachman Lake water is rated "soft" but for use by the mill it needed additional chemical softening adding to the expense of operating the mill according to an "Industrial Survey of Dallas" done by Lockwood, Greene and Company for *Textile Industry of Texas*, Dallas Chamber of Commerce, 1927, p. 45.

⁵⁵ Wright, *Old South, New South*, 132, 142-145.

downtown businessmen voted to close most of the stores, while trainloads of workers attended Labor Day rallies in Dallas. Unions had a strong presence in Sherman, 30 miles north of McKinney, where an Open Shop movement went down in defeat.⁵⁶ Wages, according to the state Bureau of Labor Statistics averaged \$2.81 for men and \$2.72 for women in small town mills. In Dallas, textile wages averaged \$3.30 for men but \$2.76 for women. The mill investors might have feared a touch of labor activism and its implications for wage pressure in McKinney. In Dallas, wages for women were under control, child labor slipped by enforcement, and a growing Open Shop movement promised to depress men's wages.⁵⁷

State laws regulating labor might have been weakly enforced in smaller communities dependent on a mill, but Dallas offered a larger workforce drawn from surrounding communities, including a large pool of women, thus keeping a lid on wages. The workforce at the Dallas Cotton Mill resembled a traditional mill community filled with native-born Americans while other sections of the city were filled with immigrants according to Elizabeth Enstam.⁵⁸ Dallas was also active in promoting anti-union activism through its Open Shop movement. Texas, prior to the First World War, had been supportive of labor movements. As noted earlier, union workers had been active advocates for laws regulating labor around the state. Beginning in 1919, businessmen, serving on the industrial relations committee of Dallas and working with labor unions

⁵⁶ Jay Littman Todes, "Organized Employer Opposition to Unionism in Texas, 1900-1930" (M. A. Thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1949), 75, 118-119. Denison, also in Grayson County, had 5 unions in 1903 when Dallas had fewer than 10 unions. It appears that unions had greater appeal north of Dallas, a point the men from the Southeast would take into account.

⁵⁷ *Sixth Biennial Report*, 38, 84. *Dallas Morning News*, October 13, 1919, p.10. In a "Letter to the Editor," a McKinney writer urged local citizens to organize because government was "for greed." At the time Dallas Firemen were out on strike.

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Y. Enstam, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas, 1843-1920* (College Station: Texas A & M University, 1998), 117. The textile tour had visited Sherman where an Open Shop movement had failed.

primarily in the building trades, began to look for an alternative solution to frequent shutdowns and escalating wages.⁵⁹ When the iron workers union struck within 6 months of a previous strike, demanding a wage increase of a dollar a day, Dallas businessmen fought back by forming an Open Shop Association led by several hundred business leaders. Promoting what they called the “Square Deal,” they expressed alarm over the “illiterates, foreign agitators, IWWs and bolshevist elements,” involved in the strikes. Housed in the Chamber of Commerce building, the movement boasted over 3,000 members representing 250 businesses.⁶⁰ William Mosher was elected president of the Square Deal Association with up to \$50,000 in membership fees available to be used against unions. The first order of business was to convince the citizens of Dallas of the dangers unions represented to future industrial growth. Such was the power of the Square Deal in Dallas that if workers went out on strike, the association used its funds to bring in scabs from St. Louis. As a result of the Open Shop, “Dallas experienced its greatest mortality of unions until the Great Depression” according to Jack Strauss.⁶¹

Like Miller’s Waco mill, the Dallas Textile Mill would be located in an industrial park, not in an older established area near Dallas’s other mill and factories. This mill would be located near Dallas’ Love Field airport because the airport offered a water supply, power plant, and a spur of the Katy railroad that served the 3 other industries

⁵⁹ Dallas’s first union was formed in 1882, growing to 19 by 1892. In 1886 Texas textile owners formed an association to resist the demands of employees. Jack R. Strauss, “Organized Labor in Dallas County,” (M. A. Thesis, Southern Methodist University Dallas, 1948), 9, 36-37, 66.

⁶⁰ Jay Littman Todes, *Organized Employer Opposition*, 68-70. Hill, *Dallas the Making of a Modern City*, 59, 82-83. IWWs were members of the Industrial Workers of the World.

⁶¹ Strauss, *Organized Labor*, 66, 74. Todes, *Organized Employer Opposition*, 62, 70. The fee for joining the Square Deal was \$2.00 every 6 months for an individual, or \$1.00 per employee plus a base fee of \$20 for businessmen. Self-employed or members of professions paid \$12.00 a year. Ruth Allen found union membership in Texas went from 291 in 1916 to 502 in 1920, dropped down to 205 in 1925 before reaching bottom at 135 in 1931. Ruth Allen, *Chapters in the History of Organized Labor in Texas* (Austin: Bureau of Research in Social Sciences #4143, University of Texas at Austin, 1941), 158.

not related to aircraft already located around the airfield.⁶² Plans for the mill began in March 1921, predating the textile tour. It appears a new Dallas mill was a fait accompli with a site already selected. The plant design was by Robert and Company of Atlanta, Georgia, and L. W. Robert Jr. would be a stockholder and serve on the board. Ten firms bid for construction jobs, with Inge Construction of Dallas getting the final nod to build the million-dollar plant.

The Dallas Textile Mill would have 358 looms with 15,504 spindles and would employ 400 hands.⁶³ The entire Dallas Chamber of Commerce was involved in getting the mill built. J. Perry Burrus was named president and William B. Newsome, now serving as a Federal Reserve vice president for the eleventh Federal Reserve district in Dallas, was a stockholder along with the men from Atlanta and Cannon Mills of North Carolina brought in by the personal invitation of John W. Carpenter. Other notable stockholders were C. L. Sanger of Sanger Brothers department store, E. W. Morton of Morton Milling, E. R. Brown, vice-president and general manager of Magnolia Petroleum, George Aldridge vice-president of City National Bank, and R. W. Higginbotham, wholesale merchant and stockholder in Clarence Miller's textile mill. Fletcher Pope from McKinney joined the board one month after ground was broken.

The Sanborn Insurance map for the Love Field Industrial District indicates a larger, more compact mill village than in McKinney. On 4 streets named for Aldridge, Burrus, Inge, and Louis Lipsitz, president of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, were

⁶² *Dallas Morning News*, March 21, 1921, p. 11. May 18, 1921, p. 4. February 18, 1923, p. 1. February 25, 1923, p. 1. March 16, 1923, p. 2. Love Field was the creation of the city Chamber of Commerce as America entered World War 1. The chamber hoped the Army would use the field for training during the war and after. When the Army declined to buy the airfield after the war, the chamber developed it as an industrial park. Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 116.

⁶³ *Dallas Morning News*, March 16, 1923, p. 2. This mill would be the largest in Texas by four spindles! Bagley, Cotton Mill Development, 11.

over 97 homes of various sizes. Ten duplexes were added by 1931 and 25 additional single homes constructed by 1947, displacing the baseball field. No boarding house for single employees appears. Yards were large and some held small sheds, suggesting the employees did some gardening. A photograph taken during an air show in 1931 shows the mill, village, ball field, railroad sidings, and the just completed duplexes.⁶⁴ There are only a few trees, a single car, and no sign of a playground or any recreational area. The mill was two-stories tall with a single floor attached, most likely the weave room, 4 warehouses, and separate opening room were located behind the main building with a rail siding between the main building and the storage areas. A large cooling pond for water and separate office building completed the mill. Unlike either the McKinney or Waco factories there was no dye or sizing room and no elevated water tower. The children of the mill attended Dallas city schools and two churches, Love Field Baptist, and Love Field Assembly of God, both located outside of the mill village. As the Love Field area grew, more factories were built and a host of businesses sprang up to serve the residents. The Dallas Textile Mill supported a baseball team through the war and a band through 1936 but did not provide any other evidence of mill paternalism. Thus the mill owners had to cover the costs of the mill and village alone.

⁶⁴ *Sanborn Fire Insurance map*, Dallas Texas, vol. 7 sheet 299 H and vol. 2 page 7 sheet 752, September 1947.



Figure 4.14. *Dallas Love Field 1930 Bird's Eye View*. From the collections of the Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

The promotional tour and the building of the Dallas Mill offered Clarence Miller the opportunity to move beyond mill ownership to owning a textile corporation. In September 1924, the board of the C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company voted to increase the value of the company from \$1,750,000 to \$3, 250,000 by bringing in the Textile Finance Company of Dallas. Miller paid \$75,000 for 650 shares while the two men from Textile Finance bought 6,750 shares for \$75,000. Between 1919 and 1924,

the Miller Textile mill without enlargements, improvements, or production of a high-value cloth went from being worth \$500,000 to over \$3,000,000. Miller used the money from his personal investment in his own mill to purchase the Texas Cotton Mill Company of McKinney for \$1,900,000 and the new Dallas Cotton Mill at Love Field for an additional \$1,000,000 on January 23, 1925.⁶⁵ According to the local paper, McKinney's mill was being managed by Al Culberson of Greenville, South Carolina, and while local stockholders would continue to have interest in the mill, only J. Perry Burrus would stay on the board. In addition to Clarence Miller's interest in textile mills, his holdings consisted of clothing manufacturers in Salt Lake City, Fort Worth, Atlanta, and Little Rock. All three textile mills would operate under the C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company name.

The future of McKinney's mill was now joined to that of a corporation. The largest local stockholders held on to their stock, but some of the smaller investors cashed out and began trying to raise money to build a second mill. Looking forward, McKinney residents wanted to believe that despite the failure to build a second mill, the production of textiles would continue to help the town grow, but it would be the pain of bankruptcy, labor issues, and the Great Depression that would visit the mill in the future.

⁶⁵ *Dallas Morning News*, September 27, 1924, p. 3. Copy of the Amendment of the Charter C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company file #33312, ledger 11-Mi-49, Office of the Texas Secretary of State Austin, Texas. The vote by the board took place September 18 and was certified September 19, but the financing was not added to the charter until September 24, 1924. *McKinney Daily Courier Gazette*, January 23, 1925, p. 1.

CHAPTER 5

BOOM AND BUST, 1926-1936

Nationally the 1920s was a period of prosperity and expansion with growing industries bringing an increasing variety of products to people. The textile mills of Texas were part of this variety, supplying a growing number of manufacturers located in cities like Dallas, Waco, and McKinney. The recent boom in opening mills, however, pointed on the horizon towards overproduction while developing local mills in the overseas markets would reduce the consumption of finished goods and lead to collapsing prices.¹ This would drag McKinney's mill into forcible reorganization just as the national economy collapsed into the Great Depression. Under the ownership of the Texas Textile Company, McKinney's mill would avoid the labor strife wracking mills in the Southeast by accepting government work thus evading closure, and by adapting to new production and new ownership.

Within a month of purchasing the Texas Cotton Mill Company, Clarence Miller returned to the board of the C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company to request yet another increase in capital from \$3,250,000 to \$6,000,000. The process began before the sale closed on the McKinney and Dallas mills and was completed by February 7, 1925.² With the extra cash Miller went on a buying and building spree. He purchased textile mills at Sand Springs, Oklahoma, for \$2,030,000 in August, the Pioneer Cotton Mill in Guthrie, Oklahoma, in December, plus he bought control of the Brazos Valley Mill in West,

¹ Simon, *A Fabric of Defeat*, 44.

² Copy of the Amendment to the Charter of the C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company, Waco (February 1925), file # 33312, Office of the Secretary of State, Austin, Texas. Shares of stock were priced at \$100 up from \$56 a share with 13,500 new preferred shares paying 7 percent. Three different groups of investors approved of the new capital with meetings held in Dallas, Fort Worth, and Waco the company headquarters. Clarence Miller paid \$100,000 cash into the company.

Texas. Unlike the boosterish claims for various Texas mills, including McKinney's, the Sand Springs plant was truly the largest west of the Mississippi, employing 1,200 workers for 25,200 spindles. This was a sheeting plant, but Miller wanted to expand the line by adding a dye room and bleaching facility. Once the modifications were complete at Sand Springs, then a bleaching and finishing plant would be added to the Guthrie mill. A completely new mill for the production of Turkish toweling was budgeted at \$1,000,000 with a site to be determined by the board. By February \$2,000,000 in financing by the Texas Finance Corporation had been underwritten for a stock offering to build a 10,000 spindle toweling mill in Waco. Miller announced plans to double the number of spindles at McKinney and add an additional 5,000 spindles to the Dallas plant.³ A few years earlier, J. B. Bagley of Texas A & M College estimated the cost per spindle had reached \$50, making Miller's proposed investment in the McKinney mill worth \$500,000.⁴ Based on an interview with Rogers Davis, a representative of the Saco-Lowell Shops of Massachusetts, Clarence Miller had even greater goals than the Chamber of Commerce reported. The Dallas plant was to get a new spinning room with 12,000 spindles and McKinney was to gain 13,000 spindles.⁵ The strategy appeared to be an attempt to become the largest textile corporation in the Southwest with mills producing a diversified line of materials feeding into the rapidly expanding clothing manufacturing plants located in Dallas and throughout the county.

³ *Dallas: Official Publication of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce*. V. 4, no.8 (August 1925), 12. Ibid. vol. 4 no.12 (December 1925), 29. Ibid., vol. 5 no.1 (January 1926), 29. Ibid., v. 5, no.8 (August 1926), 24. *Dallas Morning News*, January 25, 1925, p.1. *Dallas Morning News*, February 2, 1925, p.1.

⁴ J. B. Bagley, *Cotton Mill Development*, 25. Charles Grossman estimated the per spindle cost in Texas to be \$41.60. Charles J. R. Grossman, *The Possibilities of Cotton Manufacturing*, 62.

⁵ *Dallas Morning News*, February 3, 1925, p.13.

Investing in new mills or expanding old ones as Texas reached peak cotton production appeared to be a good bet and followed the pattern of southern textile success. In 1926 Texas growers produced a record 17,977,000 bales of cotton. Peak cotton, however, was both a blessing and a curse. In 1925, cotton sold for 20 cents a pound, but falling demand meant more than 5,000,000 bales were clogging warehouses as the record harvest hit. Prices for farmers collapsed dropping to below 10 cents a pound. Men who made their profit buying low and selling high stockpiled more bales of raw cotton believing the pattern prior to World War I would reoccur. Clarence Miller invested in bales of low-cost cotton, stockpiling, and storing them. The firm of Anderson Clayton in Houston would gain control of the Texas cotton market by buying thousands of low-cost bales, driving smaller warehouses and New York cotton buyers to the wall. Opportunity for profits by mill stockpiling obscured the true cost of cotton over production; farmers lost income and could not purchase the products of textile mills.⁶

The failed attempt to bring a second mill to McKinney in 1923, combined with the profits made by those investors who chose to sell out when Clarence Miller bought the Texas Cotton Mill, sparked a short bout of mill fever in McKinney.

⁶ Volanto, *Texas, Cotton and the New Deal*, 14. Buenger, *But Also Good Business*, 61, 67.



Figure 5.1. “Comes High but He Must Have it.” Cartoon by John Knott. Courtesy of the Dallas Historical Society, Dallas, Texas. Used by permission.

The goal of city leaders was a modest, 6,000-spindle mill for \$600,000, suggesting a new mill village was also contemplated. Investors subscribed over \$400,000 in stock by March 1925 with a list of directors drawn directly from the original mill. John Heard, C. G. Comegys, George Wilcox, L. A. Scott and Ed Gibson were all original stockholders, while Fletcher Pope married the daughter of Jesse Shain, T. E. Craig married Katherine Heard, daughter of Stephen Heard, A.M. Scott was the son of L. A. Scott, and W. Avery Dowell succeeded J. P. Dowell. In a sense, support for a new

mill was “in the family.” Missing from the list of supporters were the original bankers and businessmen who had moved to Dallas and were now invested in Clarence Miller’s company. The lack of interest by local bankers was a contributing factor in the failure to build a second mill in McKinney. In 1925, therefore, McKinney civic leaders did not follow the pattern of mills in the Southeast by building additional mills. This pattern was true of other Texas cities with only the largest cities of Dallas, Galveston, Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, and Waco able to support additional mills.⁷

Clarence Miller was rewarded for his efforts to improve and increase the number of textile mills in Texas in May 1925 when he was elected president of the Texas Cotton Manufacturers’ Association. The association promptly bid for the 1926 meeting of the National Cotton Manufacturer’s Association. A committee was established to advise towns about developing mills while another committee traveled to St. Louis to work on rail freight rates to aid Texas mills shipping woven cloth. The Dallas Chamber of Commerce began using the phrase “cotton mill king of the Southwest,” when writing about Miller.

⁷ Flamming, *Creating*, 151-152. *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, March 3, 1925. Often the second mill was either a spinning mill producing yarn or a twine mill.



Figure 5.2. Clarence Miller's home in Dallas. Photo by author.

This vigorous work raising the profile of Texas mills helped elect Miller to the Cotton Textile Institute in 1928 for a 3 year term.⁸ The Institute represented the interests of major textile mills in the South.

Clarence Miller's personal success as a mill promoter was matched by the growth he brought to C. R. Miller Manufacturing. By 1927 the mills were reported to be 30 days behind in filling orders with 7 months of future work already booked. This led to another round of proposed additions to all 3 plants. Waco would add 2,000 spindles,

⁸ *Dallas Morning News*, May 13, 1925, p.1. *Dallas: Official Publication of the Chamber of Commerce* v. 5, #8 (August 1926), 24. *Textile World*, 16 October 20, 1928, p. 63. Note: Institutes were developed and promoted by Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce under President Calvin Coolidge as promotional and professional industrial groups. Both the Dallas and McKinney mills had been selling cloth to the state of Texas for government use (*Dallas Morning News*, July 12, 1924, p. 18). Under Miller the mills would be able to get national government sales in the future.

Dallas 5,000 spindles and 144 looms, while McKinney would add 25,000 spindles with the mill block expanding to 117 homes in 1928.⁹ These additions were the result of Clarence Miller's aggressive marketing of his company around the United States and Canada. In August of 1928 he traveled to St. Louis, Detroit, and Canada selling denims, ticking, awning stripes, coverts, drills, osnaburgs, and wide sheeting. Ford Motor Company purchased sheeting used to make imitation leather seating.¹⁰

Growth was also occurring in mills in Mexico and around the state. Perry Burrus joined with Miller in developing an additional mill for the production of denim in Juárez, Mexico. Previously the plant had been weaving grey goods, now it added a dye house, 3,500 spindles, and commission business. Perry Burrus's son Jack served as president of the mill. New mills were under construction in Harlingen and San Marcos; El Paso was adding 100 looms and building new offices while the investors in the Texas Textile Corporation were in the midst of selling stock to build a million dollar plant under the name Southwest Textile Mills Inc. to be built in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas.¹¹

Unfortunately the growth of new mills and the expansion of existing mills around the state fed into a growing problem of over production plaguing the South. The problem began at the turn of the century when, thanks to the boll weevil reducing American cotton yields, European mills turned to cotton produced in Egypt, Africa, India, and South America. Businessmen in these regions faced with increasing cotton production began to import cotton mill machinery and develop their own mills producing

⁹ *Dallas Morning News*, September 11, 1927, p. 5. *Textile World* 5 February 4, 1928, p. 428.

¹⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, September 7, 1928, p.13. "Covert cloth has a mottled effect because the two ply yard used one white ply and one colored." Used for uniforms and summer suits. Hoye, *Staple Cotton Fabrics*, 139-140.

¹¹ *Textile World*, v. 73, no.5 (February 4, 1928), 419. *Textile World*, v. 73, no. 6 (February 11, 1928), 40. *Textile World*, v. 73, no.8 (February 25, 1928),53. *Textile World*, v.73, no.10 (March 10, 1928), 45. *Textile World*, v. 74, no.14 (October 6, 1928), 77.

grey goods and yarn in direct competition with southern mills. Japan and China increased their spindles, reducing the need for imported cloth, then increased exports to the United States of the same goods produced by southern mills. Compounding the over production in cotton cloth, women's clothing in the 1920s shifted to lighter weight materials, simpler styles and the increased use of luxury materials like silk and the first synthetic, rayon. Such trends meant that the market for goods produced by textile mills shrank just as the number of mills and spindles increased. Prices began to drop as the expense of improving, enlarging, or building mills went up. In an effort to make their factories more efficient, mill owners increased productivity by cutting workers, adding night shifts, and introducing the "stretch-out."¹²

David Carlton and Peter Coclanis observed that mills in the Southeast were able to overtake New England mills in the years leading up to World War I by installing newer, more efficient machines that could be operated by novice mill employees. This trend continued after the war with automated machines like the looms purchased by Clarence Miller for his Waco plant helping to reduce the number of employees needed to operate the machines. Thanks to refinements in factory operations, mill managers could find inefficient machines for replacement. When interviewed, Jack Smith, son of the McKinney mill's longest serving superintendent, Frank Smith and the manager of a

¹² J. Inouye, "From the Far East-A Market for Texas Cotton," *Dallas: Official Publication of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce* v.5 no.11 (November 1926), 33. John A. Todd, "World Position of Long Staple Cottons: Disconcerting to Spinners," *Textile World* v. 75, no.5 (February 2, 1929), 162. David L. Carlton and Peter Coclanis, "Southern Textiles in a Global Context," in *Global Perspectives*, Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie, eds., 160-161, 164-167. Professor Bagley suggested that high freight rates protected Texas "wonderful territory" for selling mill products...South American trade was...economical. Bagley, *Cotton Mill Development*, 10. According to Robert B. Evans and Rose F. Monachino, *Trends in the Consumption of Fibers in the United States, 1892-1939*. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Chemistry and Engineering, Southern Regional Research Lab at New Orleans (April 1941), 5. Mill use of silk in the United States peaked in 1929. Cotton use would peak in 1937.

local clothing factory, observed that in any textile mill a factory was only as good as the poorest machine.¹³ Mill owners believed the costs of new machinery could be quickly recouped by greater speed and automation or by machines that consolidated jobs. From the owners viewpoint more machines allowed them to replace experienced, expensive workers with fewer and cheaper hands justified in part by declining cotton prices. Textile colleges produced managers and supervisors ready to apply the latest management techniques to increase human efficiency using time motion studies or scientific management.

Frederick W. Taylor introduced time motion studies in the 1880s helping factory owners discover more effective ways to organize work and train workers to increase efficiency. In textile mills experts in Taylorism would watch the best employee perform his or her job and compare that work to a performance standard. The best weavers, spinners, doffers, carders, dyers, pickers, slashers, and cloth room operators would either set the new company standard if his or her performance matched what was desired or each employee would be retrained. All other employees would then be retrained to the new performance level. In an effort to cut labor costs and increase production, mill owners increased the number of machines each worker had to tend. The stretch-out was the term mill workers gave to management demands that all workers labor at increasing numbers of machines at the productivity level that only the best workers achieved. As each worker, shift, and mill increased production, stockpiles of material grew and prices began to fall. When mill profits decreased, the owners doubled down and added more production with night shifts. By 1928 *Textile World*

¹³ David L. Carlton and Peter Coclanis, "Southern Textiles in a Global Context," 157, 161. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 204-206. Jack Smith, oral history interview by Deborah Kilgore, April 17, 2006, McKinney, Texas, NTHC.

reported, “the industry was menaced by high costs and low prices.” At a meeting of the American Cotton Manufacturers Association W. D. Anderson spoke,

Too many goods are being produced as a result of increased efficiency, growing domestic demand but flat exports (5% of production). As a mill owner with money invested in mill securities I labor for a fair return on investment and a living wage for those who work in the mill. Therefore we must stop operating our mills at night.¹⁴

He thought that the habit of requiring a certain percentage of capital to be earned back each year was leading the industry towards short sighted investments like night work, which, he advised, undermined the community. By June even the editors of *Textile World* were reporting that buying could no longer keep up with production. A call went out to reduce production by shutting down southern mills between June 29 and July 9 to pressure buyers “holding the fate of the industry on their books and in warehouses” to come to their senses. A few large mills did close but not long enough to make a difference.¹⁵

Time motion studies and retraining lifted productivity, increased profits, and fit within the tradition that had senior employees training new employees over the course of weeks.¹⁶ Interviewed workers from both the Waco and McKinney mills described training at C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company that followed a traditional pattern at all levels. In McKinney, Tennie Ireland trained under Edna Nelson for 6 weeks during the first shift, earning a training wage of 10 cents an hour. Once trained, Tennie started with 2 spinning frames working up to 6 machines or 12 sides and earning 25 cents a hank. When night work began, Tennie moved to night work to earn more money. Opal Wright began in the weave room, placed there by her mother because weaving was a step up

¹⁴ W. D. Anderson, “Southern Textile Mills Conditions,” in *Textile World*, vol. 73 #20 (May 1928), 97-101.

¹⁵ Editorial, *Textile World*, vol. 73, no.23 (June 1928), 35.

