

My memories of the operation  
of the Faith Mills!  
Elwin Richard [Dick] Castle

If you were to go to the mill at the bottom of the hill on burden lake road, you will notice a warehouse on the right side of the road going down the hill. This is were it all began.

Trucks would bring in bails and bags of cotton materials, some mixed blends of different types of cloth materials and it would be stored in that warehouse until needed.

When needed, the mill trucks would bring a few bails at a time over to the building across the road that was referred to as the lower mill. . there the bails would be opened in the picking room.

The materials ..would be put into what they called hoppers. it looked like what a small dumpster looks Like today. This machine was called the Picker . The machine operator would fill the hoppers with the cotton and mixed blends of material and it would go through the machine and hundreds of needlike hooks on a huge belt would pick it apart and it would come out the other end blended and picked apart into cotton. It would then go to the Garnet room in the cellar of lower mill and also put into hoppers and the material would go through the garnet machine and would come out fluffed like cotton candy.

The cotton would then be sent through the pipe line that was connected from the lower mill to the upper mill . it was blown up through that pipe to the cardroom bins.[.Parts of the pipe are still laying on the ground between the mills].On occasions as you went down the road you would see cotton blowing in the air as the pipe at times would spring a leak. [The snakes, frogs and turtles just loved it as it made a good nesting place along the banks for them].

The cotton was blown into small bins [.i'am guessing at the size of the bins] but maybe 6feet wide and about 10 feet high. The bins were behind the Card machines in what was called the cardroom. The machine operator would have to go in the bins as

the cotton was being blown in and stamp it down as it was blowing all over him.

As the cotton pile got higher, he had to make sure he kept a hole open down to the door at the bottom to get out and he would have to slide down to get to the door to exit. He would be covered from head to toe with cotton as it got very hot in the bin and the cotton would stick to you. The cardroom was what is now the signature stone room. [The back room of the ground floor.] The machine operator would then take arms full of the cotton and fill the hoppers connected to the card machine. The material would go through the machines on large belts and come out the other end as yarn with approx. 30 ends that would go onto roller about 5 feet long[.Guessing at that length.]

The rolls would then be put in carts and go from the first floor [ground level] to the [second floor] known as the spinning room or sometimes called the winding room. The rolls would be put on the back of the machine called Jacks, or sometimes called Mule Spinners. The approx 30 ends would be put into the jacks and each end would go through wax rings that would hold the yarn together. the operator would be on the other side and the yarn would be attached to a part of the machine ,that would pull the yarn from the roller and the machine would stretch it out [guess 5feet] and as the machine moved back in, the 30 lines of yarn would wrap around bobbins, eventually filling the bobbins, and the operator would have to break the yarn, throw the full bobbins into carts and begin another 30 lines changing the big rolls in the back when needed. The operator would walk behind the machine as it went back and forth winding the yarn and would connect any strands that may break. The carts of bobbins would then go to the [front part of the second floor] to the knitting machines. The knitting machines would knit in a circle and would come out the bottom of the knitting machine. the operator would have to cut the material and remove it and then start another pile..the material would be stacked and put in carts and taken to the cellar which was the washroom. there the material would be washed and dried in big



machines and some cases sent to the next room to be dyed. Some material was dyed depending on color of underwear being made. The material was also turned inside out on many occasions by machines to dry.

At times you could tell what color garments were being dyed by the color of the water in the pond. The creek ran to the mouth of the first lake at burden lake.

Many times being young we would swim in the creek just below the lower mill and then suddenly we would have to leave as the color of the water would change.

Many people would fish and hunt frogs in the pond and if you were lucky to catch a turtle, you could take it to Aron Dibble and he would make turtle soup and if you wanted the shell he would paint it and give it back to you.

Once the material was washed and dried it would be put on the elevator and sent up one floor to the cutting room, which was on the upper cellar floor. There it was placed on the tables and it would be cut into different parts of the underwear. Example : Legs, cuffs, drawer panels. the cuffs and collars and the body of shirts. The pieces would be tied into bundles of , I beleave 36 units per bundle and sent up one floor to the sewing room or sometimes called the finishing room which was in the front of the building at ground level. There it would be passed out to the sewing machine operators and the body of the underwear would be assembled. it would be tied back up and put in carts to go to the machines to sew the cuffs on the legs and sleeves and collars, then on to the same floor to the sewing machines that sewed the elastic on the waist of the underwear, then on to the button hole department on the same floor for buttons., then the size labels and brand name would be sewed on. Maybe not in that order. There were tags with stickers on them for each department and the operators would take there sticker off the card . they would get payed by the amount of stickers they had. Now the underwear was all put together. I can remember Lusion O, Keefe and Later William Lance coming through the mill with a box in front of them and a strap around

there necks with the pay envelopes for all the employees. Each sewing machine operator and inspectors were payed by piece work

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Next it would be sent to the inspectors [Approx. 5 or 6] in the corridor over looking the dock area on the same floor and they would clip the extra threads that were hanging on from the sewers and would put there tag in the bundle that showed the dozen was inspected. then put back in carts to go back down one floor to be folded, Pressed and put into boxes.