¹⁶ Hall, et al. *Like a Family*, 208-210.

in pay from spinning, but Opal did not like her teacher and went to work with her mother and several aunts as a spinner. This on-the-job training extended into the front office, where Louise Nixon learned to do the company payroll while working for Carl Buchanan, the company accountant. Overseers and fixers worked their way up from the floor according to Earl Muchow at the Waco mill. Management however, was being replaced by professionally trained men from Agricultural & Mechanical College of Texas at both the Dallas and Waco mills while in McKinney, Frank Smith, a business school graduate who came to town in 1922 to work at the mill after a stint in the oil fields, followed a more traditional path, working in each department as he advanced.¹⁷

Across the Piedmont the stretch-out led mill owners to cut wages, alter traditional work habits, and disturb communities by running mills at night. This resulted in strikes in Tennessee and the Carolinas with workers demanding that owners run the mills without the stretch-out.¹⁸ Mill owners who had an over supply of workers and a backlog of unsold material had little problem breaking each strike. While thousands of workers shut down mills in the Southeast, quiet reigned in Texas. Rapid industrialization, including the opening of 9 new mills, continued to draw mill workers to Texas, while high cotton prices meant farmers were able to stay on the land instead of coming to the mills in search of work. Buried inside promotional material for the 1927 “Industrialize Dallas” campaign was the news that “docile, native, Anglo-Saxon workers” in Texas were

¹⁷ Opal Wright oral history interview, Louise Nixon oral history interview October 27, 2006 by Deborah Kilgore McKinney, Texas UNT. Earl Muchow oral history interview, August 29, 2002 by Lois E. Myers and Elinor Maze, Robinson, Texas for the Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, Texas. *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, April 13, 1945, p. 1. Frank Smith attended Massie College in Houston before going to work in the oil fields. He worked his way up to superintendent in 1930 from overseer. Louise Nixon recalled he was the general manager in the 1950s before being promoted to president of the company before retirement. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 210.

¹⁸ Simon, *A Fabric of Defeat*, 45, 47, 50-51. Hall et al. *Like a Family*, 214-217.

making higher wages in the mills than workers in mills located east of the Mississippi.¹⁹

The phrase, “docile, native, and Anglo-Saxon” was management code for a workforce that was not inclined to strike or join a union and would abide by the “whites only” work rule followed by most southern mills. Texas mill workers had no need of unions or strikes at this time.

Table 5.1. Average Hourly Wages at Twenty Texas Cotton Mills for 1927.

Job Title	Texas average hourly wage	North Carolina wage	South Carolina wage	Georgia wage
Spinners	.245	.230	.213	.220
Doffers	.312	.282	.260	.282
Loom Fixers	.416	.411	.377	.372
Male weavers	.362	.353	.314	.297
Female weavers	.362	.316	.276	.284

Source: Grossman, *The Possibilities of Cotton Manufacturing in Texas*, Exhibit III-A, 42.

Based on interviews with mill workers, the stretch-out did not have the impact in Texas that it did in the Southeast, whereas night work paid higher wages and was greeted positively. Workers in McKinney welcomed the chance to make 10 cents more per hour for night work. In the survey of textile mills conducted by the state labor department in 1928, only 8 mills out of 26 reported running night shifts. Texas workers were burdened with timekeeping devices used by mill owners to measure “productive time” that could be paid by the piece instead of the traditional daily wage. The labor department report showed women did make slightly more money at piece work mills, earning \$14.35 a week for skilled women compared to \$13.50 a week for skilled women

¹⁹ *Industrial Survey of Dallas* (Dallas: Industrial Dallas Inc., 1927), 11. In an effort to promote mill building in Dallas the report focused on the low level of female employment in manufacturing, only 3.9 percent of the population. Twenty-six percent of the factory labor force in Dallas was female. (29).

paid a regular wage.²⁰ Pick counters on looms and hank clocks on spinning frames allowed managers to monitor each machine under an employee to see that it was being run without little down time.²¹ Tennie Ireland detailed the struggle a spinner had with keeping a spinning frame operational.

They were long frames and there was a big roll of yarn that would come through vertically above my head and it went through different procedures, come out through rollers and made thread. And so we had to learn to, connect them you know, "put them up." As they (the cotton) come through the roller you had to learn how to put that up there. The thread moved through the top bobbins, rollers and on down the face of the machine. And that would run and spin on to a smaller bobbin. The (cotton) rope come in on a big bobbin which come from the card room and then we, from the big bobbin we'd run it onto a smaller one. And it was constant work you know, it would run a long time then a lot of times it would break and you'd have to go and tie it up again. It was interesting and a lot of work to it.

And you had to keep everything clean. What we did was, you could have a wad of cotton and we'd have to clean the frame. You had to open the top where this rope laid on top of it and you take it up when it would empty and replace it. And then if it was on that shelf so we'd have to keep that clean, wipe that and then the bottom then we had to go under those rollers and clean. [Note: while the machine was running to avoid losing money.]

You had to have a little apron to put the cotton in that rolled around made a, you know, a rest pad. And you also had to have a roller hook to clean that with and then you had to have a little old deal that you run through there to block it out to get this fuzz. You had to carry your tools in an apron and then you had to put your stuff as you go around, you know, if a bobbin up top about empty you pushed it, you know put a new one in and twist it and that [bobbin] you put in your pocket. You just cleaned it off and put it in your pocket. You *had* to have pockets. We laid the bobbins back up on top and there is a guy come along and pick those up. And then the bottom one, then see there was a man come along and he, after those bobbins got full, called the doffer he come along; that was his job to do that.

We worked straight through. You didn't have no breaks, no lunch breaks or nothing. If your job was caught all up you got to sit down and eat, if you didn't, you didn't.

²⁰ *Tenth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, State of Texas, 1927-1928* (Austin: Von Boeckmann Jones Company, 1928), 41.

²¹ Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 204-205.

After you were trained and you had your frames if you kept them running they had a clock on them and you got paid by what you run. So you really had to keep them running and you had to have a good doffer, too. And you know a lot of time the machines would breakdown, too. There's another guy that has to be employed to keep, to keep them fixed. So if your machine went down you'd lose that pay. Sometimes you had to stop it off. It got so far ahead of you, you was losing money too. And if the doffer was behind you lost money again.²²

Tennie's experiences mirror the work of a spinner who was featured in a column in *Textile World* published in 1928. The example details the cleaning tasks that a spinner had to complete. This was unpaid work which, according to the article, only occurred when the frames were stopped for doffing. Unlike Tennie's narrative, the girl in the article gives a pay rate 10 cents higher than Table 5.1 shown earlier, and maintains that 3 sides was a normal load of work.

A woman spinner is paid between 32 and 35 cents an hour. She is supposed to keep her machines clean, do all her own cleaning and sweeping up, and keep her waste sorted. She has to clean her gears when the machines are stopped to doff. The machines must be clean for best results. An operative running three sides of 100 spindles each will usually be kept busy while the machines are running keeping her ends up and piecing, depending of course on how well the work runs and the size. It is customary in many mills to allow a few minutes at the end of the day for cleaning, with the machines stopped, followed by cleaning under the frames and between the frames, sweeping out into the main aisle. The floor hand then sweeps up the waste in the main aisle.²³

Just as Tennie's story demonstrates the stretch-out was in place in the spinning room, Steve Powell's memory of his mother working 30 looms as the "top weaver" of the McKinney mill reinforces the position that under Clarence Miller the mill moved closer to the model southeastern cotton mill.²⁴ The promotion of new machines, professional management, and efficiency programs occurred across the Southeast. Clarence Miller's

²² Tennie Ireland oral history interview, November 14, 2006 by Deborah Kilgore, Garland, Texas, UNT.

²³ *Textile World*, "Questions and Answers: Service on Mill Problems and Correspondence with Readers," v. 74 no. 17 (October 1928), 61.

²⁴ Steve Powell oral history interview September 21, 2006 by Deborah Kilgore McKinney, Texas, UNT.

plans to add more spindles and looms to his mills followed by night work put McKinney's mill and the entire company into the mainstream of southern mill ownership. The entire industry was interested in keeping production climbing, reducing labor costs, and maintaining profits.²⁵ This pattern had a price that Miller would pay in 1929.

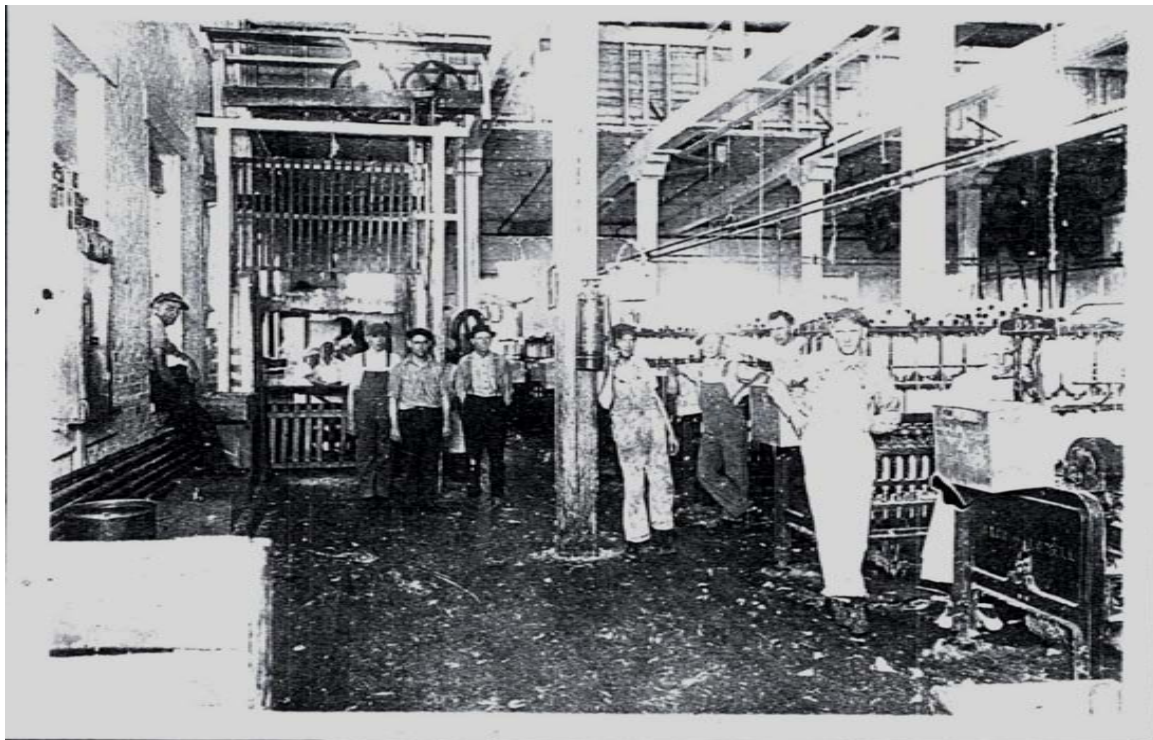


Figure 5.3. Male employees in the spinning room at McKinney mill. Photo courtesy of Steve Powell.

Historian Allen Tullos describes the mill owners of the Piedmont as enemies to themselves during the 1920s.

²⁵ Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 209.

Struggling to keep their companies afloat on the laissez-faire flood of production they helped to create, they created a panic with competitive price cutting, wage cutting, layoffs of long time workers, and the installation of new equipment. They ran night shifts to stretch costs across greater units of production, filling their warehouses but finding few buyers. Caught among commission houses merchants, the market and each other, many mill men led the parade of businesses into the Great Depression.²⁶

The same can be said for Clarence Miller. In early February 1929 stockholders in C. R. Miller Manufacturing were astonished to find company assets had experienced “considerable shrinkage.” Miller himself was forced to resign by the board and William B. Newsome, originally submitted November 30, 1928, called for a re-audit of the annual statement. The firm of Coats & Burchard found the fixed assets of the company described as textile mills and factories located in Dallas, McKinney, Waco (two mills), Nuevo Laredo, Chattanooga, and Kansas City worth “little more than \$4,000,000.” Even more glaring the total number of spindles was given as 45,000 spread over five mills. Had all Miller’s announced upgrades and expansions been implemented, the Dallas, McKinney, and Waco mills would have added in excess of 57,000 more spindles. Based on Faye Bible’s spindle count done in 1932, Miller had added just over 5,000 spindles to the McKinney mill.²⁷ The mills located in Oklahoma and Arkansas vanished as had the mill located in West, Texas. A prominent banker and rising power in Dallas, Robert L. Thornton, president of the Mercantile Bank and Trust Company, was appointed by Judge T. A. Work as receiver for the company. The company was found to have 3 or 4 months of orders on the books, enough for only 2 shifts. Warehouses held 13,000 bales of raw cotton and finished product that could be sold, profitably. The *Dallas Morning*

²⁶ Tullos, *Habits of Industry*, 173.

²⁷ Faye Bible, *Study of Texas Cotton Mills*, 25.

News reported the directors of the company and the hundreds of stockholders across Texas and Oklahoma were assured that in receivership the company could provide employment to the 600 employees living in company housing in Dallas, McKinney, and Waco while all creditors were satisfied. By June, based on these reports the mills should have closed, certainly there was an immediate reduction of workers as the third shift was cut, but the newspapers did not report any mills closing.²⁸

By September 3 the assets of what had been the C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company had attracted only a single bid, and it was from Texas Textile Mills, Incorporated. Described as “the stockholders of the Miller Company,” the company charter filed with the Texas Secretary of State shows this to be true. The original investors from McKinney or their heirs are listed including Mrs. Mary Boyd who still owned \$5,300 worth of stock. The investors in the Dallas mill, J. Perry Burrus, John W. Carpenter, and Robert Cannon from North Carolina, still held stock, and small stockholders from Waco and around the state were issued common shares. Clarence Miller was completely wiped out, but his brother Bryon did hold on to 403 common shares of stock in the new company. The new stockholders agreed as part of the sale to assume the debt of C. R. Miller Company owed to the Central Trust Company of Illinois for \$400,000 on a first mortgage and the \$1,300,000 owed to the Continental Illinois Bank and Trust Company on a second mortgage. These details make it apparent that the bankruptcy was for the purpose of writing off bad debts, shedding poor investments, preserving the mills, and protecting the investors.

²⁸ *Dallas Morning News*, February 23, 1929, p. 13. *Dallas Morning News*, September 3, 1929, p. 13. *Textile World*, “Mill News,” v. 75 no.10 (March 1929), 55.

According to the balance sheet for the new company, the Dallas, McKinney and Waco mills were collectively valued at \$3,473,343. The mill in Nuevo Laredo was worth \$112,133 and its inventory valued at \$55,189. Land and buildings in Fort Worth and Kansas City (clothing manufacturing not textile mills) were valued at \$100,000. As part of the sale of assets, the Texas Textile Mills bought all the property for \$1,000.00, and for the consideration of ten dollars the new company purchased everything else owned by C. R. Miller Manufacturing from R. L. Thornton on October 1, 1929. Miller also owed \$27,025 in local taxes for 1928 and 1929 and \$63,772 in wages, expenses and accounts payable.²⁹ The lack of inventory value for any of the American mills or factories suggests the backlog of orders and the 13,000 bales of stock had been disposed of prior to the sale. Unpaid wages implies that the workers may have been idle for some time. Whereas bankruptcy and reorganization were not unknown to Texas mills, not one of the former mill workers recalled the reason for the McKinney textile mills change in ownership or name. Published histories of the mill have never included these details.³⁰

Although the stock market crashed two weeks after the Texas Textile Mills began operating, the effect at first was muted in Texas.³¹ Both the Waco mill and the twine mill next door were reported to be running 12 hour days and employing 300 workers in February 1930. By April the Depression was beginning to be felt. Mills in Dallas,

²⁹ Copy of the Charter of the Texas Textile Mills Inc., file # 5555-8, ledger 20160, Office of the Texas Secretary of State, November 1, 1929.

³⁰ Melissa LaPrelle states the Texas Cotton Mill Company opened in October 1910. C.R. Miller Manufacturing purchased the McKinney mill in 1924, and changed the name in 1927 to the Texas Textile Mills. Her interview with Bryan C. Miller Jr. did not comment on any of the bankruptcies. Melissa LaPrelle, *Life and Times*, 4-24.

³¹ The Dallas Federal Reserve Bank reported that 1929 had the lowest number of business failures since 1920, but farmers had a backlog of low-grade cotton. "A noticeable recession occurred in the closing months due to reduced agricultural income and the eastern financial disturbances." *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, 1929* (Washington D. C.: GPO, n. d.), 5.

Houston, and San Antonio were operating but reporting surplus labor. If sharecroppers and tenant farmers were unable to find a position due to drought or economic conditions, they were classified by the state as surplus labor. The state had been directing agricultural workers to areas needing help since the First World War, but the Depression would overwhelm this effort. In 1930 the state reported 334,602 Texans needed work placement. By 1931 the number leapt to 537,939 to be sent into the fields to chop or pick cotton, bale hay, and do other agricultural jobs. Textile mills began to feel the impact of the Depression. The tire cord mill in Fort Worth closed.



Figure 5.4. Waco Cotton Convention cartoon by John Knott. Courtesy of the Dallas Historical Society, Dallas, Texas. Used by permission.

For the Texas Textile Mills business continued into February 1931 with the company re-electing the original board and reporting a low balance of liabilities to assets. Clarence R. Miller was elected to the operations committee, managing the mills. He was also serving as a director, suggesting he was able to purchase preferred stock in the Texas Textile Mills after 1930.³²

By summer the picture had darkened and the Waco textile mill closed. Families were allowed to stay in the mill village while the men rode the Interurban to Dallas or McKinney to work for the week. The Dallas and McKinney mills experienced sharp cutbacks in personnel and hours with the total workforce at both mills given as 800 and the hours of operation during the summer as only a single shift, 3 or 4 days a week. By August, Clarence Miller, serving as a spokesman for the company, was claiming that orders were up and the mills would soon return to running “full blast” with the Waco mill reopening “soon.”³³ These were not conflicting reports. Milton Everett of San Antonio published a monthly magazine named *Texas Industrial Resources* based on newspaper clippings. In October 1931 he reported that of 21 mills surveyed, 4 had closed, 6 were running half time, and 11 were full time. Unfilled orders totaled over 6 million yards of goods. By January 1932 orders were up, the New Braunfels mills had re-opened, and 21 mills were in operation out of the 27 open in 1929.³⁴ The *Directory of Texas Manufactures* listed the mills at Bowie, El Paso, Galveston, Gonzales, Kingsville, and San Antonio as “off line” by July 15, 1932. The Waxahachie and Bowie mills would

³² *Dallas Morning News*, February 5, 1930, p. 9. *Dallas Morning News*, April 16, 1930 p. 1. *Dallas Morning News*, February 11, 1931, p. 17. *Eleventh Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Texas, 1929-1930* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1931), 53. *Twelfth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Texas, 1931-1932* (Austin: Knape Printing Company, 1932), 29.

³³ Earl Muchow interview. *Dallas Morning News*, August 11, 1932, section 2, p. 6.

³⁴ Milton Everett, “Texas Cotton Mills” in *Texas Industrial Resources* (October 1931), n. p. Milton Everett, “*Texas Industrial Resources* (January 1932), n.p.

never reopen.³⁵ A report issued in 1933 by the U. S. Department of Agriculture included figures behind the reports. Cloth sales went from 36,000,000 yards in May 1932 to 128,000,000 by August, reflecting the backlog of orders Miller was seeing. Sales and orders remained high through April 1933 when ending the gold standard bumped prices up for 2 weeks. Sales were reported rising due to a falling dollar, positive attitude, and better prices. Raw cotton gained a penny each month for 1932 and cotton consumption by the mills reached a record 8,350,000 bales. The report also found that the consumption or processing tax the NRA added in August did not affect prices or consumption beyond the typical seasonal slowdown.³⁶

Bad times did not mean that the Texas Textile Mills did not support sporting events. The Depression may have ended the mill band's performances in McKinney, but the band hall was being used for basketball games. The Textile Mill Comets played women's basketball, while the Textile Mill Meteors, a men's team made up of mill workers who played ball at Boyd High, kept the men busy.³⁷ The baseball team played under the name of the Textile All Stars. Opal Wright remembers using the band hall as a roller skating rink, a popular pastime during the Depression.³⁸ The mill and the community around the mill pulled together to get through bad times.

Demonstrating the blending of the two is the 1933 McKinney city directory, which lists the cotton mill as a separate entry. It shows 152 cotton mill employees living in and around the mill block. Eighteen residents did not work for the mill and are listed as

³⁵ *Directory of Texas Manufactures*, 1932 (Austin: Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas, 1933), 21.

³⁶ Frederick V. Waugh with Carl C. Farrington and Maurice R. Cooper, *Recent Developments in the Domestic Cotton Textile Industry* (Washington D. C.: Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, September 15, 1933), 7-9.

³⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, February 3, 1932, p. 11. *Dallas Morning News*, December 25, 1932, p. 3.

³⁸ Opal Wright oral history interview.

Safeway or Wilson grocery employees, a cook, painter, storeowner, and the retired minister of the King Memorial Baptist Church. This makes the McKinney mill village different from the Waco mill, where only full-time employees could live due to limited housing, and from mill villages in the Piedmont. This represents the continuation of the McKinney pattern of blending city and mill that had not changed even under different ownership or unusual circumstances. One hundred and twenty seven children under the age of 18 were enumerated.³⁹ There was often a waiting list to get a mill house, which was always freshly painted and maintained by the company. In Waco the houses in the mill village were nicer than those in the surrounding neighborhood of Edgefield. Laura Tynes recalled that between tenants, the company would upgrade the houses by installing hot water in the bathroom and applying fresh paint. In contrast the homes in Edgefield, where mill workers who could not get into the village had to rent, did not even have sinks. Those with larger families would move up to the larger houses after a few months. Renters were required to keep the houses looking neat and clean, and many planted flowers along the pebbled paths and sidewalks.⁴⁰ There were no sidewalks, gutters, or curbs, and the streets were dirt or oil dirt. In McKinney the housing farthest from the mill consisted of 3 room duplex homes.

³⁹ Chamber of Commerce, *McKinney City Directory, 1933* (McKinney: Perkins & Wilson Printers, 1933), 87-89.

⁴⁰ Warren and Laura Tynes, oral history interview, August 9, 1995 by Sandra Denise Harvey, Waco, Texas for Institute for Oral History, Baylor. Calvin Carlile oral history interview, November 28, 1994 by Rebecca Sharpless, Waco, Texas Waco-McLennan County Project, Baylor University. John Davis White oral history interview, April 1, 2006 by Deborah Kilgore, McKinney, Texas, NTHC.



Figure 5.5. Duplex mill house Itasca, Texas. Photo by author.

New workers would be housed there first. Most of the houses consisted of single cottages of 4 rooms with the larger 5 room homes closest to the mill on the west side. One mill worker recalled rent at 6 dollars a month including water in 1935. Another recalled 60 cents per room. Electricity was extra. If employees did not get enough work to pay the light bill they unscrewed the bulbs around the house that week. Joe Finley's parents were mill workers from Alabama who were impressed in 1942 to find that McKinney's mill village offered gas stoves, a big improvement over the wood and coal burning stoves they left behind. Because of the heavy shade around parts of the mill village in McKinney, workers could not always grow crops as allowed at the Miller plant in Waco.⁴¹ Some of the trees in McKinney's mill block were peach trees enjoyed by all the workers. Chicken coops were allowed, and one resident traded eggs and chickens with local farmers and other mill workers. A five-gallon bucket for food waste was collected by a local pig farmer who then offered a portion of the slaughter in return. Milk, eggs, and butter were delivered by vendors in McKinney according to Billy Don Kanady. The iceman made deliveries memorable in the following manner.

⁴¹ Mill block residents could use a 12 X 12 plot per family several blocks from the mill by the Brazos River to grow crops. These were grown cooperatively with one family raising corn while the next grew tomatoes. Warren and Laura Tynes oral history interview.

I can tell you a little bit about the ice man. He drove an old truck with ice in it. And he had a leather pouch on his back to keep the ice from freezing his back and a pair of tongs where he picked it up and threw it on his back. We were always following along behind the truck to get another chip of ice as he chipped it off. And he took an old coil from a Model A and rigged it up where he could crank it and shock us before we could get it. We get a hold of it and he'd shock us trying to keep us from messing around that truck.⁴²

Laura Tynes of Waco recalled the black assistant to the iceman would not enter into the mill village but waited outside with the truck. In McKinney 5 black employees of the mill were scattered around the area known as "the Run" within a mile of the mill. As children many of those interviewed remembered workers who kept a horse or mule if they lived along the edge of the mill village. Opal Wright's husband kept a cow that she was afraid of, for milk. When the cow would get loose, Opal would call the mill for help catching it.⁴³

Behind the company office was the Cotton Mill Cafe under the management of J. H. Willis who lived at 609 Elm Street. Only two grocery stores survived to serve mill employees, A. W. Cole at 601 Elm and Wilson & Bevel at 500 Elm. Next door to Cole's Grocery is Cole's Dry Goods, a small dress and notions store serving the wives and mill workers. Jack Hill began working at Wilson's as a delivery boy, but by the end of the decade he would be hired away at better wages by Coles. Working at the mill held no promise for Jack. The dry goods store would serve the mill workers as a union hall in the 1940s and 1950s. Burnett's lunch room provided meals to workers in the neighborhood. A worker who moved out of the mill block was W. A. "Tight" Tyler, a fixer

⁴² Billy Don Kanady oral history interview, October 24, 2006 by Deborah Kilgore, Anna, Texas, UNT.

⁴³ Laura Tynes oral history interview. Billy Don Kanady oral history interview. Opal Wright oral history interview.

who brought his family of mill workers from Mississippi to McKinney in the 1920s. A fixer was the highest paid employee in a department after the overseer. Jeanette Bailey, Tyler's daughter, remembers her father was able to buy an empty lot near the mill and move a house on to it for his wife, who worked as a spinner, and 4 children. This allowed him to plant a garden and raise pigs; the meat was smoked in their smoke house. Instead of walking to the square on Saturday, the family would ride in a 1934 car, stopping first at the Jockey Lot for groceries and perhaps fresh tamales. Watching their spending was obviously worth the effort.⁴⁴ Other male employees who obtained high positions at the mill would follow this pattern. Eddie Powell would purchase a home on Wilcox Street and Opal Wright's family would also move out of the mill village to live in town.