Then it was sent by mill truck up the hill to the shipping department under the main office building where it was stored and packed to be shipped. Sometimes it was shipped out from the first cellar in the front of the building where they were folded and packed.

To understand the floors of the mill I will try to explain this way: The front of the mill was two stories high. The back was four stories. Two celler floors and then the first and second floor above ground.

Many of the homes around the mill were owned and maintained by the mill and if you worked there you could rent the home. I beleave I heard something like \$4.50 Per Mo. which was taken out of your pay each week like \$1.10 per week. Back in the late 30s and 40s. A little more in the 50s and 60s. We lived at 1508 Burden Lake Road and \$25.00 sounds fimilair per Month.

Across the street of the upper mill on the hill was a boarding house that was owned and operated by the mill. Many people from the capital district that worked in the mill would board there and was said that they would go home on weekends.

In my time, the boarding house was run by the mother and father of Pittsburg Pirates pitcher Elroy Leon Face. The Faces were great Loving, caring people and the rooms were filled almost all the time.



I can still remember supper time and everyone coming down for supper at the huge dining room table back in the 40s. And Boy! Could Mrs. Face cook.

There was a night club under the main office but I don't remember that too well, but I do remember the fellow that ran the friendly tavern in Crooked Lake. His name was { Carl Norman } and he used to come with his sound truck and show movies to us kids and eventually doing the same at the Crystal Lake dance hall in the 40s. The night club was to entertain the workers in their spare time. I heard about dancers and the whole bit.

On their breaks for lunch the men had a horse shoe pit in the back of the mill outside the wash room and many of games of horse shoes were played there.

I can remember the mill's owner, William D. Mahony, who lived in the mansion at the top of the hill. A very caring individual. Always wore a white hat. A very distinguished gentleman. He had a chauffeur whose name was Jerry. All the kids just loved him as he gave us candy and always kidded around with us.

I remember Mr. Arthur Butler who I believe was vice President of the mill until Mr. Mahony passed away and then became President. A quiet gentleman who lived on Orient Ave. A man that cared about his employees and would help in any way if you had asked. My dad and I also worked for Mr. and Mrs. Butler at their home doing odd jobs. They were both very special people.

If you had worked in the mill chances are that your mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, nephew, niece, grandmother, grandfather or cousin all worked there at one time or still works there with you. Nearly every member of my family worked in the mill. My Dad fired the boiler there for nearly 40 years. I can still hear the steam whistle blow at noon and at 6:00pm. Living near by I remember washing my car and then my dad would be stoking the boiler and the black soot would start falling and my car would be all black specks. Needless to say I wasn't a happy camper and the people that just hung their laundry out to dry weren't either.

People that worked in the mill were all great people, as I said a lot of them were related and were all there doing the same thing. Working to raise their families and just trying to make a living.

My Dad, Leroy K. Castle Sr. Also called {Gip} or {Pop} would have to make his rounds through out the mill and then go to the lower mill. There were different keys throughout the mill where he would go and would have a clock strapped on his shoulder and I believe about every three hours he would punch his clock with a key located at different Stations throughout the upper and lower mill to show that he checked each section for fire, intruders etc. We would play in the mill and knew about when he was going to come around and we would hide until he went by. We were very careful not to touch the machines or do any harm to anything as we knew the importance of things staying the way they were left, except for a few wax rings around {halloween.}

The boiler was fired by hard coal. The mill trucks would go to Troy to the train yards off first street and would get loads of coal that came in by train and would dump it in the coal bin which was located just outside the door that now is the entrance to signature stone. There was a small alley way about 6 feet wide and about 20 ft. long between the entrance and the coal bin. As the trucks pulled in the mill they would come in the driveway and would first pass by the small office at mill entrance, then past the turbine room on the right, then the Steam Room, then by the boiler room in the cellar on the right and the smoke stack on the left and then to the coal bin on the right. This part of the mill has been torn down but while looking at the entrance to signature stones, about 6 feet out is where these rooms were. The 20 foot alley in between lead to the boiler room.

If you drive past the entrance to signature stones today you can see the stances for the watertower and next to that was the garage for the mill trucks on the left. On the right is a work shed and down over the hill you can still see the pump house that pumped water to the mill from the creek behind the mill. At one time there were a couple of machines that were run by water power, I believe the

washing machines.

Many people fished that creek and caught some great bullheads, walleyes , pickerel ,bass ,all kinds of fish.Once in a while they would lower the water level and I remember catching some big fish by hand.