Figure 5.6. Opal Wright's home, several blocks from the mill. Photo by author, 2008.

⁴⁴ Chamber of Commerce, *McKinney City Directory, 1933* (McKinney: Perkins & Wilson Printers, 1933), 87-89. Jack Hill oral history interview. Jeanette Bailey oral history interview.

Single workers lived in the only 2 story housing inside the mill block, a boarding house run in the 1930s by Jettie May Davis White, mother of John Davis White. A single woman, she met and married a mill worker while running the house. John Davis recalls between 8 and 10 men resided at the boarding house. Meals, cleaning, and laundry were included in the rent. With her savings and a loan from Mrs. J. P. Dowell, wife of a local business owner and mill investor, Jettie May was able to buy an abandoned icehouse just 3 lots north of the mill on Hamilton Street. John Davis recalls a man driving old broom handles down the floor drainage holes, cut flush to make a solid floor so they could live in the structure. The loan was paid back quarterly even as the ice house was remodeled and expanded into an independent boarding house, first for mill workers in the 1940s and 1950s and later for senior citizens.⁴⁵

Just outside the mills churches grew up. In McKinney, the King Memorial (Baptist) Church was built in part by mill workers. The workers recalled spending their spare time and money buying bricks and laying them over many months as they could afford to. No one interviewed, however, could offer any example of the church offering community services to the mill families. The church was named for the pastor of the First Baptist Church in McKinney at the time the mill opened. Unlike the churches found in the Southeast near cotton mills there is no evidence the King Memorial Church was supported or staffed by the mill owners. In addition to a Baptist church, McKinney and the Dallas plant also had Assembly of God churches near the mill villages. In Waco, the Edgefield Baptist Church offered a daycare with playground for mill children and ran a soup kitchen in 1934 and 1937 when the mill was closed. It also helped the wives left

⁴⁵ John Davis White oral history interview.

behind when the men left to find work. From interviews with mill employees it seems likely that the Edgefield church did not receive any direct support for its humane work.⁴⁶

The tremendous employee churn covered in previous chapters continued through the 1930s. In interview after interview the children of the McKinney and Waco mill recall a parent, aunt, uncle, or sibling who traveled from mill to mill looking for a better life. The *1933 McKinney City Directory* lists multiple adult members of a family sharing a house along with wives and children. Sometimes all adults were cotton mill employees; sometimes only a single adult was. This was different from mills in the Southeast where owners recruited large families so everyone could work in the mill. Overseers like Pearlie Odle and J. L. Janes lived alongside employees. The new superintendent Frank Smith rented the cottage shown below in the 1920s, purchasing it for his growing family by the 1930s. Like most of the front office employees he drove to work.⁴⁷ At some point during the 1920s a large covered shed was built to provide shelter for the overseer's and manager's cars.

⁴⁶ Baylor University Oral History Institute has been amassing information on the Edgefield community and Edgefield Baptist Church. The men used the Interurban to commute to McKinney or Dallas for the week to work and returned home when the work ran out. Earl Muchow oral history interview.

⁴⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, April 2, 1933 section 2, p.11. *Dallas Morning News*, June 28, 1933, p. 3. *Dallas Morning News*, July 12, 1933, section 2, p. 1. Simon, *Fabric of Defeat*, 86. Steve Powell oral history interview.



Figure 5.7. Frank W. Smith home through 1938. Photo by author 2009.

Despite Clarence Miller's optimistic outlook for the mills, business did not improve enough to keep the Waco mill running, cutting into any possible profits. Because the mills had to pay 7 percent interest on the mortgages plus money to the stockholders, it did not take long for the new company to be sued for failing to keep current. On April 2, 1933, an application for intervention was filed against the Texas Textile Mills. Miller claimed the mills were "fine" and characterized the lawsuit as a dispute between classes of stockholders. More likely the dispute rested in part on the death of J. Perry Burrus 2 months earlier. The settlement of his estate may have required the sale of thousands of shares of stock as the Great Depression destroyed stock values. A solution for everyone, workers and management, was on the way.

President Roosevelt's New Deal promised help to the cotton mills through the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) and a series of price supports for farmers and labor, via the National Recovery Administration (NRA). To set prices the NRA leaned on those with experience, including members of the Cotton Textile Institute and other similar organizations. Clarence Miller's position with the Cotton Textile Institute meant he could directly help set the wages of his employees and the price of goods produced by the mill. The textile code, the first to be published under the NRA, set a minimum wage, outlawed the night shift, barred child labor and appeared to address the stretch-out. By June the mills had orders up 60 percent from the year before in anticipation of higher prices. Both the McKinney and Dallas mills had 2 shifts working 55 hours to fill orders. Wages were supposed to rise 20 percent giving every worker 10 dollars a week. When the law gave southern workers 12 dollars a week, celebrations broke out. John Edward and Bessie Powell were married after this wage increase. After living for a few weeks with different family members around the mill village, they rented 2 rooms from Mrs. Hattie Crosby at 41 Clark Street and set up housekeeping. They had 3 cups, 3 plates, and 3 forks in case someone dropped by for a visit.⁴⁸

On October 13, 1933, the McKinney mill hired an additional 250 workers to meet surging demand. Rising wages in town and the prospect of jobs finally replicated the pattern of labor in the Southeast for Texas mills. Former tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and farm hands found themselves forced off the land and into towns and mills.

Landowners used farm price payments from the government to buy machines, replacing sharecroppers. Seasonal laborers whose jobs were based on planting to picking were

⁴⁸ *Dallas Morning News*, April 2, 1933, section 2, p. 11. *Dallas Morning News*, June 28, 1933, p. 3, *Dallas Morning News*, July 12, 1933, section 2, p. 1. Simon, *Fabric of Defeat*, 86. Steve Powell oral history interview.

replaced with wage labor for the harvest alone. As farms “went bust” families moved to town to work at the mill. Ernest Brown’s father and mother were sharecroppers in Ellis County. While his parents went into the Waco mill as weavers in 1933, Ernest joined the Civilian Conservation Corps and went to New Mexico for 3 years. Blaine Hall’s father kept his mule for plowing the garden for vegetables but made sure his son had a job at the mill as a doffer. Jack Hill’s father ran a small store south of McKinney, but when the farmers could not pay he tried barter then closed up and moved the family into town.⁴⁹ Jack would go to work making grocery deliveries for the stores serving the mill and village in McKinney.

“It was hard on everybody. Everybody was poor...it was just hard times,” according to Blaine Hall. Opal Wright recalled hunting for squirrels because that was the only meat for the week. Billy Don Kanady made his own fun with whatever he could find. Slingshots and rubber guns made from tree limbs whittled down to the correct size and shape and armed with rubber strips made from flat tires. Airplanes were made from tarpaper shingles, tin cans were wrapped around worn out shoes for playing in the mud ditches and slats from his mother’s blinds were slit into thin strips and used for making kites.⁵⁰

Higher wages meant higher prices which left workers still struggling. John Eddie Powell noted that overalls went from 69 cents to 99 cents a pair.⁵¹ With the mill owners controlling both the price of finished goods and employee wages, the stage was set for

⁴⁹ Volanto, *Texas, Cotton, and the New Deal*, 125-135. Ernest Brown oral history interview, October 2, 1996 by Peggy Rouh, Dallas, Texas UNT. Jack Hill oral history interview. Blaine Hall oral history interview.

⁵⁰ Blaine Hall oral history interview. Opal Wright oral history interview. Billy Don Kanady oral history interview.

⁵¹ Steve Powell oral history interview.

a rise in labor activism in the Southeast. Known today as the General Textile Strike of 1934, it was widespread, violent, and crushed by mill owners as earlier strikes had been. It is important to this history because for the first time Texas mills joined a national fight for building unions.

The textile code gave the Cotton Textile Institute the power to set work loads, wages, and production rates while asking the owners to give up 2 customs they already knew were problems, child labor and night work. For the workers the code appeared to give them a 40 workweek, good wages, an end to the stretch-out, and the opportunity to join a union. Since the mill owners controlled the Institute they had all the power to enforce the code as they saw fit. Owners like Clarence Miller saw a quick return to profits by squeezing workers' hours. In desperate times all the ingredients for trouble were present.⁵²

As detailed above, mill owners, wanting to get ahead of rising wages and burn off stockpiles of cheap cotton, increased production. Hiring improved, as did sales. For a moment the recovery appeared to take hold. By the fall of 1933 over-production once again led to packed warehouses and falling prices. Payrolls were slashed, workloads increased, and the stretch-out was renewed. Complaints went to the Cotton Institute, which blamed the government for setting wages too high and adding a processing tax to cotton goods. The processing tax, in particular, would provide the mechanism for the management of the Texas Textile Mills to solve its lawsuit problem. By refusing to pay the tax to the federal government the company was able to bank extra profits while running up a debt to the government. Settling the tax bill a few years later would allow the company to get out from under obligations to stockholders. But first the company,

⁵² Simon, *Fabric of Defeat*, 86-90.

like mill owners across the South, had to deal with rising labor trouble and a renewed push for unions.⁵³

Strikes began in the Piedmont in the fall of 1933. As organizers from the United Textile Workers Union (UTWU) picked up the threads and contacts from past strikes, mill owners countered with strikebreakers, private police forces, and National Guard units armed with machine guns. When the NRA board charged with settling the strike simply ordered everyone back to work, cases of “cheating the code” were heard, and strikers found the gates locked against them as mill owners hired new hands out of “surplus labor.” Strikes, lockouts, and violence continued across the South through the winter as both sides waited for the NRA board to “live up to the Code.” At the Crown Mills in Dalton, Georgia, the company’s failure to live up to the code led to the formation of a UTWU local named by the mill owners as the new “industrial relations committee” in an attempt to create a company union concerned only with the Crown Mills and not with the national union. When the company informed the union representative “there was no deliberate speed up or stretch-out, the new, technologically advanced machines simply ran faster,” it put the seal on worker grievances.⁵⁴ In May, 1934 the NRA board without any textile worker or union input ruled to cut production 25 percent to solve the problem of overproduction. It made no attempt to address wage cuts, the stretch-out, or “code chiseling.” This was a win for the owners and a drastic cut in hours for mill

⁵³ Ibid., 91-96. Bryant Simon reported that between August 1933 and August 1934 the Textile Code Authority received almost 4,000 complaints of code violations, investigated only 96 and ruled in the worker’s favor only once.

⁵⁴ Flammig, *Creating the Modern South*, 196-198.

workers. In response the United Textile Workers met in August and called for a general strike for September 1, Labor Day.⁵⁵

In Texas mill owners moved swiftly to cut off any rise in union activity. On August 18, as strikes spread across the South, Clarence Miller announced that the Texas Textile Mills were safe from the general strike. The 1,500 employees of mills in Dallas, McKinney, and Waco,

...are not organized and have no affiliation with those eastern mills, many of whom are foreigners. We have a large inventory for the purpose of giving regular work under the NRA codes. They are entirely satisfied and have made no demands.⁵⁶

On Labor Day many workers at southern mills put in their normal half Saturday and then attended Labor Day rallies. Mill owners might have believed for a moment that this strike would follow the pattern of earlier actions, scattered shutdowns most over within a few days. This time the strike caught fire. By September 4, 200,000 had walked out, September 5 added another 125,000 and by the first week an estimated 400,000 workers had walked out. The pattern in Texas was slightly different. On September 2, Clarence Miller reported workers at 24 mills in Texas had “asked” to work on Labor Day. The reason for working on what was normally a holiday was

to provide a little extra cash on the piece work basis since the termination of the thirty hour week last Tuesday. Workers in our mills (Dallas, McKinney, and Waco) are of a type entirely different type from those involved in the strike. Most of them are high school graduates. They are convinced there is no need of a strike as we have promised them concessions or advantages which workers gain by the strike there will be granted here. The strike has stiffened prices and increased orders in

⁵⁵ Simon, *Fabric of Defeat*, 96-99, 109-110. A general strike would close down all union mills around the region and mill workers would try and close all mills to pressure owners faced with losing money just as the cotton season began.

⁵⁶ *Dallas Morning News*, August 18, 1934, section 2, p.1. Note: Foreigners in this case meant Communists. Miller is using the same approach used by the Open Shop movement in 1920.

Texas. Dealers have placed many orders with mills in which there are no unions.⁵⁷

Miller, like many mill owners was overly optimistic. One of the mills in Houston was closed by strikers the next day. An estimated 300 pickets, including women got into a fight with police and on-lookers by September 4. Researcher Ruth Allen noted that one mill in Texas was represented by the Textile Workers Union in 1934, possibly this striking mill. The mill owner, trying to bridge the gap between labor and Texas mill interests, posted a notice on the gates.

The mill would remain open three days a week in the face of no demand for goods and would give work to those who desired it. The mill would not hire persons to take the place of those on strike.⁵⁸

During these dark days Frank Smith, the mill superintendent, packed a pistol to work when entering the gates meant braving crowds of desperate people in line for a possible job, a common scene at mills during the strike. By ramping up production during the normally slack summer months, then cutting the guaranteed 30 hour work week just before the general strike, Texas mill owners successfully stopped any movement towards unions without losing possible sales if a mill was closed.

By September 13 the source of those “many orders, growing demand, and stiffening prices,” was discovered to be the federal government. The Waco mill received an order for 800,000 yards of ticking for government mattresses under the Federal Emergency Relief Agency. The mill, which had been closed for a year, was reported to employ 350 for 5 days a week in two 8 hour shifts. Laura and Warren Tynes had a different memory. When the mill re-opened, their father serving as a fixer worked

⁵⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, September 2, 1934, section 2, p.1.

⁵⁸ Allen, *Chapters in the History of Organized Labor in Texas*, 158. *Dallas Morning News*, September 5, 1934, p.1.

12 hours a night for 6 days a week, earning 9 dollars an hour. The McKinney plant received orders for 400,000 yards of ticking and would do all the dying for all 3 plants. The price per yard was given as between 12 and a half cents and 13 cents with the contract to end in January. At the same time the Brazos Valley Mill in West, Texas, received orders for 500,000 yards of ticking. This news also casts a poor light on Miller's earlier statement that all 3 mills were in operation before the strike. By cutting hours and, therefore, wages before the strike, promising to allow any strike concessions won elsewhere to be implemented in Texas mills, and then by announcing substantial jobs as the strike grew across the country and showed signs of arriving in Texas, the mill owners stopped Texas mills from joining the General Strike of 1934. The textile mill owners put off for a few more years the arrival of unions.⁵⁹

The strike failed across the South after 3 weeks when the workers outnumbered the resources of the union. No concessions would be made.⁶⁰ It is notable that in 1934 the majority of textile mill workers in Texas mills did not follow the pattern of mills in the Southeast and join the strike. It remains a surprise that even workers at one mill attempted to join given the harsh reception strikes received around the state.

With the union threat over, the owners of the Texas Textile Mills could return to running the mills according to their own rules. Child labor increased; Blaine Hall and Opal Wright in McKinney went to work at age 14, below the legal limit. While both dropped out of school and went to work to help their families, Blaine recalled that all the doffers on his shift were boys. Opal's mother was unable to afford clothes for her

⁵⁹ *Dallas Morning News*, September 13, 1934, p. 3. *Dallas Morning News*, September 22, 1934, p. 3. Blaine Hall oral history interview. Opal Wright oral history interview. Laura and Warren Tynes oral history interview.

⁶⁰ Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 349-350.

beyond the sixth grade. Girls were expected to get married and set up housekeeping, and Opal like many girls had been serving as a “mother’s helper” to other working women in the mill village. This meant after getting her own family’s breakfast, she went to help other women get their children off to school. Sometimes Opal did some light housework. When a boy stole a kiss during an outing in Finch Park, Opal, like many girls in mill families, dropped out of school, married and went to work in the mill. Money was so tight that Opal used her Easter dress for a wedding dress after earning enough to pay off the lay-a-way. In Waco Earl Muchow’s sister went into the dye house at age fourteen.⁶¹

For the mill to increase profits it meant getting rid of the 4 cent cotton processing tax the mill was having to pay. As a representative of the company, Clarence Miller traveled with mill men from Belton, Cuero, Dallas, Denison, Hillsboro, Itasca, New Braunfels, Mexia, and Post to Washington D. C. to lobby for relief. Miller testified at a hearing that his mills were paying \$2.40 for an 8 hour day under the NRA while Japan, using Texas cotton, was paying children between 90 cents and \$1.25 for a 7 day week. Seven mills in Texas had already closed and another seemed likely to follow if the government did not waive the tax and restrict imports.⁶² By April, Miller shifted tactics and demanded the government be fair and slap a processing tax on silk and rayon. The use of silk in American mills had been declining for 6 years, and rayon did not fit the profile of a natural commodity suffering from weak prices due to over production,

⁶¹ Blaine Hall oral history interview. Opal Wright oral history interview. Earl Muchow oral history interview. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 160, 163, 170.

⁶² *Dallas Morning News*, March 27, 1935, p. 9. Although the closed mills are not listed, the absence of men from Corsicana, El Paso, San Antonio, Houston, Brenham, Bonham, and Sherman suggests those were the mills in trouble.

weakening his case. Complaining about the processing tax was a regular feature of any gathering of cotton men. W. L. Clayton of Anderson, Clayton Company of Houston the largest shipper of cotton in Texas spoke at Southern Methodist University on why mills were struggling.

Cotton is in keen competition with rayon, silk, wool, mohair, sisal, hemp and other fibers which remain untaxed. The NRA has imposed an increase of seventy per cent in hourly wage rates in the cotton textile industry and at the same time the workweek has been reduced from an average of fifty-four hours to a maximum of forty hours. All of these have contributed to a shrinkage of domestic consumption and the increased price of cotton goods.⁶³

As the Texas Textile Mills unpaid processing tax bill grew to alarming proportions, the company turned all the levers it could to keep as much cash on hand as possible. In April the Waco mill was ordered closed, throwing 300 workers onto public relief. Miller, as the newly elected president of the company, claimed that the processing tax and Japanese imports made it impossible to keep operating. The *Directory of Texas Manufactures* listed the distribution of each product made by a mill. Whereas the McKinney and Dallas mills had national distribution, the Waco mill was always listed as international. Considering the frequent closing of the Waco mill during the 1930s, this suggests that the problem was not imports from Japan as much as a declining overseas market.⁶⁴ By June the company filed for federal bankruptcy under section 77 B for solvent companies. Judge W. T. Atwell set September 14 for reorganization after denying the government petition for a change in company management.

⁶³ W. L. Clayton, "Our Vanishing Markets," in *The Cotton Crisis Proceedings of the Second Conference Institute of Public Affairs January 31 and February 1, 1935*, S. D. Myres Jr. ed. (Dallas: George F. and Ora Nixon Arnold Foundation, Southern Methodist University), 30.

⁶⁴ *Directory of Texas Manufactures*, (Austin: Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas, 1933), p. 21.

According to the bankruptcy filing the company owed the government \$323,723 in back taxes. Assets were listed as worth \$2,891,749 in property and goods, but it was unable to meet its obligations, although the company lawyer admitted that even after the back taxes were paid, the company held \$235,000 more in assets than liabilities.⁶⁵ Before proceeding it is worth looking at the material produced by the mill.

What did the McKinney mill produce? Historically there were three types of fabric produced by the mill; cottonades, ticking, and denim. Denim was featured in most advertising and was the only fabric recalled in interviews. The samples gathered by Faye Bible for her study in 1932 show both the Waco and McKinney mills making denim. Was Japan really going to drive the Texas Textile Mills out of business because of imported denim? In the 1920s McKinney was supplying general store vendors, clothing manufactures, and possibly the large Sears warehouse in Dallas with cottonade and denim. However, cottonade was a fabric rapidly falling out of favor, so the mill needed to change product lines by 1925 when Clarence Miller began his expansion. In 1927, a garment factory opened in McKinney with plans to make men's under garments and shirt collars using a finer weave than cottonade. This suggests that the mill was producing a finer fabric than heavy grades of work denim and awning fabric. By 1939 three mattress factories opened, using ticking and denim, which was a specialty of the Waco plant. Between 1945 and 1968 the Texas Textile Mills was famous for making Tex-Tex, a type of sport denim. The mills were collectively billed over the years as the

⁶⁵ *Dallas Morning News*, April 16, 1935, p. 9. *Dallas Morning News*, May 8, 1935, p. 9. *Dallas Morning News*, June 27, 1935, p. 7.

largest denim producer west of the Mississippi.⁶⁶ But what did the mill produce between 1927 and 1938? No one seemed to recall what enabled the mill to keep going through the Great Depression.⁶⁷

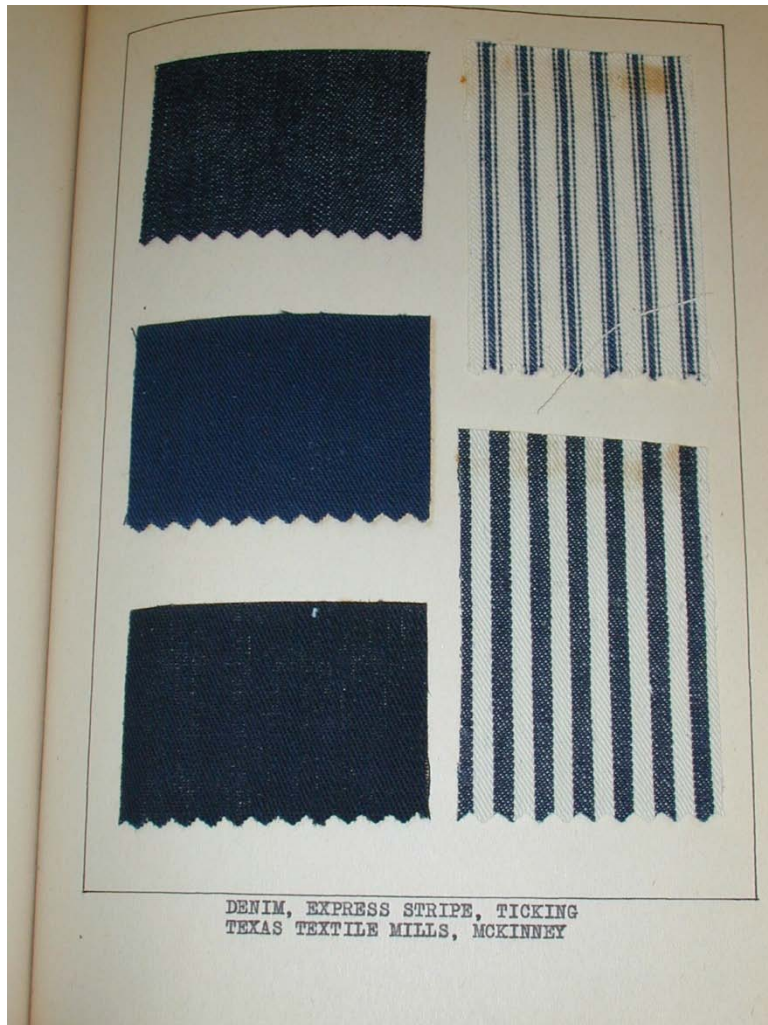


Figure 5.8. McKinney Mill Fabric from 1932. Denim on the left, ticking on lower right. Photo by author from Faye Dehn Bible, "A Study of the Texas Cotton Mills and Their Products," plate XI, p. 44. Photo by permission of the Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University.

⁶⁶ *Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide* (Dallas: A. H. Belo Publishing, 1939), 234. Faye Bible, *A Study of Texas Cotton Mills*, 42, 45.

⁶⁷ Jack Smith oral history interview.

Based on 2 of 3 recently discovered loose leaf binders for the years 1932 to 1947 found under the mill, this information can now be filled in. On January 25, 1932, an order was placed for hickory stripe pattern ticking with unfinished edges, white with mix of 15 percent blue. Two orders in May and June of 1933 totaled 6,000 yards of ticking. By 1935 there was a change to a new pattern of twill ticking and order frequency increased to once a month. Order sizes increased to 10,000 then 12,000 yards by 1936. Since these orders do not match the large quantity listed for the FERA orders in 1934, it is safe to assume these notebooks are for independent orders raised by the company salesmen, 2 of whom continued to work during the Depression. In July 1938, a new material was ordered called herringbone napped suiting in patterns of black and brown, blue, gray and black, red and brown, and all black. Special finishes like whipcord were added. In June 1937, the plant was once again handling multiple fabric types with orders for 9,500 yards of whipcord and an order for cottonade in the same week. The first reference to denim was an order for Montauk denim in March 1938.⁶⁸ Although these notebooks do not reflect the total number of orders the mill and company received between 1933 and 1937, the evidence is strong that the mill was generating much of its income from government orders not subject to competition from Japanese imports. A tax bill of \$323,723 implies the

⁶⁸ Texas Textile Mill Papers. The binders hold production sheets giving the date, type of material, pattern numbers or names, dye colors, special instructions, width and length of an order. See Figure 6.1. for an example. Note: John Hoyer describes the fabric produced by the Texas Textile Mills as mill finished denim and twill. Hickory and express stripes were used for overalls, work shirts, and work clothes including caps favored by railroad workers. Sandforizing or sizing was a starch bath applied to the yarn to shrink the fabric and soften it. Like dyeing this is a finishing step. Express stripe is the pattern found in mattress ticking (regular spaced stripes) while hickory stripe featured narrow bands of color and wide bands of white. Whipcord and cottonade are twills with pronounced diagonal pattern often in brown, green and gray it is used for seat coverings, pants and uniforms. Cottonades give the appearance of narrow striped suit material (think of pin stripes suits). Hoyer, *Staple Cotton Fabrics*, 135-136, 146-147.

mills had produced in less than 3 years in excess of 800,000 yards of cotton fabric. Simply put, Japanese imports, like the “unfair” processing tax were a smokescreen for keeping profits high while wages and hours were held down.

The announced reorganization of the Texas Textile Mills did not occur in September 1935. Robert L. Thornton, who had a role in the bankruptcy of the C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company, was interested in the mills, but he and most of the business leaders in Dallas were involved with the Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas due to open in 1936. A series of extensions were granted sending the reorganization into June 1936. The Waco mill reopened in January 1936 with 125 employees working a single 8 hour shift. The Corsicana mill, the first in the state to have automatic looms, was reported still to be running half shifts, making bags for picking season and filling Civilian Conservation Corps orders. In a tour by M. E. Heard, the head of textile engineering at Texas Technological College, mills in Ft. Worth, McKinney, Sherman, and Denison were found to be running “at capacity.” Other mills reported in operation were Hillsboro, Itasca, Mexia, New Braunfels, Waco, and West.⁶⁹ Textile mills showed signs of life but not of growth or stability.

The reorganization of the Texas Textile Mills began to unfold beginning in May 1936. Published accounts detailed the property located in Fort Worth and Kansas City would be sold, as would the Love Field mill. Bondholders were offered the choice of getting 40 dollars for each one hundred dollar bond or getting 5 percent of each new bond offered. Profits realized from the sale of the 3 properties would be invested in the remaining mills in Waco and McKinney. One month later the bondholders were being offered 50 percent value, suggesting that unlike the bankruptcy of 1929, this filing was

⁶⁹ *Dallas Morning News*, January 23, 1936, section 2, p. 7. *Dallas Morning News*, June 16, 1936, p. 12.

designed to wipe out stockholders who had grown tired of waiting for profits and dividends to return while avoiding getting a loan to improve and modernize the mills. The mill in Waco would receive \$40,000 in improvements, including installation of high speed spooling, warping, and long-draft roving machinery. The McKinney mill was supposed to gain \$60,000 in improvements. High speed machinery meant the stretch-out would continue and hiring would decrease. When the NRA was invalidated by the Supreme Court in 1935, mill owners increased hours and cut wages. In Texas, the 1,300 women employed in cotton mills saw their wages drop from \$10.90 cents a week in 1935 to \$10.30 cents in 1936 according to Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor. Mill owners who had reduced wages from an average of \$14.35 a week for skilled women in 1928 to \$12.00 a week in 1933 could congratulate themselves on effective management of the situation. Certainly the outcome of the bankruptcy of the Texas Textile Mills would lead to improved profitability as the nation began to exit the Depression.⁷⁰

The new Texas Textile Mills would be a private company owned by 12 men, including T. E. Craig, A. M. Scott, and F. B. Perkins of McKinney. Craig, who worked for Texas Power and Light, had served as the Collin County chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation along with Perkins. All 3 men were listed as having interests in investments or real estate during the Depression. Three investors from the original Waco mill joined the new company including Clarence Miller, but leaving out his brothers, and 5 from the original Dallas mill. The twelfth owner/investor was Robert L. Thornton. The first new mortgage was issued by the Republic National Bank and Trust of Dallas, owned by Thornton's partner in the Texas State Fair, Fred Florence. The

⁷⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, May 12, 1936, p. 7. *Dallas Morning News*, June 23, 1936, p. 2. *Dallas Morning News*, June 28, 1936, p. 15. *Dallas Morning News*, October, 14, 1936, section 2, p. 8. *Dallas Morning News*, November 18, 1936, p. 3.

debt on the original mortgage was listed at \$228,000 to be redeemed by April 1943. The second mortgage was with City National Bank and Trust of Chicago. The interest rate was reduced to 5 percent. As each unpaid bond was paid off, the number of directors would be reduced by one, meaning ownership would slowly be reduced to just a few. The twelve owners purchased all the assets of the old company for over \$1,125,000.00, giving the company a value in stock and property of \$2, 225,000.00.

On December 12, 1936, the bankruptcy entered the final stage with a Saturday hearing to determine fees for the banks, the comptroller, and the bondholders. Instead of tearing down the mill at Love Field, the mill was leased to the Texas Textile Mills. The lease suggests some of the new owners were less interested in the textile mills as businesses and more interested in the long-range potential of land in industrial districts served by expanding transportation systems. The entire process had lasted 19 months.⁷¹

Between 1926 and 1936 the textile mill at McKinney experienced a boom with the return of mill fever and an expansion-minded owner with traditional ideas of mill ownership. It also endured a bust with 2 bankruptcies and the Great Depression. During this decade the mill moved closer to the traditional southeastern mill model of over production and falling wages, child labor, and the stretch-out, yet Texas mill owners managed to fend off any attempt by workers to join unions by manipulating wages and hours for a short time only to return to the old pattern once the danger was past. Going forward, the mill workers would play a role during the Second World War, join the

⁷¹ *Dallas Morning News*, November 15, 1936, p. 9. Copy of the Charter of the Texas Textile Mills file # 70273, ledger # 33721, Texas Secretary of State Office, October 1, 1936. *Dallas Morning News*, December 12, 1936, p. 12.

Textile Workers Union, experience a natural disaster, and finally descend into slow decline along with the majority of mills in Texas.

CHAPTER 6

SWEPT AWAY, 1936-1967

In the previous four chapters the history of the cotton textile mill at McKinney moved from an individual mill responsive to the community it served in Texas, a state with an employment pattern based on male, not female or child labor in the mills to a mill operated according to the southeastern model that dominated American textile mills in the early twentieth century. This model relied on keeping wages low in order to remain competitive. The labor of women and children undercut the wages of men working at the same jobs. Company towns offered independent farm families a way out of the fields at the price of autonomy. The use of automatic machines that did not require a skilled workforce and could be run at a killing pace helped southern mills keep their advantage over northern mills in the 1920s. Hostility to unions, to government regulation, and to challenges to a workplace privileged by race was the hallmark of the southeastern mill pattern. After the Texas Textile Mill was purchased by 12 investors in 1936, the pattern changed again as the threads of history blended common experiences of southern textile mills with local and state events. These created a unique weave as the history of the mill drew to a close.

From 1936, McKinney's mill would reach its maximum employment level after modernization, be drawn into the 1938 Texas governor's race and the national debate over unions in southern mills, play a role in World War II, experience a natural disaster that closed the mill for over a year, and survive a major strike in 1954 before closing in 1967.

As a result of the 1936 bankruptcy, the mill owners in McKinney and Waco invested thousands of dollars in new, more efficient machines. New machines reduced the number of operators needed per machine, however, expansion at each mill would increase the number of operators required. Expansion, in the form of adding shifts rather than adding buildings, was the most cost efficient. In a study, conducted by Barnes Textile Associates of Boston, the experts discovered that new machines required less custom repair work, lasted longer due to better lubricants, and ran longer between regular servicing. Larger bobbins on spinning frames reduced the number of doffers needed. Reducing vibration in the looms, increasing the size of bobbins and the speed of the machines had improved weaving by 20 percent.¹

Comparing sheeting mills in the Southeast, this study found that new machines offered substantial savings. One example of the improvements possible was the spooling machine. In 1910 a hand-operated spooler could remove 300 yards of thread a minute from a bobbin. By 1936 an automatic machine could remove 1,200 yards a minute. Improved machines in the spinning room included the introduction of long draft ring spinning frames with 272 spindles each over the smaller 224 spindles ring frames of 1910. This machine efficiency reduced the number of spinners needed from 56 to 23 per shift. Doffing had a smaller reduction from 19 to 14 per shift. Jobs filled by men increased from 44 to 51, while jobs for women decreased. In the weave room the impact on women is harder to find because both men and women tended the looms, however, in 1910 an average mill might employ 70 weavers, whereas in 1936 the

¹ *Survey of Technological Improvements and Developments in the Cotton Textile Industry, 1910 to 1936* (Boston: Barnes Textile Associates, Inc., n. d.), 5. Box 45/4 Alonzo B. Cox Papers, CAH, University of Texas at Austin, Texas.

number had dropped to 22. Total employment in the weave room did not decrease by much as new jobs were created.²

Higher speeds and greater reliability reduced the number of employees in every department. In the carding room with 126 fewer total employees the decrease in man hours was 52 percent. Spinning dropped 28 percent, spooling and warping 62 percent, weaving 26 percent and in the cloth room 18 percent. The only increase was in miscellaneous labor like the bobbin cleaner. In Texas the mill located in Mexia was frequently mentioned in *Textile World* magazine as installing new, faster machines during 1937. Mills that had been idle in Brenham, Kingsville, Cuero, and Gonzales came back on line as orders picked up, however, renovation not construction ruled these mills. Clearly the improvements in mill machinery meant a reduced need to build or expand mills and a reduced workforce. Mill fever had finally run its course.³

In addition to new machines, the McKinney mill received an inspection for poor lighting in 1937. Called a “shadow-chasing campaign,” officials with Texas Power and Light, along with Superintendent Frank Smith, used a light meter throughout the mill to determine lighting needs after employees complained of headaches. The spinning room was found to have the worst lighting. By doubling the lighting to 800 lights the mill was able to end the headaches and increase production by 10 percent.⁴ The increase in production paid off for the employees with a 25 percent pay hike in April. An

² Ibid., 6-14.

³ Ibid., 15-18. *Textile World*, v. 87 #10 (September 1937), 155. *Textile World*, v. 87 #11 (October 1937), p.133, 147.

⁴ *Dallas Morning News*, January 24, 1937, p. 12.

additional 200 new employees were hired with the mill reporting 250,000 yards of cloth produced each week by three 8 hour shifts.⁵

Some of this production was being used by new businesses opening in McKinney. Three mattress companies were operating by 1938; Burnside Mattress was located on Virginia Street near the railroad. McTee Mattress was on Davis near the Jockey Lot and produced awnings in addition to mattresses. Ostrom Mattress was located on the ground floor of the Masonic Hall along the Interurban tracks. In addition to constructing mattresses, Ostrom made upholstery. The mill, therefore, was producing heavy fabrics again. Elm Street, where the mill was located was lined with businesses. Edelman, Coles, and Wilson's provided groceries while Bill Bailey ran a restaurant that doubled as a domino hall in the evening. Henry and John Yeatts ran the Cotton Mill Café behind the mill office, across the street sat the Textile Mill Café. Men could get a trim at Belts Barber Shop. The baseball ball fields at the South Ward School were lighted, and Finch Park had a swimming pool built.⁶

This surge in new city business, mill investment, and bigger paychecks was based on several factors. Child labor was abolished with the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938. Blaine Hall recalled being laid off by the mill for several months until he passed his sixteenth birthday. The Waco mill reported filling a large government order for denim requiring 315 employees, mostly men working two 10 hour shifts.⁷

⁵ *Dallas Morning News*, April 22, 1937, p. 17.

⁶ *McKinney Texas Con-Survey Directory* (Parsons, Kansas: Baldwin Con-Survey Company, 1940), n. p. The domino hall was a source of fascination to mill children. Jeanette Bailey recalled the air being filled with cigar smoke when she would be sent to fetch her father home. Others remembered rumors of a pet tiger. Maps of the area around the Waco mill (Edgefield) indicate a pool hall was across the street from the mill.

⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, August 21, 1938, p. 12.

When the Wage-Hour bill became law, the plant would move to a 44 hour week. With the lowest wage level removed, wages could rise for men and women. This mirrors government records that show hours increased from 33 hours per week in 1938 to nearly 37 hours a week in 1939. Wages went from 39 cents an hour in 1938 to 41 cents in 1940.⁸ Better labor laws helped push wages higher although not without continued resistance from mill owners like Clarence Miller.

Government spending increased to counter the unusual impact of forced crop reduction under the Agricultural Adjustment Act in Collin County. As noted in chapter 4, to deal with overproduction the government paid landowners to reduce acreage planted in cotton. This created a surplus of agricultural workers, replicating the source of cheap textile mill labor found in the Southeast. With the mills running reduced shifts or shutting down, Texas families provided a large pool of low-cost labor for many years. Black former sharecroppers could not work in the mills, but white men, viewed by managers as able to work harder, could go into the mills. If there were no jobs in the mills, workers moved on or took government work in the Works Progress Administration (WPA) that built the North Ward School in McKinney. Beth White Stapleton, the daughter of a cotton gin owner, attended the North Ward and remembered the excitement of having a new brick building instead of the clapboard structure from the 1900s. Her father, Hurbert White left behind a business based on cotton and cashed in on the revival of spending in McKinney by going into the automobile business.⁹

⁸ U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1941* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 369.

⁹ Jack Smith oral history interview. Blaine Hall oral history interview. Beth White Stapleton oral history interview.

Government money meant improved seed and farm machines bought from businessmen in McKinney. Cities and towns benefited from government spending programs faster than farmers. Instead of sharecroppers paying off their debts once the picking season ended, towns in the county could now count on wage labor paid in cash by the week or month, increasing the cash flow. In Collin County, farmers and landowners looking for low-wage workers that would not compete with or follow white workers into town and the textile mill arrived at a unique solution-- migrant labor from Mexico. In 1938, 6,000 workers arrived in the county in June to harvest onions and then returned in the fall to pick cotton. Lack of housing caused great hardship, leading county officials to work with Congressman Sam Rayburn to secure a Farm Security Agency loan to build a permanent migrant labor camp just east of McKinney. The camp opened with ribbon cutting and speeches by local judges and Speaker Rayburn on August 28, 1941. The move to bring Mexican labor into low wage previously white only work was not just in the fields of North Texas. In a series of articles published in 1935, Stuart McGregor presented the argument that textile mills would grow faster in Texas if foreign markets could be regained for finished products and if, instead of waiting for cheap white labor, mill owners built where they could "exploit" cheap Mexican labor. He described Mexicans as "easily trained as mill operatives."¹⁰ The solution of a migrant labor camp coupled with a pay raise at the textile mill suggests the labor supply was tightening up by 1940. Additional pressure came from a stronger union movement.

Although women's wages had been hit especially hard during the Depression some improvement was possible where unions were active. As discussed earlier,

¹⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, June 17, 1938, p.1. *Dallas Morning News*, June 25, 1940, p. 7. *Dallas Morning News*, August 29, 1941, p. 2. *Dallas Morning News*, March 8, 1935, p. 1.

women's wages in the textile mills fell rapidly. In North Texas, mill workers had not been able to organize unlike workers elsewhere, however, within a year of the Great Textile Strike women in Dallas would organize the longest strike in the city's history over wages. In response to the U. S. Supreme Court's overturning the NRA, over a 1,000 dressmakers working in 15 Dallas factories joined the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) to protect their pay. Union organizers from New York and St. Louis arrived to advise the workers and meet with dress manufacturers to recognize the union. The dress factory owners refused. With employers free to cut wages and increase hours, the women went on strike in February 1935.

Unlike the textile strike of 1934, businessmen did not take action before the strike to weaken the workers, thus they were unprepared for both the length of the strike and the violence that began to occur along the picket lines. By June newspaper reports of women fighting with police and others gave the city and state a black eye. As the strike progressed, Governor James Allred called on the State Industrial Commission to reach a settlement. Representing management on this commission would be Clarence R. Miller of the Texas Textile Mills. Women on the picket lines engaged with police, strike breakers, company security police, management and passersby over 10 months before giving up, having won nothing. The experience of the "dressmakers' war" convinced the Open Shop organization in Dallas to take steps to block "foreign" organizers from bringing unions to Dallas.¹¹

¹¹ Hill, *Dallas: Making of a Modern City*, 133-145. *Dallas Morning News*, September 7, 1937, section 2, p. 1. In 1937 Miller was praised by the president of the Dallas milliners' union, Max Zaritsky, as a "peacemaker" when negotiating yet another strike over the forty-hour week. The evasion of the state laws for women's hours, a 10 cent raise, and ending the practice of having white women work near black men were not addressed. Miller was appointed to the commission June 29, 1935. *Dallas Morning News*, June 29, 1935, section 2, p. 1.

Historian Don Doyle described the ascendance of merchants and industrialists in southern cities as “men shaping a new order” who dominated city building for a modern and evolving South through 1910. In 1936 Robert L. Thornton created a new order for the city of Dallas as a result of his experiences with the Texas Centennial Exposition. Instead of waiting on the elected city government, a committee of businessmen with the power to “get things done” would dominate not just the city of Dallas but also the region and state for 40 years. Known as the Dallas Citizen’s Council, this invitation only, private organization would devote its considerable money, resources, and power towards a vision of a modern Dallas shaped by economic growth. Their vision did not include unions, minorities, or working women. Composed of bankers, the heads of Dallas corporations, major retailers and the president of Southern Methodist University, the council would control the city by vetting candidates for city positions and by acting as gatekeepers to loans and power brokers. In addition to Thornton, two other members of the Citizen’s Council were stockholders in the Texas Textile Mills, Paul Carrington and Clarence Miller.¹²

To prevent union activities in Dallas, the Open Shop Association worked with the Ford Motor Company, the police, the *Dallas Morning News*, the *Dallas Daily-Times Herald*, the local American Federation of Labor (AFL) members, and the Citizen’s Council to establish a strong arm squad known as the “service department” to prevent the rebirth of the local Socialist party and the establishment of unions led by the newly organized Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). According to George Lambert, members of the service department were “under orders to stop any interest in industrial

¹² Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, xi. Payne, *Big D*, 163-173. *Dallas: The Official Magazine of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce*, v. 27 no.3 (March 1948), 28. Loans went for growth the council supported, not for construction or growth based on public need until forced.

organization in Dallas.”¹³ During 1937, the Ford squads attacked over 50 people, killing one, and crippling others. On August 9, 1937, the squad disrupted a socialist rally in Fretz Park attended by hundreds of textile workers, most from the nearby mill, not the Love Field plant. Families had picnicked, listened to speakers talk about unions, and prepared to watch two films. As the films began, the squad rushed the stage, smashed the projector, and kidnapped one organizer who was taken “for a ride to the levee,” stripped, beaten, tarred, and feathered and then dumped at the *News* for a photograph. The police, tipped off, were not around to restrain the crowd, estimated at 500. They allowed a riot to erupt.

Governor Allred sent in the Texas Rangers to restore order; rewards were offered but nothing happened to end the attacks for several months. The resemblance to activities used against blacks for decades was not lost on union supporters. Socialists and CIO organizers moved to San Antonio and Houston while Dallas businessmen dealt with two issues: to persist fighting off unions and not injuring the successful image of Dallas as site of the Texas Centennial Exposition. Their solution was to end the work of the service department. To continue fending off unions, they embraced workers who joined American Federation of Labor unions, the dangerous radicals who backed the United Textile Workers strike in 1934. Unions were still discouraged, but CIO strikers and leaders were labeled as alien, foreign, Russian, or Jewish by the press. This new embrace of the AFL was quickly on display. Labor Day 1938 featured not 1 but 3 days of speeches by labor leaders from the AFL, feasting at the Cotton Bowl, and a 20 block

¹³ George Lambert oral history interview, February 6, 1972, Dallas, Texas, interviewed by Dr. George Green, Oral History Project, Division of Labor Archives and Manuscripts, University of Texas-Arlington, Texas. Officially the CIO did not exist as a stand-alone organization until 1938, however “industrial unionism” operated as a committee inside the AFL between from 1936 until 1938.

long parade. The Socialists did not get a chance to speak until September 9. Clarence Miller was quoted as saying “ I’ll die before they unionize my employees” in the 1920s, yet appearing before a government panel in 1939, Miller would state that “ William Green, president of the AFL was a capable and worthy successor of Samuel Gompers whose services have not been properly appreciated until recently.”¹⁴ By appearing to embrace the AFL, businessmen in Dallas and across Texas tried to hold off the radicals who formed the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

In McKinney this concern for rising interest in unions found expression in the promotion of the mill as a large family. In addition to chasing away shadows to reduce headaches, the company began hosting Christmas parties with cap guns or trucks for the boys and dolls for the girls and a turkey for each family. Tennie Ireland remembered each family getting a fruit basket for Christmas. Beginning in 1938 the entire staff, superintendent Smith, the managers, overseers, fixers, office girls, doffers, spinners, weavers, carders, even Joe Wattley the black janitor were assembled dressed for work for a company photo. In the 1939 photo, six of the women appear in coveralls, which may be the company uniform Tennie Ireland recalled. The workers who appear in the photos are those that worked the single Saturday shift and do not reflect the entire workforce. The remaining black employees working in the warehouses and opening room never appeared in the photos. Based on interviews these photos were part of a deal with a local photographer. For a few dollars employees and businesses around the mill could purchase one. The tradition of the photos and the Christmas parties continued

¹⁴ *Dallas Daily Times Herald*, August 18, 1934, p. 8. *Dallas Morning News*, September 4, 1938, section 2, p. 1. Jack Rivers Strauss, “Organized Labor in Dallas County” (M. A. thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1948), p. 75. *Dallas Morning News*, July 7, 1939, p. 14. Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City*, 149-156. Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 137-138.

through 1942. Beginning in 1943 and continuing through the 1950s the mill published a company newspaper. Scattered through the war years are a few photos of some of the black employees of the mills, drivers, maids, and janitors. This surge in management concern during a period of labor troubles reinforces the argument that McKinney's mill increasingly was being woven into the southern paternalistic textile mill fabric.¹⁵

New improvements in housing and health began during the late 1930s. Bathrooms were added to mill village cottages and gas lines extended to some homes. Sanitation became an issue with the city and county. Officials from the State Board of Health began a 3 month program with the mill to neutralize the dye that for years had been dumped into the creek that flowed into the East Fork of the Trinity River. Billy Don Kanady remembered the creek dying his skin blue during summer play and was full of raw sewage at other times. What followed was the construction of a plant to deal with factory waste after a hearing attended by the State Department of Health; the Game, Fish, and Oyster Commission, County Attorney Roland Boyd; the McKinney Sewer Company; and Thomas Craig, president of the textile mill. Shortly after this, the company installed a massive septic tank for the mill village.¹⁶ This promotion of "improvements" around the mill and expressions of paternalism were in response to union organizers visiting the mill in 1938. The increasing militancy of strikers in Dallas

¹⁵ Tennie Ireland oral history interview. Jeanette Bailey oral history interview. Jack Smith oral history interview. The staff photographs are too large to be reproduced here. Both the 1939 and 1942 photos can be seen on the Portal to Texas History website where they appear courtesy of the North Texas History Center. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-pt-15434>. Two bound volumes of the mill newspaper during World War II, *The Overseer*, are in the collections at the North Texas History Center. After the war the newspaper was known as *Tex-Tex Topics*.

¹⁶ Billy Don Kanady oral history. *Dallas Morning News*, October 16, 1939, p. 10. *Dallas Morning News*, February 14, 1940, p. 4. Victoria Byerly, *Hard Times, Cotton Mill Girls: Personal Histories of Womanhood and Poverty in the South* (Ithaca, New York: ILR Press, Cornell University, 1986), 12-13. The mill had successfully bid as a WPA supplier for three contracts totaling \$53,962.00 in colored fabric. *Dallas Morning News*, October 22, 1939, p. 2.

and around the country summoned Clarence Miller briefly to attempt a political role at the state level, echoing the history of the eastern Piedmont at the turn of the century.¹⁷

In the 1890s through the 1900s, as mill fever covered the Piedmont, canny politicians saw opportunity in mill workers as voters. In South Carolina, “Pitchfork” Ben Tillman, known for his use of images as the stalwart farmer using his pitchfork to poke anyone who challenged his vision of social reality based on white supremacy, used rising anxiety among white men over black suffrage to court mill voters. The promise to keep textile mills for whites not only attracted farmers to move their families to the mills but also offered protection from an industry that made cheap wages a major thread in courting investors. Every white family knew the lowest wage went to black families, therefore, a protected workplace offered a floor under the low wages in the 1890s. Tillman’s vision of white supremacy appealed to farmers, landowners, and businessmen influenced by labor struggles at the turn of the century. As governor he spoke to “laboring men” as well as farmers, but he did not support mill workers as industrial workers as much as he relied on their still fresh ties to farm and land ownership for his political ascendancy. As South Carolina and other southern states passed laws to protect or increase the white vote, without appearing to restrict black suffrage, Tillman supported both literacy tests and property ownership as valid tests for voting. Mill workers, living in company housing, had little chance of meeting the property requirements, while company schools that encouraged students to go into the mill did little to advance literacy tests. Tillman, therefore, supported mill workers solely as a white voting bloc that could be counted on to support any legislation wrapped in the

¹⁷ This replicates conditions in the Piedmont through World War 1 when labor shortages forced mill owners to compete for workers. Simon, *Fabric of Defeat*, 41-42.

cloth of white supremacy. He supported state laws that limited factory hours for women and children but fought against federal laws that might enforce standards because white supremacy might be threatened.¹⁸

Tillman presented the image of hard working poor white farmers, but in truth he was “a member of the best families in the South,” and owner of a plantation where his black employees “”dressed in rags,... asked after the Senator’s health.”¹⁹ In 1910 Coleman Blease, who served under Tillman, was elected governor of South Carolina after several tries. Blease did not just campaign for mill votes, he joined mill fraternal organizations and reminded voters he was one of them. Like Tillman, Blease used race in his elections, but in the 1910s and 1920s his chief target was reformers in the legislature who favored regulating female and child labor.²⁰ Blease relied on the mill vote to stay in power, yet he supported what the mill owners wanted. Although Tillman broke with Blease by 1914 over race-baiting during elections, the trend across the South through the 1920s linked race and mill work against progressive moves that affected mill owners’ control over their workers.²¹

By 1930, thanks to the stretch-out, years of unfilled promises from politicians, and strike violence, mill workers across the Piedmont began to move towards those promising reform and away from demagogues spouting race issues. Texans shared some of these patterns with two exceptions. Because Texas mills remained small and

¹⁸ Stephan Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman & the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 3-5, 188, 190-191, 222-223, 254, 264. As senator, Tillman railed against “industrial slavery” and “gold money men” coming to blows on the Senate floor with South Carolina’s other senator who was supported by Piedmont mill owners.

¹⁹ Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman*, 279-280.

²⁰ Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 413, 417. Simon, *Fabric*, 17-19.

²¹ Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman*, 296-299. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 120-121. Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 414, 417.

isolated with only a few cities able to support more than one mill, office seekers did not court the mill vote. Labor laws were successively modified for women and children working in the mills as in the Piedmont, yet through the middle of the 1920s enforcement did occur.

The rise of union organizing in Texas cities in the 1930s, however, alarmed businessmen who began waving the red flag of communism. Woven of race in the workplace, the issue of where black men could work in a factory in relation to women was raised at the local and state level during strikes in Dallas. A Ford worker, Hiram Moon, explicitly told George Lambert that “joining the CIO meant filling the factory with Negros.”²² Overtly, however, the issue in Dallas was not race but unions based on foreign ideas. Because the socialists and the communists were organizing blacks in Birmingham, Alabama, and Mexican women in San Antonio, the men who led the fight against “foreign” unions were fighting for white supremacy. In 1938 Clarence Miller took the fight against unions and other foreign ideas into the governor’s race in Texas.

In June 1938 Clarence R. Miller announced his candidacy for governor of Texas. He called for more smokestacks and more jobs but also for state laws to “protect industry from CIO labor racketeers.” Industries needed protection from sit-down strikes, sabotage, the destruction of private property, assaults, and murder. The CIO was “even now organizing negro cotton pickers in Texas,” and Miller put himself forward as an industrialist who could stop them. To increase his appeal to ordinary men and women, his life story was cast in the Horatio Alger mold through the newspapers and local radio broadcasts. The narrative told how Miller came to Dallas by walking the rails in 1900 with only a nickel and a dime in his pocket. He had sold papers in the small town of

²² George Lambert oral history interview.

Ennis as a boy, played in a band, and worked for the telephone company before going into business with his brothers in Fort Worth in 1902. By 1918 they owned eight clothing factories and were building their first textile mill. In a nod to the times, Miller claimed that when the Depression closed his mills in 1932, he stopped both rent and utilities charges until the mills reopened. He discussed his spartan breakfast along with normal dinners and his dislike of cigars. His 1,500 loyal workers called him Mr. Clarence and were used to seeing him working 10 and 12 hour days. In a nod to state pride, Miller mentioned his native status and his family roots near Mexia. So successful was the “textile tycoon” that he now kept racehorses and hosted Enrico Caruso as a houseguest. To help sell his platform around the state, Miller traveled with the mill band from the Dallas mill even when he appeared in McKinney to court voters.²³

Miller traveled with a band because of competition on the political circuit. One of his opponents was a popular radio personality from Fort Worth who worked as the sales manager of the Burrus Flour Mills. Wilbert Lee O’Daniel known as “Pappy,” had hired a group of musicians to help sell flour in the 1920s. Known as the Light Crust Doughboys, this western swing band was very popular across the state as was Pappy O’Daniel who was “drafted” to run for governor by his radio listeners. O’Daniel had started his own flour company in 1935 and traveled the state in 1938 with his hillbilly band, a Bible, and the issues of ending poll taxes and supporting old age pensions and industrialization. Miller charged him with sending Texas money out of Texas by selling flour made in Minneapolis. By mid-July, Miller left the race and threw his support behind Ernest Thompson, the railroad commissioner who was also running for governor.

²³ *Dallas Morning News*, June 12, 1938, section 2, p. 1. The physical wealth of mill owners compared to the poverty of mill workers was noted in the Piedmont. Tullos, *Habits of Industry*, 302-303.

Thompson pledged that he would see to it that new industries paid good wages equal to the wages paid by the same industries in the North. Thompson claimed he was strongly behind organized labor and in sympathy with the AFL and Texas State Federation of Labor but opposed to un-American sit-down strikes. In the end Thompson lost in the Democratic primary to O'Daniel who would spend his two terms proposing laws against labor unions and strikes before following the Tillman pattern and running for the United State Senate in 1941.²⁴ By running as a mill owner, Clarence Miller stood out from the political path followed in the Southeast, but his short campaign closely followed the pattern of politics and textile mills in the South with his emphasis on labor issues and foreign flour. In language, image, legislation, and action Texas industrialists, including mill owners in the 1930s, closely followed the pattern established in the Southeast. The mill owners, including the board of the Texas Textile Mills, did not establish company unions as so many mills in the Piedmont did.²⁵ This suggests the owners' dislike of unions was fundamental and not just a matter of wage and labor control.

Although his bid for political power was short, Clarence Miller continued to represent the interests of the textile industry in public forums. When the federal government recommended a minimum wage of 32 and-a-half cents an hour for workers in the textile industry in 1939, Miller claiming to represent the 80 percent of unorganized workers in the Southwest, announced that his workers objected to representation by "professional labor racketeers." Four times organizers had visited his mills, claimed Miller, and not a single worker had signed on the dotted line. They "don't want to join a

²⁴ *Dallas Morning News*, July 12, 1938, p. 6. *Dallas Morning News*, July 15, 1938, p. 3. George N Green, "Wilbert Lee O'Daniel," in *The New Handbook of Texas*, 4: 1107-1108.

²⁵ Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 305.

union, don't want to pay dues, don't want money taken out of their pay envelopes." The chairman of the hearing, Elmer Andrews, was not happy to understand he had appointed labor racketeers to the Wage-Hour Committee and called Miller to point out which of the 7 labor members were racketeers. Miller admitted he only knew of Sidney Hillman and went on to detail how, because of high rail freight rates and lower costs of living in the South, wages should also be low or "every cotton mill in Texas would be closed in five years." After leaving the hearing, labor leaders introduced R. R. Tisdale from Atlanta, a CIO organizer who had been "thrown out" of one of Miller's villages, to Clarence Miller.²⁶

Spinner Opal Wright believed the workers did need a union even if it meant she would be opposing her husband who was a supervisor at the McKinney mill. One injustice she cited was over the company smoking room. Located next to the Cotton Mill Café it had benches along three sides and an ashcan in the center. Men could take up to 15 minutes for a paid smoke break but women could not. Billy Kanady recalled the smoking room was too far away for some, so bathroom breaks often included smoking. As for the pay envelopes and union dues, workers might have seen little difference between what the union charged and how much the company charged for rent, food inside the mill, utilities, waste and other fees. Opal recalled one week when

²⁶ *Dallas Morning News*, July 7, 1939, p. 14. Sidney Hillman was the head of the Textile Workers Organizing Committee of the CIO. The Fair Labor Standards Act called for wages to start at 40 cents an hour by 1940, a two-dollar weekly raise from the wage increase spinners received under the NRA. High rail freight rates were a favorite target of southeastern mill owners. Mary Oates found, however, that the rates favored southern industries before 1910 and the charges on raw cotton were higher within a 100 mile radius than outside. It was true that fine finished goods produced by New England mills had a lower freight rate than coarse to medium goods produced by southeastern mills. The problem was not in the freight rates or with government regulations but with the mill product. Since only the McKinney mill "finished" cloth on site, the Texas Textile Mills were paying higher freight to ship material to McKinney for finishing. Oates, *Role*, 45-49, 53, 56-59.

her mother earned just 9 cents and several women returned to work within days of giving birth.²⁷ The hard reality of millwork was captured by songwriter Joe Glazer for a union songbook.

The Mill Was Made of Marble

I dreamed that I had died
And gone to my reward
A job in heaven's textile plant
On a golden boulevard.

Chorus: the mill was made of marble
The machines were made out of gold
And nobody ever got tired
And nobody ever grew old

The mill was built in a garden
No dust or lint could be found
The air was so fresh and fragrant
With flowers and trees all around

It was quiet and restful in heaven
There was no clatter or boom
You could hear the most beautiful music
As you worked at spindle and loom

There was no unemployment in heaven
We worked steady all through the year
We always had food for the children
We never were haunted by fear

When I woke from this dream about heaven
I knew that there never could be
A mill like that one down below here on earth
For workers like you and like me.²⁸

Trying conditions at the Texas Textile mill contributed to turnover and poor health as described in the song about a mill in the Piedmont. Having a union could not guarantee

²⁷ Opal Wright oral history interview. Jeanette Bailey oral history interview. Billy Don Kanady oral history interview.

²⁸ *Textile Workers Union of America Songs* (New York: TWUA, 1950), n. p.

improved working conditions, however, workers believed help was needed to deal with the changes technology brought to the mill. The stretch-out combined with the conditions described below made employment an endurance contest.²⁹

When the mill was built the main shaft was powered by the Corliss steam engine turning at 360 revolutions per minute (rpm). Located under the carding and spinning room with solid maple flooring, this would have produced a thunderous vibration. Each floor was filled with machines connected to the main shaft by long leather, later fabric and rubber belts hissing and slapping. The belts in turn powered each machine and all of their moving parts, as yards of materials moved through the machine. In the carding room alone there were 94 machines. By the 1920s the steam engines were replaced with electric motors on many machines but that did little to reduce the noise. The vast space was vented through the roof, and massive windows were set in solid brick walls without any form of sound dampening. This trapped the sounds in a rolling echo chamber effect enlivened by the whistle of wind sweeping over the vents. After 1943, water-cooled fans and window-mounted vents added to the noise in an attempt to cool the rooms 10 degrees.³⁰

Because cotton manufacturing requires a high level of humidity, a series of pipes delivered a steady drip of water to each machine whose speed in turn created a fine mist of water, oil, grease, and cotton lint that coated the workers. Within minutes of beginning a shift workers would be drenched in sweat from the heat and mist. The only doors between departments were heavy metal fire doors that were not closed rendering each entire floor in a building into something akin to an airplane cabin inside a plane

²⁹ Simon, *Fabric of Defeat*, 46-47.

³⁰ *The Overseer*, July 1944, p. 1. Darla Lovett, Texas Textile Mill Papers.

engine. So loud was the noise that employees inside the mill could not hear the scream of the steam whistle on the smokestack signaling lunch or shift change. Instead smaller whistles had to be placed in each department. Clocks of any sort were not used inside as the vibration made them unreliable. The dye, picking, and slashing rooms were even worse. Bales of cotton were held with iron bands. The mechanical breaker operated at 475 rpm, so a regular rhythm somewhat like a firing range increased the noise level.³¹ The cotton was dyed raw, so tanks of coal-tar-based dye were heated to boiling and held there for up to four hours as the cotton moved through. Production orders make it clear that cotton fiber was also bleached before use, adding to the smell. After the cotton was removed from the dye, it had to be dried using fans cranked to 1,549 rpm. In Waco, Laura Tynes recalled that while working inside her home in the village, the constant roar meant she never heard any birds, just the mill, echoing off other buildings.³² Jack Smith remembers having to cup his hands against a worker's ear and yelling to be heard in the weaving room.³³ The McKinney mill had a sanforizing machine that added starch to the finished fabric. Steve Powell recalled that his summer job at the mill involved going under the weave room to shovel out the stinking waste from operating this machine. In a conversation with McKinney workers, Jess Cope, John Davis White, Walter Bowers, and others, the men noted they could always tell who would become a steady mill worker. It was the "ones who came back on the third day," able to stand the stench and noise. The weaving room had a special danger, too much lint on the small motors for each machine meant small fires would break out if a worker

³¹ The third binder of the Texas Textile Mill Papers contains materials relating to the mill machinery and serves as the source for this segment.

³² Laura Tynes oral history interview. *McKinney Courier Gazette*, April 13, 1945, p. 1.

³³ Jack Smith oral history interview.

was not alert. According to Jack Smith, the opening room where cotton bales came into the mill had so much lint and debris in the air and around the machines that fires occurred once a week.³⁴ To be a mill worker required a very special kind of stoic determination.

If Texas mills mirrored southeastern mills by 1940, in most respects World War II disrupted mill life and set a new pattern that would lead McKinney's mill workers and their children towards a different future from mills in the Piedmont. In Dallas the Citizen's Council brought aircraft fabrication plants to the city. North American Aviation was the largest war industry in the Dallas area, employing 30,000 workers. These plants paid better wages than the mill, leading young workers like Blaine Hall and Opal Wright to car pool into the city to work the night shift at war production plants. Older workers like John Edward Powell tried to join the military but were turned away when textile mills were classified as essential to the war effort yet total of 250 Texas Textile Mill employees served during the war.³⁵ McKinney also gained a new employer because of the war. In 1942 the U. S. Army built Ashburn General Hospital north of the city. With 1,500 beds for injured soldiers, the hospital required housing for employees and families, a gymnasium, and an industrial kitchen. Flo Henry's father was among many who found new higher paying jobs at the hospital. Construction of the hospital was delayed briefly due to a carpenter's strike that required the intervention of a Dallas builders union and authorities in Washington D. C. At the conclusion of the strike, the general contractor stressed that all of his subcontractors were using union labor. Because the war opened the door of opportunity to many mill workers and their families,

³⁴ Earl Muchow oral history interview. Blaine Hall oral history interview. Opal Wright oral history interview. Steve Powell oral history interview. Jack Smith oral history interview.

³⁵ *The Overseer*, July 1945.

the future of the mill changed. Mill workers at war production plants were amazed by the clean, orderly working conditions, higher wages, and the unions that represented workers. As a result it would be only a matter of time before the workers who remained with the mill voted for union representation.³⁶

As men left for distant battlefields, businesses of all types increased the hiring of women but ran up against Texas labor laws that limited women to 54 hours a week at most jobs. Six companies sought waivers from the law on July 14, 1943. Firestone Tire & Rubber and Lone Star Aircraft in Dallas needed additional production workers. Dallas Railway and Terminal needed to run its trolleys to transport an increasing number of workers, while Cabell's Dairy needed to supply those same workers with dairy products. The local 5 and 10 cent chain, Dukes & Ayres, joined the hearing before a state judge to appeal for a waiver but unlike the other firms did not get one for more than 30 days. Cabell's and Duke & Ayres had locations in McKinney and cited labor needs in McKinney during the hearing.³⁷

As the labor pool shrank, CIO representatives found mill workers more receptive to organizing. On November 29, 1943, the McKinney mill voted "overwhelmingly" to join the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA) as Local 617. The final tally was 299 for and 20 against. A few weeks later the Dallas plant followed, voting 198 for and 33 against becoming Local 618. The Waco mill did not organize during the war.³⁸ Wages

³⁶ Payne, *Big D*, 206. Blaine Hall oral history interview. Opal Wright oral history interview. Flo Henry oral history interview. Vargo, *First 150 Years*, 98, 171. *Dallas Morning News*, November 5, 1942, p. 3.

³⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, July 14, 1943, p. 5. *Dallas Morning News*, July 21, 1943, p. 3. A clothes cleaning service in Dallas was fined 50 dollars for violating the fifty-four hour law in 1941 while cleaning uniforms from Camp Bowie. *Dallas Morning News*, July 26, 1941, p. 1.

³⁸ *Dallas Morning News*, November 30, 1943, p. 7. *Dallas Morning News*, December 22, 1943, p. 8. One of 5 Waco interviews stated they voted for a union in 1942-1943. Earl Muchow oral history interview.

were climbing nationally for textile workers, and the War Labor Relations Board tried to pass along some of the raises to local mill workers.³⁹

Texas mill owners managed to avoid passing on any increase in wages for a short period of time. The result was the organization of the original Dallas Cotton Mill, and mills in Itasca, Hillsboro, and Mexia by 1944. The War Labor Board mandated 40 hour workweeks at textile mills nationwide did not apply as the Texas Textile Mills were already working a 54 hour week, typical for southern mills. On September 5, 1943, the Waco and McKinney mills went to 7 days a week with 2 shifts offered on Sunday at double overtime. Even double overtime was not enough to bring workers like Opal Wright back to the mill. Tennie Ireland recalls being told to work on Saturdays but not Sundays and was never paid double overtime by the mill. The mill began offering increased services to attract workers. Life, accident and hospital insurance, could be had for 30 cents a worker each week or 60 cents for an entire family. The Dallas mill started the Dal-Tex Textile Employee Credit Union; workers needed only 25 cents to open an account.⁴⁰ Increasing shortages of labor affected the production of war material, so the Army began diverting mill workers already in the service back to the mills. In December 1944, soldiers with textile experience from all around the country were given 90 day furloughs to come to the mills to work. Forty soldiers came to McKinney's mill. These furloughs were extended in the spring even as a company bus

³⁹ U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1942* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 406. Wages nationally jumped to 46 cents per hour and hours increased to 39 a week. This trend continued during the war with hours up to 42 a week and wages rising to 63 cents an hour by 1944. Texas mills hands worked the hours but did not gain the wages without protest.

⁴⁰ *Overseer*, January 12, 1945, p. 3. *Overseer*, February 23, 1945, p. 4.

began making trips to Denton to bring 30 employees to the Dallas mill for the second shift.⁴¹

The arrival of these soldiers to work in the mill prompted the local head of the CIO to speak out about wages paid in North Texas. According to A. R. Hardesty, 200 soldiers were on furlough from battlefields to help with a labor shortage caused by wages held down to 40 cents an hour set in 1941. The soldiers were being paid both 40 cents an hour plus their Army pay to work in the mills. The War Labor Relations Board had been able to raise wages in only one mill; the original Dallas Cotton Mill was offering 50 cents an hour, 15 cents below what mills paid in other regions of the United States. Hardesty specifically mentioned the high wages paid by North American Aviation as the reason “hundreds of workers had left the mills.”⁴²

Complaints about wages at the Texas Textile Mills worked through the local War Labor Board for a year until the board ordered a 7 and a half cent raise at the start of 1945. The local unions appealed to the National War Labor Board who revised the rate up to 10 cents an hour and ruled it should be retroactive to June 5, 1944. The national board did reduce the differential between the second and third shift to 5 cents from 7 cents. This ruling caused “unrest” at mills around the state with reported wages at 55 cents an hour as “substandard.”⁴³ This suggests that wildcat strikes might have occurred as a result of the wage ruling, but with the abrupt end of the war, workers temporarily lost the leverage to increase wages based on war production.

⁴¹ *Overseer*, September 5, 1943, p. 1; *Overseer*, June 15, 1944; p. 5. *Overseer*, December 29, 1944, p. 1. *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, April 13, 1945, p. 1. Tennie Ireland oral history interview.

⁴² *Dallas Morning News*, January 14, 1945, p. 1.

⁴³ *Dallas Morning News*, July 18, 1945, p. 1. *Dallas Morning News*, July 20, 1945, 1.

During the war, textile production became even more varied with orders for awning materials in patterns of green and orange, all green, or black and orange stripes. Orders were also filled for khaki and indigo denim, osnaberg cloth, Oxford cloth, burlap, bale cloth, sack cloths for dust bags, and blackout cloth. According to the company newsletter, materials produced by the mills went for tenting, stretcher material, liners for water purification kits, cartridge belts and buffing material for optical lenses.⁴⁴ According to the reporter Mary Ann Goodner for the *McKinney Courier Gazette*, some of the tent material was being shipped to England to patch roofs damaged by bombing. Ninety-five percent of production was classified as essential to the war and 30 percent of that was just in tent material for the Army.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *The Overseer* April 20, 1945, p. 1, 8.

⁴⁵ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, April 13, 1945, p. 1.

CONSTRUCTION SHEET

FRANK W. SMITH, Supt. Date 1-2-42

Material 32" 2.03 Blackout Cloth

Part No. _____ Finish No. None

Width 32

Weight 203

Total Ends 2415

Sley 74

Pick 70

Warp No. 12 Shade Special white

Filling No. 13 Shade Special white

Reed No. 24

Harness No. 23 Shades 3

Ends per Dent. 3

Selvage Ends 24 (Included in beams)

Section Beams per set 5 yds. 8000

Percent Warp 56.3%

Percent Fill 43.7%

Ends { White Beams 5-483
 Beams _____
 Beams _____

Roving—Warp Special white

 Fill Special white

Cotton—Warp _____

 Fill _____

Figure 6.1. Page from production binder for cloth order. From the Texas Textile Mill Papers. Courtesy of Cotton Mill Partners, Ltd., and Darla Lovett.

During the war, the Texas Textile Mills sponsored afternoon radio shows on Dallas radio stations KRLD and WFAA. On July 4, 1942, the employees of the 3 mills had a radio show dedicated to them in recognition of their voluntary 10 percent salary cut for the first War Bond Drive. Speakers included Governor Coke Stevenson, Speaker Sam Rayburn, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Senator Tom

Connally, and Paul Carrington, president of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce plus mill and county officials. A biweekly free newspaper, the *Overseer* was published from July 1943 to July 1945 “by the staff for the staff.” It was full of war and employee news, cooking tips, safety tips and accident counts, bonus contests, war bond drives, photos, cartoons, jokes, and a column called “The Pulpit.” Each mill competed against each other and the separate headquarters staff to raise the most money for war bonds. For the last drive in 1945, the McKinney mill raised \$12,519.52, the cost of an entire landing craft.⁴⁶

WILL WE BE ON THE HOME-FRONT HONOR ROLL?

Invest 10% of your pay for April, May and June in War Bonds

You will be hurrying the day of VICTORY!
You will be saving for the years ahead!
You will help win the coveted "T" Flag!

Let's Get on the Home-Front Honor Roll TODAY!

Sign your name on the reverse side of this paper and turn in to office. (over)

Please deduct 10% of my pay for the months of April, May, and June, 1945, for the purchase of War Bonds so that I may do my share in the war effort, thus helping us to get on the Home-Front Honor Roll.

Signed _____ (over)

Figure 6.2. Payroll deduction card for 1945 War Bond Drive. From the Texas Textile Mill Papers. Courtesy of Cotton Mill Partners, Ltd. and Darla Lovett.

As the war began to draw to a close, the owners of the Texas Textile Mills prepared for the future by reducing capacity. When the company emerged from bankruptcy in 1936, the sale of the Dallas Love Field plant was considered but then

⁴⁶ *The Overseer*, July 13, 1945, p. 1. The staff consisted of two secretaries working at the corporate headquarters in the Santa Fe building in downtown Dallas.

replaced with a lease arrangement. Now the company petitioned the War Production Board in December 1944 for permission to close the plant citing the “inability to get workers in the tight Dallas market.” The plant’s capacity was given as 430 employees but despite busing in workers from other towns, it was operating with 200 hands producing ticking, yarn, and sheeting for government contracts. Union president for Local 618 Al Barnes began to meet with regional CIO official Paul Schuler and Clarence Miller over the proposed closing. The closing was based on the need to remove the mill village for the expansion of Love Field, and it was approved, provided the production levels could be maintained with the Waco and McKinney mills. Schuler had just returned from appearing before the former Truman Committee on January 19, 1944 to discuss the impact on war production caused by low wages in Texas and Louisiana in addition to plant closures. Darwin Payne revealed that the planning for expanding Love Field began in 1943 and involved Robert L. Thornton and John W. Carpenter, stockholders in the textile company. They had already traveled to Washington, D. C. to lobby the Secretary of Commerce on behalf of “inland ports...like Dallas that served as gateways to Mexico and South America.”⁴⁷ By 1947 the land north and south of the mill held a plastics factory, W.W. Pickle and Canning factory, a welding shop, Dallas Aviation school, Southwest Airmotors, J. H. Hubbard & Son Stove factory, a furniture laminator, a tourist court, two churches and some apartments.⁴⁸ The May issue of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce magazine was a showcase for aviation in Dallas and at

⁴⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, January 20, 1945, p.10. *Dallas Morning News*, January 30, 1945, p. 2. Payne, *Big D*, 209-210. *Wagner's Kriss Kross Directory of Dallas*, 1945 lists a diverse group of businesses serving the neighborhoods around the textile mill and Love Field. Ola's Beauty Shop, London Service Station, A & P #18, Ben Franklin, Federated store, Odorsa Grocery & Market, Clover Farm Store, A & A Liquor, JG Long Theater and The Charm Shop. One of the buildings in the mill village was serving as a beauty shop.

⁴⁸ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, *Dallas, Texas September 1947* [map] v. 7, p. 299H and v. 2, p.7.

Love Field. The airport covered 840 acres with new terminals under construction. The chamber boasted that Dallas was the largest distributor of aircraft parts for the 5 states of the Southwest, a profound change from the 1920s when Dallas led the nation in production of cotton gin machinery.⁴⁹ With the powerbrokers of Dallas behind the plan to close the mill, the union did not stand a chance of blocking it. Still, it would be several years before the Dallas plant finally closed.

In August 1945 the textile mills stood to regain the “surplus” labor that helped keep wages low across the South and in Texas. North American Aviation and other war plants around Dallas simply shut their doors, throwing thousands of employees out of work. The manager of the local government employment office in McKinney reported 15 men had come in during the week shopping for jobs but unwilling to work for 50 to 60 cents an hour. The manager of the McKinney Chamber of Commerce was more upbeat stating there were 600 jobs open between the textile mill, Burrus mill, Texas Candy Company, and the North Texas Pecan Shelling Company, and with 65 homes being built a need for carpenters and other building trades. Many city and county officials expressed hope that men would return to farming, observing that the approaching cotton harvest promised a large crop.⁵⁰ The war, however, had changed the relationship between the mill and employees and the city of McKinney. Over the next decade other businesses would compete for both workers and for the title of largest employer in McKinney. Mill workers would see their future outside the mill unlike workers in the Piedmont. The pattern was once again different for Texas.

⁴⁹ *Dallas: the Official Magazine of the Chamber of Commerce* #26 (May 1947), 17-18.

⁵⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, August 19, 1945, p. 1, 12.

Machine efficiency and the stretch-out, the reduction in cotton acreage, and the Depression had produced years of labor surplus and low wages for textile mills. As demand increased with government spending, then surged under the lash of war, this surplus melted away, giving unions an opening in Texas and the South. Once the war ended, mill owners could believe that labor and wages would return to normal levels and a labor surplus would drive out the unions and drop wages. What could not be predicted was that women would drop out of the workforce in large numbers. In 1940 women outnumbered men in the workforce in Dallas until age 35 with an overall city unemployment rate of 12 percent. There was a labor surplus. By 1947, 53 percent of women ages 15 to 35 were “keeping house” instead of working. The unemployment rate for the city was down to 3 percent. A labor shortage existed, giving workers and unions power over employers.⁵¹

When interviewing mill workers, the question of strikes or work stoppages was a recurring theme. Many spoke of strikes in the plural but could not recall any specifics. Local newspapers and the Dallas papers proved to be an insufficient source of information due to an entrenched anti-labor editorial policy. A few interviewed workers thought strikes occurred in 1946-1947, a period of national union unrest. In an effort to reach textile plants in the South that had not been organized during the war and to hold onto wage gains made during the war, the CIO TWUA began a Southern Organizing Drive in 1946 that would culminate with Operation Dixie in 1954. It was a dismal failure

⁵¹ *Economic Survey of Dallas County prepared for the Texas and Pacific Railway Company*, Bureau of Business Research, College of Business University of Texas, Austin (June 1949), n.p. According to the U.S. Department of Labor wages averaged 75 cents with the Southeast averaging 10 cents less. Men made up 60 percent of the workforce. Kermit B. Mohn and Edyth M. Buun, *Wage Structure Cotton Textile Industry 1946, series 2 #37* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1947), 1-9, 13.

due to a textile slump that began in 1948 and deepened into a textile depression by 1951. Membership in the TWUA peaked in 1947 at 450,000 out of more than a million textile workers. Only 436 contracts were in force, barely 20 percent of the mills. In the Piedmont, owners and legislatures steadily reduced the number of union mills during this period in part due to the rising tide of anti-communism and the passage of right-to-work laws. By 1960 union membership would be down to 150,000 members. George Waldrep believes the failures could be traced to three factors, the stretch-out, failure to secure contracts for union mills, and failure to resolve cases pending before the NLRB.⁵²

This was not true of the TWUA locals at the Texas Textile Mills. As noted above, weak decisions at the local level were appealed to the NLRB and back pay awarded. Although there is no direct evidence of labor unrest at the mills in 1946, material from the surviving binders of company records suggest a struggle of some sort. Uncovered in one of the mill binders is evidence of rapid wage gains by employees (See Appendix).

⁵² Richard Kelly, *Nine Lives for Labor* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1956), 5. John A. Salmond, *Southern Struggles: The Southern Labor Movement and the Civil Rights Struggle* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 2004), 154. George C. Waldrep, *Southern Workers*, 139-140, 150.



Figure 6.3. Undated meeting of Local 617 in the union hall across from the mill. Photo courtesy of Steve Powell.

On February 21, 1946, hands were earning 58 cents an hour with a 7 cent piece rate. Fixers were earning 73 cents an hour. By August 26, 1946, hands were being paid on a two-tier system with “A” hands earning 67 cents an hour, and “B” hands earning 69 cents. The letters might refer to day and night shift workers, but it is impossible to say precisely. Piece rates were just over 8 cents. On September 15, 1947, the tier system came to an end, and the mill gave another raise for card hands to \$.77 an hour with a piece rate of .0963 cents. The fixer rate reached \$.98 an hour.

The union helped the mill in a lot of ways. You did make a little bit more. And you know you had a little bit more rights too. You didn't have to take everything that was dished out. And seniority came in, that helped.⁵³

That these raises occurred because of a strike or threatened work stoppage is underscored by a report in the *Dallas Morning News* for a new contract between the textile mills and the union. The contract had a special clause by-passing the Taft-Hartley law that guaranteed the union could not be sued for damages occurred during a strike unless the strike had national approval. The agreement took 3 months of negotiations between Paul Schuler for the regional union; Giles E. Miller, the son of Clarence Miller and company industrial relations vice-president since 1944; Hester Shappard for Local 617, and H. A. Lyons for Local 618. The one-year contract was signed one day before Taft-Hartley went into effect. Workers' pay increased 12 percent. At the same time, a handwritten note to 'Bill' suggests that it was time to start checking the work of the docking frame hands and begin docking pay for bad work. Employee time was kept in weekly time books by shift supervisors for each shift then recopied into monthly Social Security time books. The copies were often kept in pencil with notations detailing the start or end of leave, termination, and, in the case of the third shift notes on how much time was spent smoking each week. All of the employees recalled the lack of time clocks for accurate timekeeping. At the start of a shift they stood by their machines while the overseers supervised from an elevated glass enclosed office near the door.

⁵³ Tennie Ireland oral history interview.



Figure 6. 4. Safety First sign above the spinning room warns employees to be at their machines at starting time. Photo by author.

Because Taft-Hartley and state right to work laws pushed back against the pro-union Wagner Act, the move by the local CIO to secure a contract before Taft-Hartley became law suggests the union was in a position of strength at the Texas Textile Mills.⁵⁴ That strength would be reduced by the planned closing of the Love Field mill and the unexpected destruction of the McKinney mill by a tornado. By 1950 Texas mills with unions would be under the same pressures as mills in the Southeast.

In 1948 the future of the mill at Love Field was the subject of a bitter dispute with the city of Dallas over the use of the land. In order to widen the road in front of the mill for more development, the city had condemned a ten-foot wide strip of land and paid less than the owners wanted. Trading on the post war housing shortage, Clarence Miller declared that the city was blocking his plans to build apartments on the undeveloped portion of the mill property where the mill and village stood. Behind the scene, the land and mill owners simply awaited the right price or the right industry.

⁵⁴ *Dallas Morning News*, September 16, 1947, p.1, 3. The Texas Textile Mill Papers. Waldrep, *Southern Workers*, 150, 153.

The appointments of Robert Thornton and John Carpenter to the Dallas Chamber of Commerce committee “new industries team” for 1947-1948, underscores their interest in pushing Dallas away from cotton. The chamber showcased aviation, oil, railroads, insurance, construction firms, bus lines, and car dealers, infrastructure improvements like the Trinity plan, lakes to provide water for growing cities, a Central Expressway, and the arts. The growing fashion industry and plants that produced electrical insulation, rubber belting, and other “little known markets for cotton” received coverage, but the textile industry was no longer a concern worth promoting. At the same time the state legislature committee for the Dallas chamber, chaired by fellow stockholder Paul Carrington, appointed Clarence Miller to the team where his long opposition to unions would find a ready audience.⁵⁵

Closing the Love Field mill meant shifting some machinery to the Waco or McKinney mills. An undated paper from the McKinney mill reveals a partial inventory of some of the machines at the mill and their ages. The waste baler, twenty card room machines, and two intermediate spinners all dated to 1910. One bale breaker was dated 1919, another 1927. Twenty-two of the card machines dated to 1912 with another 37 manufactured in 1927. The newest machine listed was from 1934. Undoubtedly the mill needed to be remodeled and upgraded.⁵⁶

On May 3, 1948, just after three o'clock, nature began the remodeling process when a tornado struck the south side of McKinney. The roof over the original spinning room was destroyed and massive beams dropped on the equipment (photographs of the damage are in the Appendix.). Tennie Ireland had just finished her shift and was on

⁵⁵ *Dallas: The Official Magazine of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce* #3 (March, 1948), 28. Ibid., #6 (June, 1947), 75. Ibid., #10 (October, 1947), 24-25.

⁵⁶ Binder, Texas Textile Mill Papers.

the first floor in the dye room when the storm hit. Once the storm had passed, she ran home because 2 of her children were home alone. Opal Wright's mother left the spinning room and held onto the newel post at the bottom of the mill staircase as the wind dragged her around. Blaine Hall had all his frames "run out" just before the end of the first shift, so he left a few minutes early. He was living at 67B Burrus Street in the mill village and made it home before the tornado struck. Damage to his house was limited to losing the post on the front porch and having windows blown out of the backroom. The homes across the street were flattened. Joe Finley was in class at Fanny Finch School when the storm hit. He watched as windows were lifted out of the walls and principal C. T. Eddins held the door against the storm, losing two fingers. Billy Don Kanady's teacher had all the children sing songs as the storm raged.⁵⁷

At the mill, windows were blown out, the water tower toppled, the band hall was destroyed, employees' cars were pushed around, and many homes in the mill village and outside lost their roofs. Beth Stapleton was in high school and recalled her teacher's frustration trying to get teenage girls to stop boy watching and get to shelter. When she got home the roof of her house was damaged and her bedroom walls studded with shards of window glass. Steve Powell's parents were both working at the mill while he was being kept at Miss Lucy's. When the storm came up Steve began crying so hard Miss Lucy took him across the street to his uncle's storm cellar, "fully equipped with kerosene lamps, canned goods, spiders, and that dank smell of a place

⁵⁷ Tennie Ireland oral history interview. Opal Wright oral history interview. Joe Finley oral history interview. Blaine Hall oral history interview. Billy Don Kanady oral history interview.

not lived in.” When they came out of the cellar it was a scene of utter destruction. Their home was demolished with his mother’s player piano scattered about the yard.⁵⁸

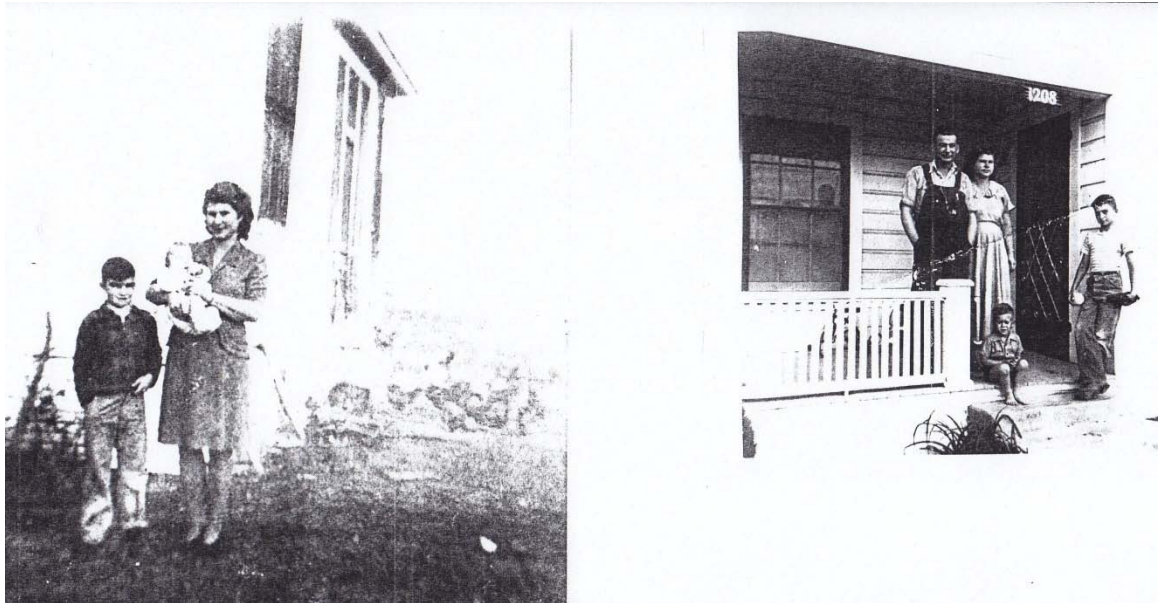


Figure 6.5. The Powell family home before the tornado. Photo courtesy of Steve Powell.

Amazingly no mill employees were killed, though three citizens died and many others were injured. One of those who died, Arthur Lee Holmes, was a cousin of Flo Henry’s. Jack Hill was across the street working at Cole’s and watched the large glass windows bow outward from the wind. He and all those in the store took shelter in a backroom as the tarpaper roof began to peel away. Soaking wet but safe, he, like everyone else, remembered the devastation around the mill and the neighborhood to the north of the mill.⁵⁹ The big question on May 4, as the extent of the damage became clear, would the mill rebuild?

The damage estimate for the mill district came to \$1,000,000. Local stockholders, Thomas E. Craig and Alfred M. Scott, joined with Clarence Miller and the Dallas

⁵⁸ Steve Powell oral history interview. Billy Don Kanady oral history interview. Beth Stapleton oral history interview.

⁵⁹ Flo Henry oral history interview. A few news reports state Arthur Lee Holmes was 13 years old and imply he died at the mill, however, this was a typo for a three-year-old boy. Two people perished in McKinney, one in Princeton.

stockholders in committing to rebuild the mill. The McKinney City Council shifted the city limits so the mill could avoid city taxes; a 12 acre field once used for visiting circuses and other events was converted to a dump, and the Red Cross and the Veteran's hospital went to work providing relief. Tents were set up next to wrecked homes; insurance companies opened field offices to issue checks; the Reconstruction Finance Corporation opened an office for small business loans, and the national TWUA began a fundraising drive to help the 365 members affected by the storm.⁶⁰ To pick up the slack, the Waco mill added a third shift, and 80 workers moved into housing around the mill. Billy Kanady was sent to live with his grandparents while his parents packed up and moved by company truck to the mill village in Waco. Their undamaged home at 714 Burrus was used as a storehouse for food supplies for mill families. Billy found the housing to be only slightly different; the Waco homes had open foundations that were more fun to play under. The nearby city park offered summer movies, and he visited classrooms and exhibits on the campus of Baylor University. Mill children attended a county school not a city school, and Billy found the classrooms ahead of McKinney schools and better funded. He was impressed with teachers who showed movies in class and a lunchroom that offered luxuries like cottage cheese on a pear slice as part of the meal.⁶¹

Seventy workers commuted by bus each day to the Dallas mill with plans to increase that number to 100 workers provided the city of Dallas would stop playing "political football" with the company's plans for more housing, according to Miller. The mill village of 110 homes in Dallas had no vacancies to allow McKinney workers to

⁶⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, February 6, 1949, p. 1. *Dallas Morning News*, May 21, 1948, p. 11. *Dallas Times Herald*, May 22, 1948, p.3.

⁶¹ Billy Don Kanady oral history interview.

move. Some of the commuters were women who could not easily pick up a hammer and go to work rebuilding the mill as male employees did. The 1949 city directory lists 20 employees as employed but not working which meant they moved to Waco, 61 employed, meaning they commuted to Dallas and 10 serving as carpenters. Mary Jordon went to work locally for the law office of Sisco & Sisco as a stenographer. Eddie Powell went to work rebuilding the mill and his home on Wilcox Street. Young Steve Powell helped by following his dad around the yard with his own toy hammer. The mill building standing today is in part the result of the labor of the mill workers literally rebuilding their own jobs with personal hammers and company nails. Blaine Hall quit the mill and went to play minor league baseball in Oklahoma. Women employees could stay home and make do, commute or find a job at McKinney's newest business, Haggar Pants Company. Employing 150 women to sew men's pants, Haggar moved into an old factory in 1948 while building a new factory north of town.⁶²

When the tornado struck, the mill employed over 600 hands. Nine months later 300 hundred were working at the Dallas mill and 100 at the Waco mill. In announcing that the mill would reopen on May 1, 1949, C. R. Miller did not commit to restoring the original workforce, only the total payroll. After 15 months, an expanded and modernized cotton mill reopened on June 27, 1949. So happy was the city to regain the \$1,600,000 payroll that the entire town shut down for a large party and a day spent touring the updated mill. For many residents it would be the first time inside the mill. Windows of blue glass were installed in the carding and spinning rooms to cut down on heat with large fans better to ventilate the rooms. Inside, walls were painted in the

⁶² *Dallas Morning News*, May 21, 1948, p.11. Steve Powell oral history interview. Blaine Hall oral history interview. Jack Smith oral history interview. Robert M. Baldwin, *McKinney: Texas Con-Survey City Directory* (Columbus, Ohio: Mullin-Kille Company, 1949).

colorful pastels of the 1950s, while some rooms were air-conditioned for the first time.⁶³ A large, red neon sign, visible from state highway 75 proclaiming the Texas Textile Mills was erected on the roof of the spinning room. Clarence Miller maintained the delay in rebuilding the mill was due to insurance damage claims involving major machinery replacements and reconstruction of the main buildings. A year later, however, the company announced that 55 new homes would be built to accommodate employees transferred from the closed Love Field mill to McKinney. These homes would be located along Amscott Street and would mark the last homes built by the mill for employees. Buried in the announcement was the reuse of machinery from the Love Field plant bringing the spindle count up to 22,650.



Figure 6.6. Frank Smith home in McKinney after 1949. Photo by author.

The rebuilt mill was producing material for seat covers, ticking, and sport denim. The market for awning material was collapsing with the spread of air conditioning. The

⁶³ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, June 27, 1949, p. 1. Beth Stapleton oral history interview.

much ballyhooed plans to produce printed tablecloths, drapes, and slipcovers for Marshall Fields and Wanamakers department stores after the war never developed. Jack Hill recalls large display textiles produced for the State Fair of Texas and given as gifts to mill supporters. These must have replaced the men's suits given by the original mill owners. Several buildings that played a role in the mill village community were not replaced. The band hall was not rebuilt and the boarding house disappeared. The mill café survived the storm because the company vault shared a wall with it, but Frank Smith closed it down.⁶⁴ Slowly the structure of the mill community was dying.

⁶⁴ *Dallas Morning News*, August 24, 1950, p. 1. *Overseer*, April 20, 1945, p. 1, 8. What cannot be known is if the large display textiles were printed by a third party or woven at the mill. If woven the mill may have invested in a Jacquard loom after 1945. Bagley, *Cotton Mill Development*, 21. Jack Hill oral history interview. Jack Smith oral history interview.

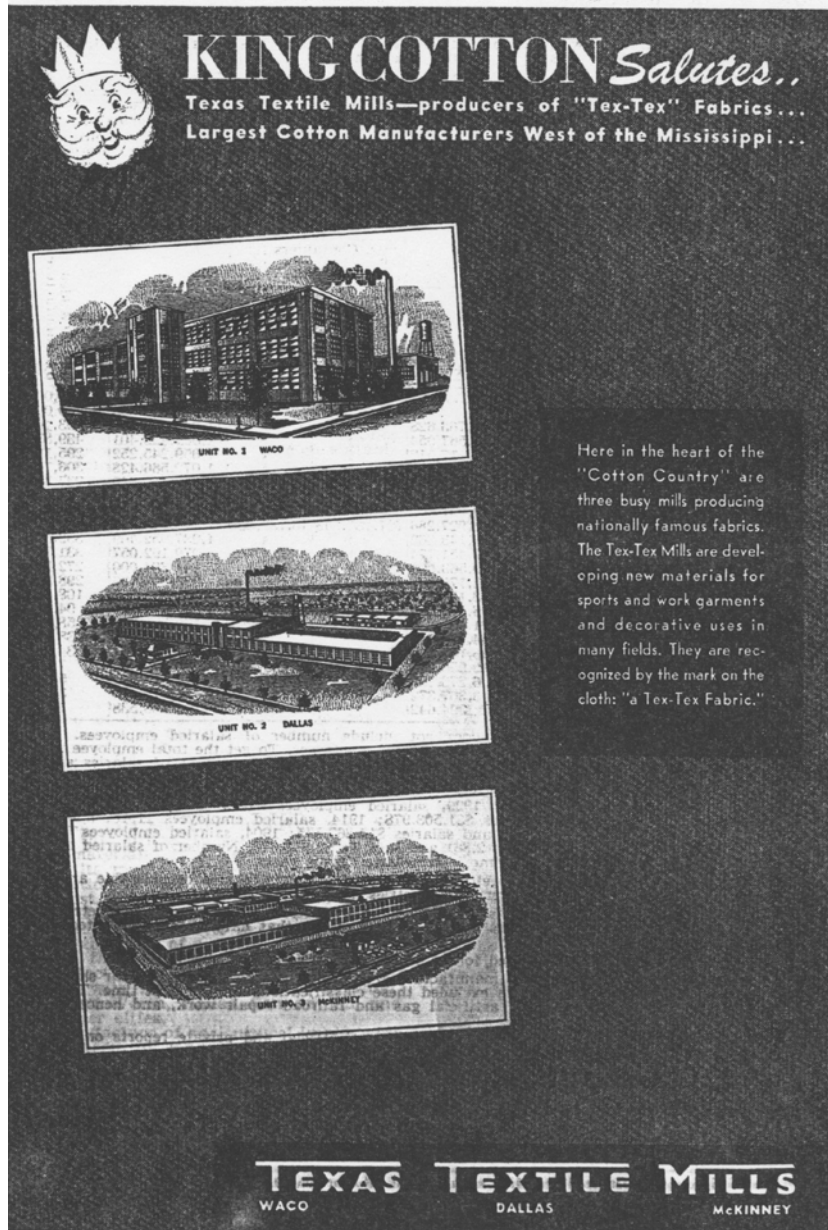


Figure 6.7. Advertisement from the *Texas Almanac*, 1947. The company used a local Dallas advertising firm, Tracy-Locke, for most marketing ads.

As a result of the war and the tornado, mill workers began making choices about their future and their children's futures that would differ from mill workers in the Piedmont. Men and women began to work at the mill not out of necessity but choice. At a reunion of mill village residents in 2007, George Powell recalled making 30 dollars a week at the mill servicing winders in the spinning room while waiting to be hired by the

post office. Billy Kanady's father left the mill for a local overhead door company. Opal Wright's husband would leave to open a barber shop. Opal and fellow spinner Tennie Ireland would also make sure their children would finish high school, something they had been unable to do. Other mill children like Steve Powell would complete college. The common thread for the mill children is that most worked at the mill either in the summer while in high school or for short periods before marriage or military service.⁶⁵ Yet unlike previous generations, they did not follow their parents and grandparents into the mill as a career. The thread of history was fraying by 1950. Instead of the mill providing a living for a lifetime, McKinney's mill workers moved away from mill work. A contributing factor would be the longest strike in the history of the town.

Before May 3, 1948, the Waco mill was not union organized. Either the McKinney employees sent to Waco by the tornado helped to start a union, or, as part of the agreement to close the Dallas plant the local union transferred to Waco. Raises of between 8 and 9 percent were negotiated at the company headquarters, which remained at the Love Field mill office through November 1950. Each mill had its own contract for one year. Six months later new contracts were signed, changing 4 job classifications from hourly rates to piecework. The violence occurring across the Southeast during Operation Dixie was noted as these new contracts were signed in 1951, but there were no reports of strikes in Texas.⁶⁶ Labor peace was being established according to the freshman state senator for Waco. Both sides understood

⁶⁵ Billy Kanady oral history interview. Opal Wright oral history interview. Tennie Ireland oral history interview. Steve Powell oral history interview. John Davis White oral history interview. Blaine Hall oral history interview.

⁶⁶ The author's view that Waco may not have been organized during the war is based on coverage in the Dallas papers of union negotiations that never mention a Waco local until after 1950. Flammig, *Creating*, 248-249, 261, 288-289.

that “management must have profits but unions are here to stay.” This was the motto of Labor-Management Day at the Waco Junior Chamber of Commerce. Two reasons textile mill owners could be upbeat in Texas were the Korean War and the Braceros bill signed by President Truman on July 13, 1951. Both the contract in 1950 and the revised contract of April 1951 were negotiated and signed by Giles E. Miller as president of the Texas Textile Mills. Clarence R. Miller was pulling back from the daily work of running the company. On December 26, 1952, C. R. Miller died of a heart attack. Some of the managers and superintendents of his mills served as pallbearers. His death led to a rapid series of changes for the company.⁶⁷

The Love Field plant would be leased for eight years to Johnson & Johnson Company to produce medical gauze. The company headquarters moved to downtown Dallas in 1951. In 1953, three bankers would form a private corporation to buy and sell “goods, wares and merchandise, agricultural and farm products” as the Texas Textile Mills Sales Corporation.⁶⁸ A quality control girl, Cleo Johnson, joined the staff with an office just off the cloth room. The changes might have been in response to the changes to the Texas textile industry.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, November 16, 1950, p. 11. *Dallas Morning News*, September 11, 1953, p. 11. *Dallas Morning News*, April 29, 1951. *Dallas Morning News*, July 13, 1951, p. 1. *Dallas Morning News* December 26, 1952, section 3, p. 8. The Braceros bill PL-78, allowed Mexican labor into the United States for agricultural work. The Texas Proviso specifically allowed those who employed undocumented workers to be free from enforcement. The Cotton Economic Institute at the University of Texas published a pamphlet in 1954 promoting textile mills. “Texas is fully aware of how cotton textiles would benefit the economy of the state...providing a new industry for agricultural areas and small towns. ...[Mills] provide new and diversified job opportunities for special population groups such as the released farm worker, women, and in certain areas the Latin American.” Joel F. Hembree, *Cotton Textiles: An Opportunity in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Cotton Economic Research, 1954), 3. The Korean War had pushed wages up in the remaining New England mills but lower southern wages had reversed the trend. *Wage Trends in the Cotton and Synthetic Textile Industry since 1950* (Washington D. C.: GPO, 1954), 1, 3.

⁶⁸ *Dallas Morning News*, April 18, 1954. Copy of the *Charter of the Texas Textile Mills Sales Corporation*, no file number, Office of the Texas Secretary of State, July 31, 1953.

⁶⁹ Louise Nixon oral history interview.

In 1929 there had been 26 cotton textile mills in operation around the state. At the end of World War II there were only eighteen. Large textile corporations from New England began buying up Texas mills and operating them as part of a chain of suppliers, dominating markets and squeezing out smaller local mills. The Worth Mills was sold in 1943 and would close in 1949. Horvath Mills of New York purchased the Dallas Cotton Mills in 1946 and would resell it in 1948 to J. N. Fisher of Dallas who closed the oldest mill in Texas a few months later.⁷⁰ Horvath also purchased the Sherman Manufacturing Company and the Brazos Valley Mill in West. Belton Yarn mill closed in 1947, as did Kingsville. The Lone Star Cotton Mill in El Paso closed in 1948. In June 1949, the Gonzales Mill closed and was purchased by Bryan C. Miller, who planned to improve and reopen it. All of these mills, according to Wilmon Droze were bought, operated, and then closed by eastern companies. B. J. Murro, the superintendent of the Postex mill stated, "I don't think that Texas people readily adopt themselves to the textile industry. The textile labor market is in the southeastern states."⁷¹ Texas plants were producing the raw materials for nylon and rayon but shipping it to Virginia and Delaware to be spun into thread. It was then shipped back to Texas for weaving. The largest mill in Texas by spindle count was now the New Braunfels mill, which was producing rayon dress goods by 1947. The town of Mineral Wells was producing raw silk and shipping it to factories in Dallas and New Braunfels. The Texas Textile Mills produced some rayon blends before the tornado but were increasingly dependent on just one product, its signature denim known as Tex-Tex.

⁷⁰ *Dallas: the Official Magazine of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce* 11 (November 1948), 76.

⁷¹ Wilmon H. Droze, "The Development of the Textile Industry in Texas" (M. S. Thesis, North Texas State College, 1950), 80, 84-86, 94.

The reason eastern mill companies were moving into Texas for the first time since the turn of the century was explored by business analyst Gus F. White in 1952. Looking at 20 Texas mills he found that the wages were 15 percent lower. With labor laws that favored women working at night, and with cheap electricity and unused buildings that could be converted to textile mills, investors would find plenty to like about Texas. He specifically wrote that the smallest towns, under 10,000 would be the best locations for a mill because “women would be without other means of livelihood.” Small towns with mills like Mexia and Curo were planning expansions due to tax savings and write downs offered by city leaders. Productivity was equal or better than in the North with less turnover and absenteeism, eager workers, and less direct labor action. He did offer one warning to investors. Farmwomen would not be suitable as mill workers due to distance from town or home duties. The wives of oil field workers did not need to work so locations near oil fields or refineries would not be suitable. The labor “usually attracted to the textile industry was not available.”⁷² It was a fading echo of boosterism for mill construction in Texas. In the course of his examination of Texas mills, White found that Texas mills did not use middlemen or factors to buy and sell both raw and finished goods, reducing the cost of business. A former mill worker, Jesse G. Edwards explored inventory and accounting methods used by Texas mills.

Like the author Faye Bible in the 1930s, Edwards interviewed personnel, sent out a survey, and visited mills, including the Texas Textile Mills. He found that the mills of Texas did not follow standard business practices for inventory costs and profits. Mills took inventory either weekly or quarterly. Some spread the cost of waste through

⁷² Gus Fagan White, “An Inquiry into the Status and Prospects of the Cotton Textile Industry in Texas” (MBA Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1952), 7, 30, 33, 55-59, 71, 85.

manufacturing expenses; others used a line-item accounting method. Most plants used the “first in, first out” raw material pricing even if it meant storing large amounts of raw cotton.⁷³ The creation of a sales corporation for the Texas Textile Mills, as mentioned above, was an attempt to move the cost of buying, holding, and selling of raw cotton and finished cloth off the company books. He found the Texas Textile Mills to be using the “process system,” defined as the cost of raw material, direct labor, and factory overhead. The mill in 1950 was losing money because it was absorbing the cost of raw material storage, a holdover from the 1920s. He also found 10 out of 11 mills surveyed were keeping their payroll as a manufacturing cost while only 8 percent of other businesses in the nation did so. No mills used time clocks, relying on overseers or managers to keep work records, leading to inaccurate labor costs. Eight mills reset their piece rate weekly, while the rest set theirs by the job. Jesse Edwards recommended mills publish financial statements to provide investors with comparative results, and use uniform accounting methods, year-to-year reporting and better internal controls for employees.⁷⁴

Each of these researchers studied different aspects of Texas cotton mills, but each illuminates the challenges facing the mill in McKinney and the Texas Textile Mills. Jesse Edwards shows an industry that was slack and increasingly out of the mainstream. With the passing of Clarence Miller and a shift in ownership, the mill would make some changes but not in the direction Wilmon Droze suggested.⁷⁵ Instead of

⁷³ Jesse G. Edwards, “The Status of Inventory Valuation in Texas Cotton Mills, 1950” (MBA Thesis, North Texas State College, 1950), 2, 16, 21-24.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 39-40, 46, 48, 67. Edwards found only 2 mills used an auditor to determine factory overhead, the transportation, power, water, taxes, and other costs. Seven mills used actual figures instead of estimating, while 3 set a predetermined overhead rate.

⁷⁵ Droze, *Development of the Textile Industry in Texas*, 93-94.

increasing the use of rayon or building a rayon plant, McKinney's mill would hold on to denim as its principal product. Change would only occur after 1962, too late to reinvigorate the company. Gus White demonstrated the persistence of vision that mill fever in the South wrapped around the industry with support for small towns, a female workforce, and no unions. His profile of what investors sought for textile mills demonstrates the labor trap the two mills occupied. Both Waco and McKinney had competitive industries offering different work environments, benefits, and wage scales. It is no surprise that the union helped push further change at the mill.

On October 28, 1954, workers at the McKinney mill walked out over workloads, according to the *Dallas Morning News*. The company had brought in an engineer "to set up new workloads at both plants," and the carding room employees objected to some of the new job classifications. This accords with George Waldrep's finding that the stretch-out continued to be an issue for mill workers and unions.⁷⁶ At the Waco mill the existing contract was extended for 30 days and the workers did not strike. The *McKinney Courier-Gazette* did not report the strike until the company took out a double page ad to explain how the employees were not working hard enough for the company to remain in business. The union responded with a half-page ad blaming old machines for the productivity shortfall. Both sides claimed there was no animosity with the company, and the picketing was described as peaceful and orderly.⁷⁷

Silence settled over the mill. Workers walked the picket line, invisible to the town because the local newspaper did not cover the strike. Each day the paper covered the Communist menace or the McCarthy Senate hearings, but the textile mill strike

⁷⁶ Waldrep, *Southern Workers*, 155-156.

⁷⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, November 5, 1954, p. 3. *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, November 6, 1954, p. 4-5. *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, November 7, 1954, p. 3.

appeared only from the company point of view. On November 17, 300 members of the union met all morning before voting down the latest proposal. The president of the Chamber of Commerce invited several city businessmen, the mayor, two commissioners, union representatives, company officials, and an official for the Federal Mediation service to meet and discuss the situation. The next day the paper reported the mill was open for “limited operations” for those desiring to work and picketing continued.⁷⁸ Billy Kanady felt that the union was making a losing argument from the start. He recalled that the sum of the disagreement was over a nickel and after several weeks of no pay it would take months of work just to catch up. Certainly the union was not well funded; Louise Nixon stated that dues in 1952 and 1953 were 60 cents a week. The strike fund had laid in supplies of canned goods at Coles Grocery, according to Jack Hill, and there was bread but little else. On November 23 the company ran a jobs ad offering permanent jobs with benefits to anyone who started that day. The strike was broken and the union settled the next day.⁷⁹ After six months of negotiations, Giles E. Miller and Boyd Payton, the southern director for the CIO, worked out a 2 year labor agreement for the McKinney mill. It included revised incentives, a change in the seniority system for job bidding and a revised group life and hospitalization. Dispute arbitration by the company grievance procedure was tossed out.⁸⁰ This marks the last appearance of the union at either mill (See Appendix).

⁷⁸ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, November 17, 1954, p. 1. *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, November 18, 1954, p. 1. Waldrep, *Southern Workers*, 159, 167. 170.

⁷⁹ *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, November 23, 1954, p. 7. *Dallas Morning News*, November 28, 1954, p. 15. Billy Don Kanady oral history interview. Louise Nixon oral history interview. Jack Hill oral history interview.

⁸⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, March 1, 1955, p. 7.

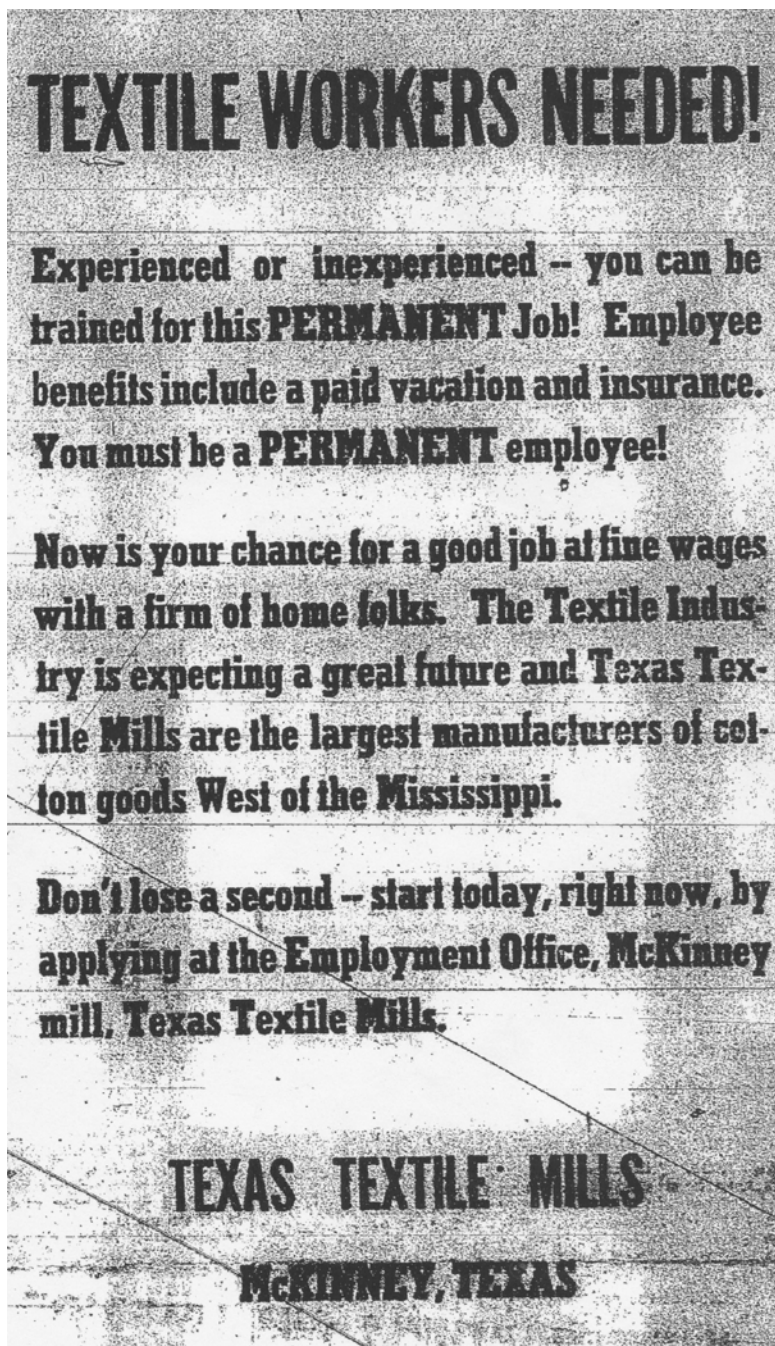


Figure 6.8. Company strike advertisement. *McKinney Courier Gazette*, November 23, 1954, p. 7.

The 1954 strike led to a company reorganization 6 months later. Giles E. Miller went into the real estate business and would sponsor the first professional football team in Dallas, dropping out of the family business. The Texas Textile Sales Corporation was

purchased by the J. W. Valentine Company while a group described, as “former stockholders” would operate the two mills. Bryan C. Miller Jr. took over running the company.⁸¹ Louise Nixon and Opal Wright described the difference in the company under Bryan Miller. Louise attended a Christmas party for office staff and managers for both mills in the early 1950s. The party host was Clarence Miller’s brother, Bryon and was held at the prestigious Adolphus Hotel in downtown Dallas with champagne and caviar. In the late 1950s Opal Wright attended a party for managers and office staff hosted by Bryan C. Miller Jr. It was held at the McKinney County Club, and in one photo the guests are in folding chairs.⁸² The mills were suffering as the market for independent mill owners dried up.

Companies from the Southeast began buying Texas mills with Cone Brothers of Greensboro, North Carolina, investing in the old San Marcos Mill and Burlington Mills buying the Postex and Sherman Mills.⁸³ The closing of the Dallas Love Field mill kept McKinney’s mill at three shifts with 672 workers in 1952. By 1955 the new labor agreement covered 615 workers. Employment dropped to 600 by 1958.⁸⁴ Tennie Ireland had had enough; she left the mill and began working for Texas Instruments in Richardson. She described it as “going from hell to heaven.” Opal Wright left the mill because her husband had also quit, while Louise Nixon left to start a business. Billy Kanady worked briefly on the night shift in the cloth room after military service in 1958.

⁸¹ *Dallas Morning News*, September 21, 1955, p. 12.

⁸² Louise Nixon oral history interview. Opal Wright oral history interview. Opal Wright memorabilia.

⁸³ Stanley A. Arbingast & Judy Vaughan, *Texas Industrial Expansion 1955 vol. 5* (October-December, 1955), 32. Arbingast & Robert Drenna, *Texas Industrial Expansion 1958 vol. 8* (October-December, 1958), 23.

⁸⁴ J. Lee Stambaugh and Lillian J. Stambaugh, *A History of Collin County, Texas* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1958), 51-53. *Texas Almanac* (Dallas: A. H. Belo Publishing, 1956), 200.

Earl Munchow believed he should have left the Waco mill sooner but felt he could not get a job anywhere else.⁸⁵ The remaining workforce was aging and new workers were hard to find putting additional pressure on the mill.

Development was gnawing at both cities with the newspapers reporting on a long list of large projects around Waco.⁸⁶ In McKinney, Dr. Glenn Mitchell purchased the mill village but mill employees had already been buying their homes from the company. The potluck dinners, games of bridge or evenings spent on the lawn watching TV through an open window with fellow employees were coming to an end. On October 22, 1959, shocking news came that the Waco plant would close. Employment had dropped to 250 hands in Waco. When the owner of a furniture company occupying the old twine mill next door made an offer for the mill buildings, the deal was closed. One hundred and twenty-five workers would be offered jobs at the McKinney plant. After consolidation, the mill managers planned to return to 3 shifts. This suggests the McKinney plant was below 450 hands. Bryan C. Miller closed the company showroom at the Dallas Apparel Mart, and for the first time since 1914 the owner of the McKinney Textile mill lived in the same city as the mill.⁸⁷

Government economist, Thomas J. Davis, looked into the textile cycles for the US Department of Commerce and found that after World War II fiber consumption was lower in relation to national income and industrial activity. The contributing factor was the rise of synthetic fibers. He also found that increased industrial activity resulted in increased use of textiles. This is opposite from the pattern before the war when textiles

⁸⁵ Tennie Ireland oral history interview. Opal Wright oral history interview. Louise Nixon oral history interview. Billy Don Kanady oral history interview. Earl Munchow oral history interview.

⁸⁶ *Dallas Morning News*, January 17, 1960, p. 3.

⁸⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, October 22, 1959, p. 12. Louise Nixon oral history interview. Joe Finley oral history interview.

worked in anticipation of future sales. It underscores Jesse Edwards's call for better inventory controls and financial controls at Texas mills. With a rising standard of living and greater disposable income, Davis found American family spending on clothing dropped.⁸⁸ The trend did not improve as the recession of 1956 ended,

So far as economic and social aspects are concerned, the conservative viewpoint is that the textile and apparel industries will find no automatic improvement in their competitive position in relation to services and other types of consumer goods. The decline in expenditures for clothing and accessories, in relation to total expenditures, is therefore expected to continue.⁸⁹

Finally the company had to change its product or be forced out of business. Bryan C. Miller announced in December 1962 he was going to reopen the Waco mill on an experimental basis for two years. He stated the plant would produce blue denim using yarn from the McKinney mill but this was not true, he planned to try synthetics and fabric blends. Only 37 to 40 employees would be needed to operate 100 new looms plus some from the McKinney plant. This suggests the Waco mill would be highly automated. With local demand dropping, and with the rapid expansion of imported fabrics from Asia, combined with new expensive laborsaving machines, the McKinney plant was now old and too large for updating. Helen Hall, wife of Mayor Roy Hall in 1960, spoke of the controversy over the mill drainage into the new county water supply of Lake Lavon (see Appendix). The mill was no longer a valued employer but a city problem. The payroll value of the mill to the city had been passed by other employers in the 1950s, and now the city had no interest in sharing the costs of expensive upgrades

⁸⁸ Thomas J. Davis, *Cycles and Trends in Textiles* (Washington D. C. US Department of Commerce, GPO 1958), 1-2, 46-48.

⁸⁹ A. W. Zelomek and Robert C. Shook, *Textile Outlook for the Sixties* (Washington D. C.: US Department of Commerce, GPO, 1960), 23.

to the sewer system. The mill was too far away from the thousands of cotton bales being produced in West Texas to compete effectively against other newer mills, and the orders began to decline. Basically Miller was trying to spread the production of one mill over two in an effort to get ahead of rental fees on his factories.⁹⁰

The news on December 14, 1967, that the plant would close was received quietly by the town. Bryan Miller was producing a silk cotton blend at the Waco mill and believed that with an additional building he could consolidate operations and increase production by 60 percent. He announced that machinery for the McKinney plant would be moved to the Waco plant, however, no one remembers the mill being stripped of its machines. Jack Hill had inherited Coles Grocery store and he lost most of his customer base when the mill closed. Each day he could see the mill across the street, yet he did not recall seeing any machinery leave the factory.⁹¹ Employment at the mill was down below 200 when the last whistle blew in March 1968. Hardly anyone noticed.

According to the Texas Industrial Expansion publication the Haggar pant factory was expanding in McKinney and a burlap bag company moved into the Burrus flour mill and began producing sandbags for the Vietnam War. Selling surplus looms and spinning machines across town made more sense than paying freight to ship old machines to Waco for a building not yet built.

The discovery that lathes and welders for the mill are still in the power house and the freight elevators still work in the weave shop and slasher room suggests that when

⁹⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, December 5, 1962, p. 9. Personal conversation and letter, Mrs. Helen Hall, March 2006. *McKinney Examiner*, October 22, 1959, p. 1. Both the VA hospital and the Haggar plant had larger payrolls by the late 1950s.

⁹¹ *McKinney Examiner*, December 14, 1967, p. 1. *Dallas Morning News*, December 15, 1967, p. 7. Jack Hill oral history interview.

the mill closed, someone simply turned out the lights. The Waco mill had sat unused from 1959 to 1962 with the company paying rent on a portion of the plant not used by Sams Furniture Company. The Dallas mill and some equipment were leased to Johnson and Johnson until 1960. It would not be unusual for Miller to try and wait out the market.

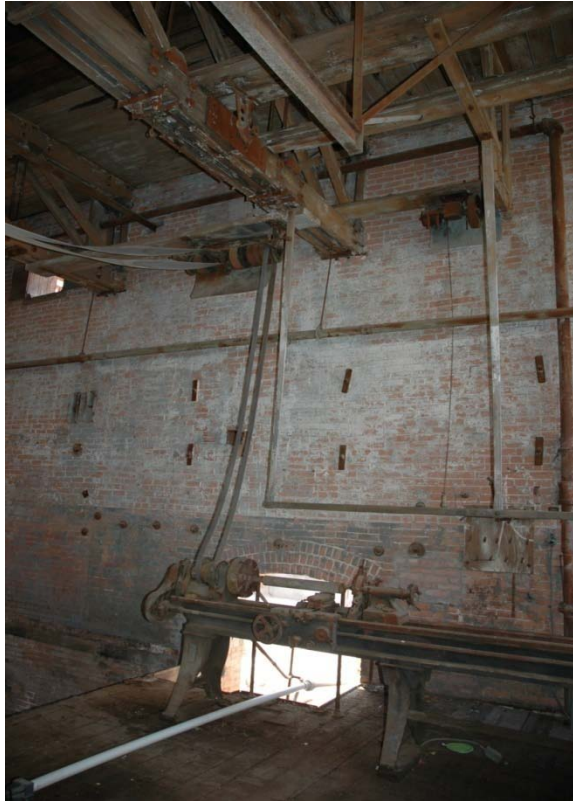


Figure 6.9. Lathe still hooked up to belt drive in the engineering room, McKinney. Photo by author, 2006.

Miller did change the address of the company from McKinney to Waco on May 24, 1968. On October 15, 1968, however, he changed the address again to a room at the Dallas Apparel Mart. In December 1968, he filed for bankruptcy even though he was current on all his obligations. Finally in March 1969, the Texas Textile Mills closed for

the final time. The State of Texas revoked the company charter for non-payment of taxes on August 25, 1969.⁹²

Texas textile mills, while few in number, resemble textile mills in other southeastern states in several ways. Wages were low, working conditions poor, and housing placed employees and their families outside of city services. Employees moved frequently as individuals and as families searched for better wages or working conditions. Workers and their children made the mill world a kind of family, leading to generations of employees who believed that mill work was the only job available. Women and children were more frequently employed at southern mills. McKinney broke this pattern. Children under the age of 15 were never employed as regular workers. Mill block children attended city schools and worked outside the mill as soda jerks, taxi drivers, or sales clerks. They did not feel the need to follow their parents and extended family into the mill, though some did. McKinney, like other Texas mills, employed a large number of men as mill hands. Some mill workers lived outside the mill block and shared the same sidewalks and parks as citizens working at other businesses.

The larger question remains; was the McKinney factory unique to Texas mills? Limited materials related to the other two plants in the company at Waco and Dallas suggest that McKinney was indeed unique. Despite the training and traditions of the original managers and workers, women and children never made up a large portion of the work force. Between 1910 and 1940 the city footprint moved towards the mill with

⁹² Arbingast and Graham Blackstock, *Texas Industrial Expansion*, vol. 18 #3 (March 1968), 34. Arbingast and Graham Blackstock, *Texas Industrial Expansion*, vol. 19 #3 (March 1969), 40. Copy of the Statement of Change of Office or Registered Agent of the Texas Textile Mills, Inc. filed May 24, 1968, office of the Texas Secretary of State. Copy of the Statement of Change of Office or Registered Agent of the Texas Textile Mills, Inc., filed October 15, 1968, Office of the Texas Secretary of State. Copy of the Determination of forfeiture pursuant to Article 12.17 Taxation-general, Vernon's Civil Statutes, microfilm reel 801-1, Office of the Texas Secretary of State.

services, transportation, and schools instead of away as occurred in Waco and Dallas. Jeanette Bailey had family members working at the Bonham mill in the 1920s and 1940s, yet her parents never moved once they reached McKinney. Blaine Hall worked for a month at the original Dallas Cotton Mill then returned to McKinney. Joe Finley's father moved his family to Dallas for mill work briefly during the Second World War but returned to McKinney as a better city. Frank Smith arrived in 1922 from the oil fields and rose to president of the mill; his son Jack cleaned toilets at the mill then went on to be president of the Haggard plant. Steve Powell's extended family worked at mills across the state before settling down. Opal Wright and Tennie Ireland followed their mothers into the mill yet raised their children to look outside the mill for work. Beth Stapleton, the daughter of a businessman went to school with "lintheads" like John Davis White and remains friends forty years later. Mill workers and families shopped downtown, used the city library, and frequented city parks. The mill supported a baseball team that played on city school property. Mill workers built King Memorial Baptist Church, and when it was destroyed by the tornado, the First Baptist Church led the way in rebuilding it. Remarkably, all city business and many other businesses closed down to celebrate the reopening of the mill in 1949. Though the mill stands unknown by many city residents today, the mill's impact dominated the city for the majority of the twentieth century. McKinney's mill experience stands unique to Texas and southern textile mills.

APPENDIX

PHOTOGRAPHS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Machinery/ Job terms

Breaker/ vertical opener. This machine loosens the matted fibers in the bale after opening. This room was most often the job of African Americans in a mill, but not at McKinney.

Picker. These machines distangle and clean the fibers until the finisher has the fibers in soft rolls. At the McKinney mill the picking and carding room was on the second floor between the dye room and the spinning room.

Carding. This machine forms a loose rope of clean fibers into a sliver. A team of men worked on these machines; grinding cards, cleaning or stripping the cards, and dealing with “waste” the short fibers, and small trash that the pickers missed. Waste was often baled and sold to other mills for use in cotton blends.

Slubber. This machine doubled, stretched and then twisted the sliver into a smaller rope called a roving. The roving is sent to the spinning room.

Ring-spinning Frame. Processes the roving into yarn of different sizes. Ring-spinning frames were created for the Southeastern textile mills because young women could learn how to operate one in about a month. Unlike Fly frames ring frames required little strength to operate. This was often the first job for girls in the mill. In the Powell photos you can see the ring frames.

Warper. A large machine that holds full bobbins from the spinning room so form the warp yarns for weaving.

Slasher. A machine that treated the warp yarns with liquid “size” to make them stronger. Billy Kanady’s father worked as a slasher.

Drawing in frames. A series of machines that loop the warp yarn before weaving. The job was often called “drawing in.”

Looms. Like the spinning room the “weave hall” was a very long, large room. McKinney’s mill had 2 weave rooms. Here the woof or filling (horizontal) yarn is woven into the warp to make cloth. Steve Powell’s mother was a weaver. This was the highest paid job for women.

Cloth room. Where the finished material was inspected for flaws or damage. If it was okay the inspector put a chalk mark on the cloth. Billy Kanady worked here for a year moving the massive rolls of cloth from the looms through inspection to storage, awaiting shipment. This was the first room to get air-conditioned at the mill.

Materials from the Carding Room. Documenting post war labor problems, 1946-1952.

<u>CARDING</u>			
<u>No.</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Pr. RT.</u>	<u>Week</u>
1	Overseer		40.00
1	Asst. O'secr		27.50
1	Opener Mach. Tender	.375	15.00
1	Feeder Mach. Tender	.375	15.00
1	Picker Finner	.485	19.40
1	Fixer	.375	15.00
1	Head Grinder + 2nd	.50	20.00
1	Grinder Halper	.45	18.00
4	Card Hands	.375	60.00
2	Strippers	.375	30.00
1	Sweeper	.375	15.00
1	Frame Fixer	.485	19.40
1	Oilier & Sweeper	.375	15.00
1	Sizer & Halper	.375	15.00
<u>Piece Rates</u>		<u>2 Can Men</u>	
4	Drawing Tenders	.043	<u>Rate</u>
4	Frame Hands		
	1.10 HK	.124	.062
	1.40 "	.130	.065
	2.00 "	.140	.070
	2.60 "	.150	.075
	3.25 "	.155	.0775
	4.25 "	.165	.0825
Band Hoving		.21	

Figure A. 1 Undated carding room pay scale from binder found under the mill. From the Texas Textile Mill Papers. Courtesy of Cotton Mill Partners, Ltd. and Darla Lovett.

SENIORITY LIST
CARDING DEPARTMENT

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE EMPLOYED</u>
Clarence E. Pilkinton	11/14/45
Grover Roberds	8/19/46
Oscar Calhoun	2/25/51
Ira R. Miller	9/1/45
Henry L. Tadlock	4/8/47
Eugene V. Magnuson	8/19/52
G.G. Davidson	9/19/43
H.F. Coldiron	3/15/21
Glen Bell	4/1/37
M.Z. Hughes	1/20/38
L.H. Dunn	8/27/45
William H. Chambers	6/26/50
Charlie L. Smith	3/3/52
Luther J. Burleson	8/19/52
Mark Bryant	8/9/43
Leeman Rowland	10/26/43
Elbert Garner	11/1/43
Clarence Kelley	9/1/35
R.O. Ramey	7/16/43
Raymond Craft, Sr.	11/20/46
James H. Kenner	6/12/52
Earnest Aaron	10/1/51
William F. Lewis	5/21/52
Raymond S. Nelson	12/10/51
G.H. Hammer	9/15/47
Ross J. Thompson	9/3/52
Joe McManus	10/11/52
Robert E. Tipton	10/16/52
Robert E. Tippens	10/27/52
Orville A. Platt	7/29/52
Jack F. Holmes	9/9/52
Johnnie E. Dunn	10/6/52
Lester G. Rooker	10/6/52
Orville W. Kissinger	10/16/52
William L. Banks	8/15/52
T.D. Allison	10/28/52
G. W. Russell	11/3/52
Burl Carpenter	4/8/43
Amos Gadberry	11/1/50
J.T. Hartsell	11/9/42
Vernon R. Fady	2/11/52
Estes T. Munger	11/14/49
Dal W. White	7/12/50
Cecil R. Perkins	5/6/47
J.T. McWilliams	10/10/45
Troy L. Cook	5/28/52
Hubert F. Whitworth	7/23/52
Ella Mae Smith	1/5/40
Minnie Lanier	2/6/43
Lorna Lee Combest	12/8/50
Hattie Cline	11/28/43
Emma Day	8/19/43
Minnie P. Buff	11/27/50

Ira R. Miller	9/1/45
Henry L. Tadlock	4/8/47
Eugene V. Magnuson	8/19/52
G.G. Davidson	9/19/43
H.F. Coldiron	3/15/21
Glen Bell	4/1/37
M.Z. Hughes	1/20/38
L.H. Dunn	8/27/45
William H. Chambers	6/26/50
Charlie L. Smith	3/3/52
Luther J. Burleson	8/19/52
Mark Bryant	8/9/43
Leeman Rowland	10/26/43
Elbert Garner	11/1/43
Clarence Kelley	9/1/35
R.O. Ramey	7/16/43
Raymond Craft, Sr.	11/20/46
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T.D. Allison	10/28/52
G. W. Russell	11/3/52
Burl Carpenter	4/8/43
Amos Gadberry	11/1/50
J.T. Hartsell	11/9/42
Vernon R. Fady	2/11/52
Estes T. Munger	11/14/49
Dal W. White	7/12/50
Cecil R. Perkins	5/6/47
J.T. McWilliams	10/10/45
Troy L. Cook	5/28/52
Hubert F. Whitworth	7/23/52
Ella Mae Smith	1/5/40
Minnie Lanier	2/6/43
Lorna Lee Combest	12/8/50
Hattie Cline	11/28/43
Emma Day	8/19/43
Minnie P. Buff	11/27/50
Melvin J. Waller	9/1/52
Mary F. Clark	3/3/52
Opal M. Benton	2/24/50
Mary Henderson	9/18/51
Bertha Park	7/31/51
Chleo M. Platt	4/1/52
Flora A. Jackson	9/3/52
Bobby J. Bradford	10/27/52
Bertha H. Duckworth	6/16/52
Dora F. Hankey	10/9/52

CARDING ... REPORT

PG. 2

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE EMPLOYED</u>
Addie M. Pope	10/10/52
Mozelle K. Allison	10/28/52
Lois N. Wallis	10/23/52
Charlie E. Green	5/8/33
Charlie W. Bennett	11/15/15
Willard B. Buff	11/27/50
C.L. Lorange	12/16/42
Denver Hall	5/7/52
Tracy O. Mauldin	8/25/52
Claud L. Phillips	8/18/52
Isaac Day	1/16/51
Raymond Harvey	11/4/52
Vera Raley	7/10/35
Hattie McPeak	1/28/43
Myrtle Ramey	2/15/42
Hazel Biggs	5/20/50
Arnie D. Catchings	6/10/47
John W. Miller	11/26/45
Emma Dunn	8/27/45
Claude N. Ellis	11/10/47
Bonnie M. McCullough	9/17/52
Clarence A. Stay	10/22/52
Patricia M. Moore	9/30/52
Frances Lorene McCullough	11/6/52
Ruth Wisdom	10/15/43
Willie Davidson	11/19/45
Rosa M. Tanner	4/1/46
J.W. Tanner	10/30/50
Ray Rush	7/9/40
L.M. McCullough	9/29/52
Nannie Johnson	9/25/52
Vernon R. Sprabary	11/10/46
Dorothy Franklin	10/7/52

Figure A. 2-5. The seniority list from the Carding room in 1952. This was the source of the problems that led to the strike in 1954. What cannot be discovered is if the seniority problem was the result of consolidating the Dallas and McKinney mills or turnover. Of the 144 hands listed over half, 83 were hired in the preceding 2 years. Fifty-three were hired in the 1940s. The hire turnover rate is amply illustrated. From the Texas Textile Mill Papers. Courtesy of Cotton Mill Partners, Ltd. and Darla Lovett.

Photos of the Tornado Damage to the Textile Mill and homes.



Figure A. 6. *McKinney Courier Gazette*, May 5, 1948, p. 2. Photo number 1 is of homes near the South Ward. Number 2 shows the Boyd High school gym that Beth Stapleton escaped. Number 3 is a damaged car at the textile mill. Number 4 is the textile mill with the second floor exposed. Opal Wright memorabilia.

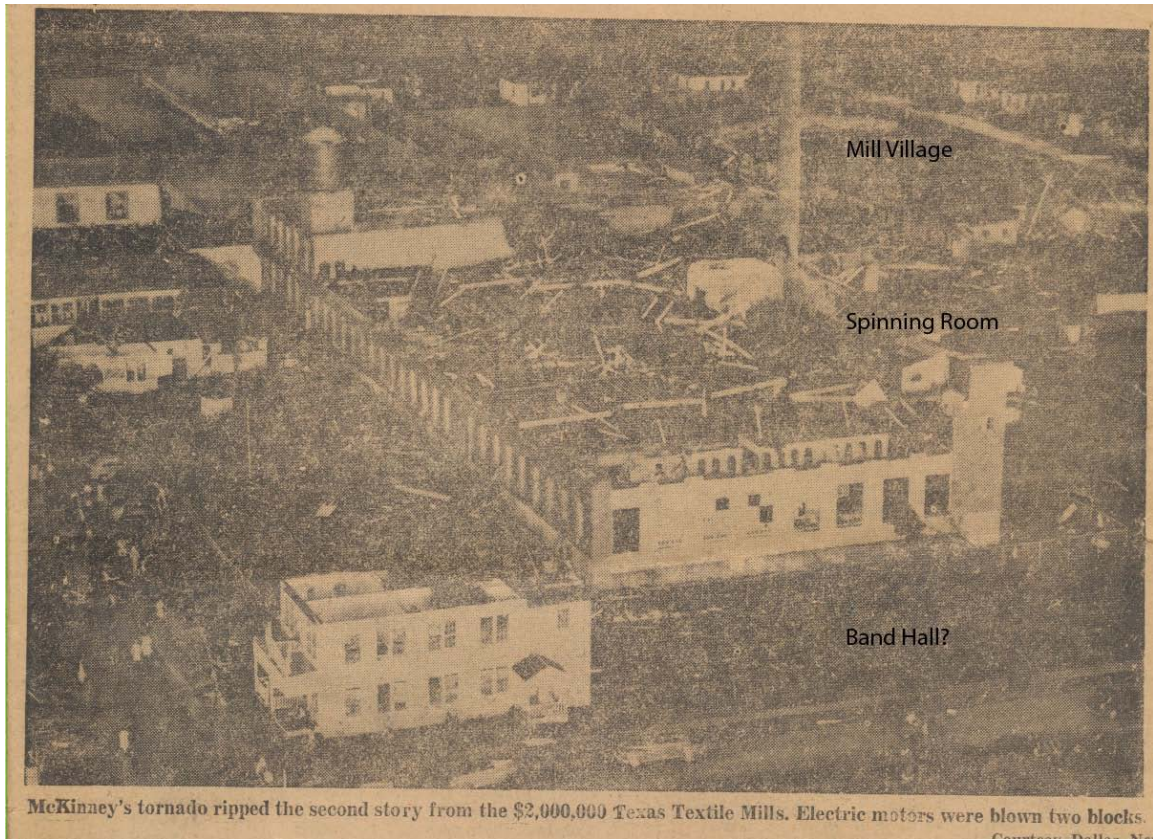


Figure A. 7. *McKinney Courier Gazette*, May 4, 1948 p. 6. Reprint from Dallas Morning News. Opal Wright memorabilia. The band hall is the white roofless, 2 story building in the foreground. The 2 story section of the mill with the water tower is the picker/slasher room.

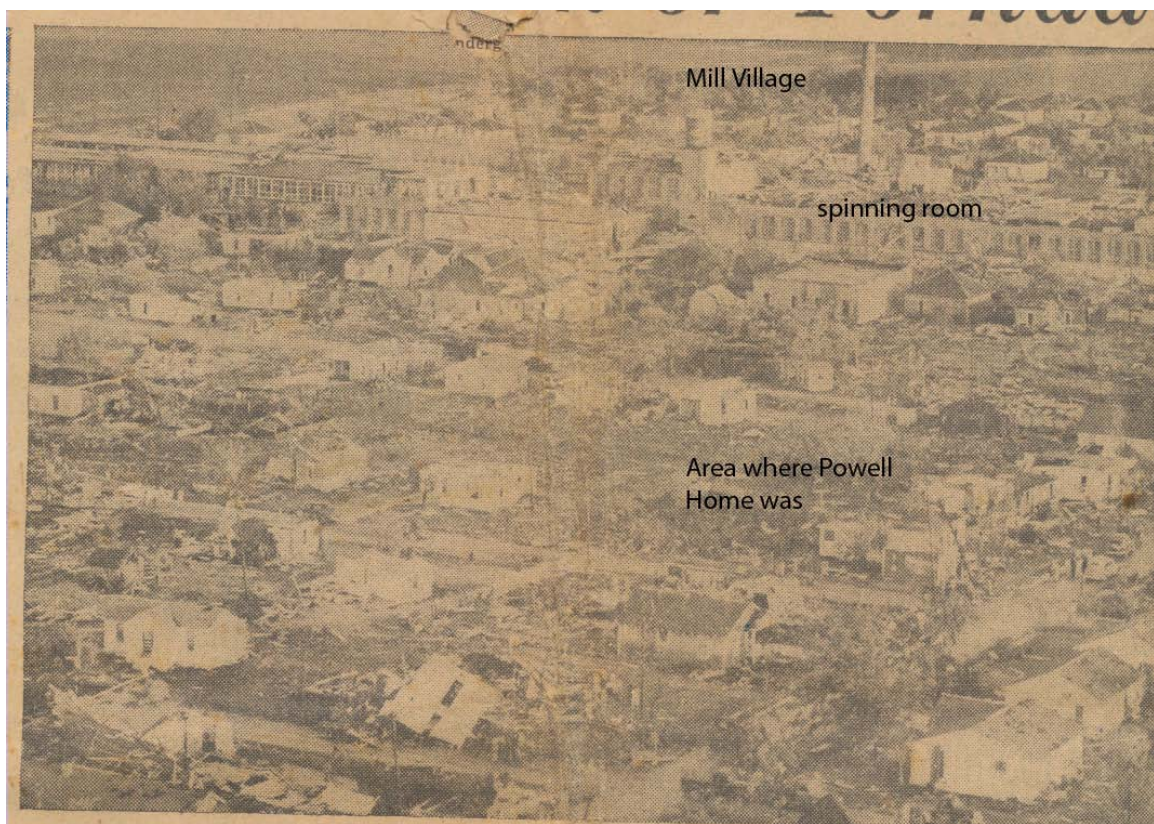
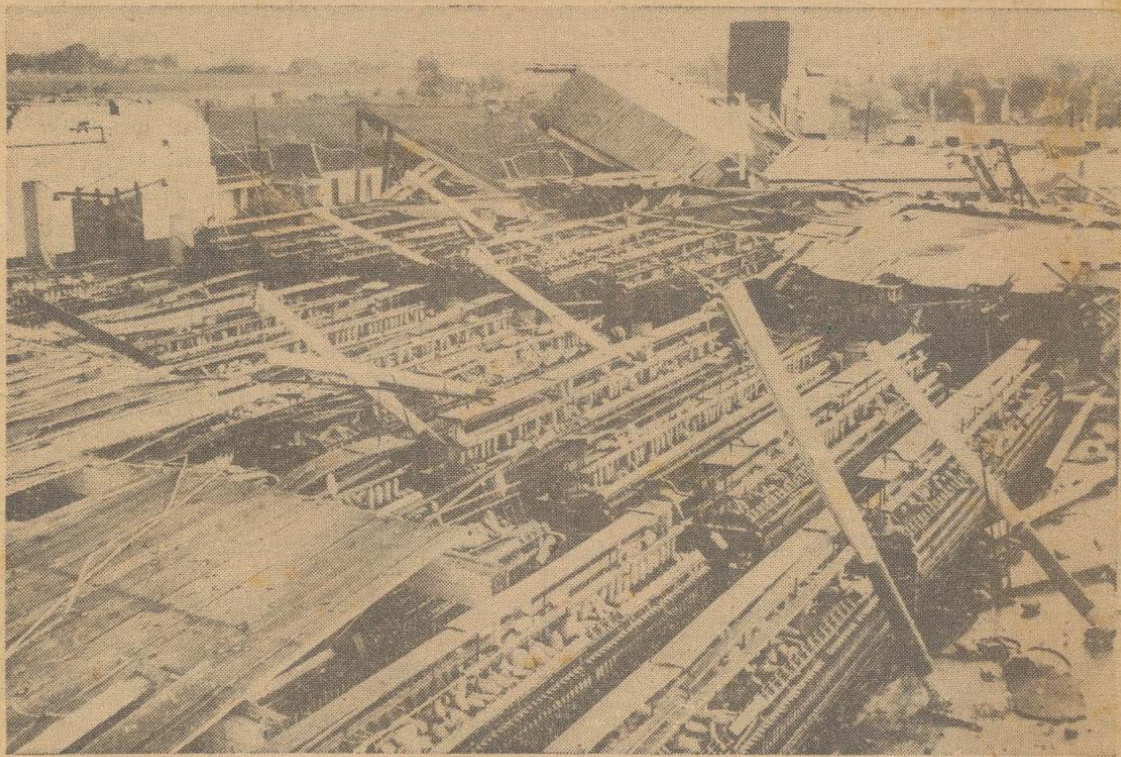


Figure A. 8. *Dallas Daily Times Herald*, May 4, 1948 p. 14. Opal Wright memorabilia.



—The Times Herald Staff Photo.

SPINNING ROOM OF TEXTILE MILL is exposed after the heavy wind sheared part of the third story from the plant in McKinney Monday afternoon. Looking down on the spinning room from the water tower above the entrance to the mill, sections of the roof can be seen covering the spindle racks. Many workers took refuge between the racks when the storm struck, a factor accounting for the amazing light injury and death toll.

McKinney Digs Out of Storm Debris

3 Dead, 50 Injured,
700 Left Homeless
By Twister

By FRANK LANGSTON
The Times Herald Staff Correspondent
McKinney, May 4.—Battered and twisted McKinney was digging out of its storm strewn rubble Tuesday as it counted the toll from Monday's tornado.

Striking suddenly, as "a terrific wind out of a total eclipse," the tornado flattened most of the city's mill district, played a grim game of leap frog of much of Mc-

Additional tornado pictures

Collin City Residents Thankful Storm Toll 'Miraculously' Low

By CHARLES DAMERON
The Times Herald Staff Correspondent.
McKinney, May 4.—Work shifts of some 600 employees were changing at the Texas Textile Mills in the south district of McKinney when an ugly, black, boil-

radio listening "to the Cardinals playing ball."

"I was in the Pacific during the war and know what its like

Continued on Page Fourteen.

WINDS INJURE 3 IN OKLAHOMA

Mill Creek, Okla., May 4 (UP).—An 80-mile area of Southern Oklahoma today showed the effects of the state's second tornado in three days, which battered two small towns and a number of farm homes and injured at least three persons.

The twister first hit this area about 2 p.m. on Monday last.

Figure A. 9. *Dallas Daily Times Herald*, May 4, 1948, p. 1. Showing the damage to the spinning room. Employees in the spinning room went under the frames to escape the storm.

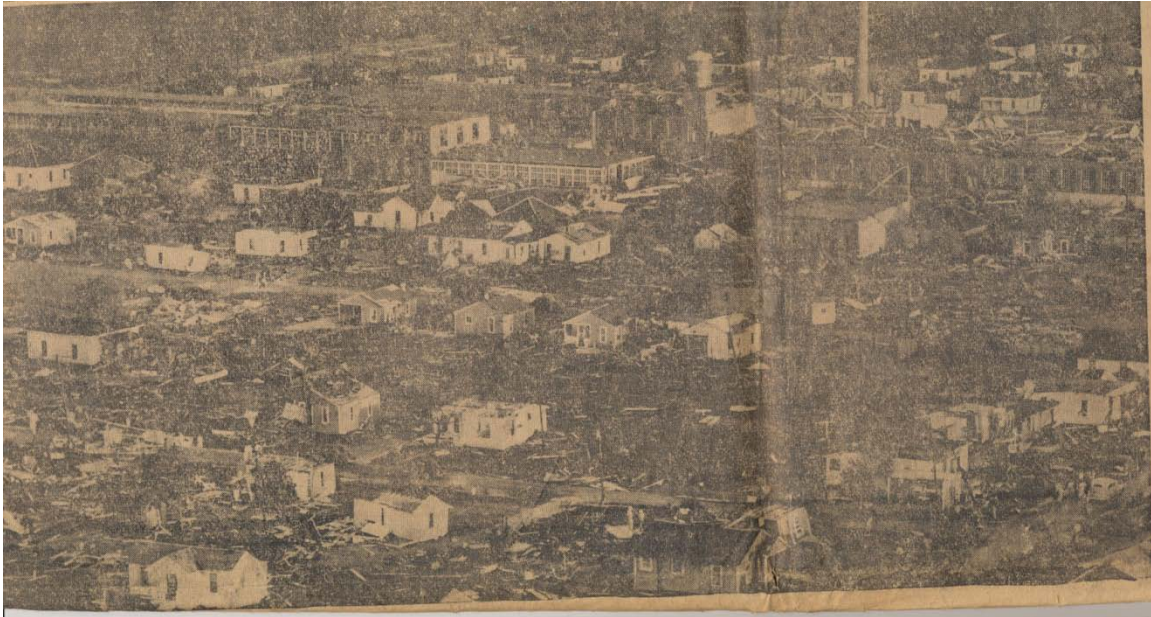


Figure A.10. *McKinney Daily Courier Gazette*, May 4, 1948, p. 1 Opal Wright memorabilia.

This shows the entire mill across the middle of the picture. The damaged area in front of the mill is not the mill village but the private homes of many mill employees. The greatest damage was in this area, not the mill village.



Figure A.11. McKinney Courier Gazette May 4, 1978, p. 1. Retrospective by one mill family included this personal photo taken May 4, 1948 along Elm Street in front of the mill.

McKinney, Texas
April 29, 1960

State Department of Health
Austin, Texas

Dear Sirs:

Attached you will find a rough sketch of proposed changes in the sewage disposal plant in this city.

The arrangement of this plant has never been satisfactory. In 1955 the Textile Mill of this city was allowed to run its dye waste through the sewage plant, thereby interfering with the growth of algae and the consequent creating a bad odor from the settling lagoons of the plant. (The small overflow was avoided)

As you are aware of the situation this creates, I shall skip that part of it and describe the changes proposed, and the influence I believe the proposed changes will have on our bad-odor condition.

The dye waste from the Textile Mill, together with the raw sewage of some 50 houses at the mill passes altogether about 225,000 gallons daily directly into our digester and clarifier, and then out into the settling lagoon of 57 acres. The dye waste causes the lagoon to remain a deep purple color, preventing the penetration of sunlight which is necessary for the formation and growth of algae. The dye waste has a very high BOD, as you know, and prevents our lagoons from operating in the manner intended when constructed. As of today, our sewage goes over the spillway out of our lagoon and into Lake Lavon practically untreated. How high the bacterial count is in this waste I do not know. I have had this condition under study for over a year, and we are no nearer a solution now than when I took office of this city, a year ago. Several plans have been advocated by various authorities and all proved too costly, even if success had been guaranteed. My plan is this:

To build a dam or dyke across 17 acres of the lower end of the lagoon and divert the Textile Mill dye waste directly into the smaller lagoon thus formed, below our main lagoon. Mr. Fix, whose firm as you know, built the disposal plant, informs me that it would require only about 25 acres of the lagoon to treat our sewage and bring it to a very low bacterial count. The dye waste from the mill is practically free of harmful bacteria, but it prevents the formation of algae in our lagoon and our entire disposal plant is practically useless as a clarifying disposal unit.

So far as I can see, no harm could possibly come from this plan. Now, all our raw sewage is going over the spillway untreated. It might retain its purple color, but at least it would lower the harmful Bacteria count, and the odor, which is ruinous to our city, possibly would be eliminated.

Please advise me on this.

Yours sincerely,

Roy F. Hall (M. Hall)

Figure A.12. Letter from Mayor Roy Hall to the State Department of Health about the textile mill. Courtesy of Mrs. Helen Hall.

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