After the Trolleys stopped,many people that didn't live in the community would take the United Traction bus that now is the CDTA out from troy that ran nearly every hour on the hour as many people also rode it to Crystal Lake, Glass Lake to swim and to the Dance Hall and Merry-Go-Round at Crystal Lake. I beleave the last bus out was around 11:00pm.The bus turned around at Giffords Market in Glass Lake.The united Traction Company paid to have the Merry go Round moved from Rensselaer to Crystal lake to draw more people to take the buses to the Crystal lake Area.The bus service was discontinued also.Maybe 1960s.

I worked in the mill in 1957 and beleave my starting pay was around \$1.59 Per hour. I worked in nearly all departments ,wherever I was needed. I worked there for about 5 Years.

Most people that worked in the mill shopped locally in the village at the Eastmans Variety Store on the corner of Burden Lake road and Route 66,behind eastmans was the Grand union store. On the opposite corner was Bungers Store then became Zanes Market, Then Barnuums News Room [Great pennie Candy], Then the A&P Market across from the lakeveiw. Then Silbergs Pharmacy where Jerry Lewis worked as a Soda Jerk.[Great home made Ice Cream} Then the Post Office on the Eastcorner of 43 and Orient Ave Next to the Pharmacy. Lakeveiw Hotel and Bowling Alley, Harry O'Donnells Liquor Store. Henry Karls Taxi and Larkin Funeral home on Crystal lake road. George Karls insurance. Drice's Hareware store where Legenbauers is today.once Ben Gauchs Appliances. Garstang's Garage, Marty's service station, Cravers Barber shop behind Bungers,Bruno's barber shop behind the variety store.Heffners bar next to legenbauers.

Back in the mill days the village of Averill Park thrived very well.



I can remember Joe Warren would sell life insurance at the mill. He would come once a week and collect I beleave 25 cents a week back in the 40s +50s.. He would walk through the mill to each customer to collect.

At one time during the war ,the mill made wool underwear and overcoat material for the U.S. Govt. The long underwear with the Button panels that opened in the back. I wore them on a few occasions and remember Boy! How they would itch.

Many knitting machines were placed under the main office on the hill for there Govt. Contracts and much of the overcoat material was made there.

Back in those days, there were Armed guards at each entrance to the mill while they had the Govt, Contracts.

The bulk of there product was Thermal Knit, a soft comfortable material that came in all colors, White, Pink, Red, black and I beleave others that I forgot.

My young days of growing up around the Faith Mills holds a special place in my heart. My Dad had to work hard to raise his family on little money but I was able to be with him when he was home and also spent a lot of time with him while he worked.

I got to know most of the people there and there was either a hug, a kiss, a Smile ,a kind word and a lesson learned from each person I met at the mill.

The mill produced warm clothing and warm, friendly people.

I will never forget my experiences growing up in and around the faith mills. An experience that I will take with me when I go.

The mill formed a Union and was there for a long time. Then when the textile work began moving south the union members voted to go on strike. The meeting was held at the Sgt. Walter Adams post. The mill owners said that if the workers went on strike that they would close the mill. The workers didn't beleave that and voted to strike and I can still see the sign on the door. It said this mill be closed as of I beleave maybe in July. A sad, Sad day for Averill Park.

Little by little the machines were shipped out and the mill closed. My Dad worked for about another 6 months to a year and then the Faith Knitting mills were gone. I believe July, 1992

Shortly after that a company from Seneca Falls, Suen Textile company { not sure how they spelled Suen } operated part of the mill then they closed and sold the mill to the Lally knitting mills, owned by Mr Keneth Lally who was a well known contributor to RPI. Mr lally operated part of it for a short time and then I believe it was sold to Ebel Boxe company and then someone who sold auto parts and now Signature Stones.

I am so pleased that I was asked to write about the mill as it brought back a lot of fond memories that I will cherish forever.

All this information is written by the best of my memories and hope it helps in years to come so the Faith Knitting Mills will always be a big part of the history of the Town of Sand Lake.

After speaking with Mr Metzner, the owner of the mill at the present. He said he has plans for the mill and hopefully many businesses will continue to make good use of the mill and Faith Mills will continue to stand tall and always be a big part of the Community for our younger generation to enjoy.

E.Rich Castle

July 21, 2005

These are just some of the names of people I either worked with or knew from my days in the Faith Mills. Most are people I worked with from 1957 until the mill closed in 1962. Note! the many same family names I listed!

Sewing Room

Foreman Esley Leavenworth

Foreman George Kalbus

Mary Monch

Ruth Gaddis

Mandy Wagner

Jenny Cann

Bertha Leavenworth

Millie Biittig

Ida Zipkin

Metta Zipkin

Evelyn Zipkin

Marie O'Keefe

Kate Hoffman

Elsie Mole

Evelyn Mole

Lenna Knapp

Carrie Warren

Kay Werger

Elwin [Rich] Castle

Grace Robinson

Lena Goodermote

Anna Teal

Thelma Barnuum

Ester Teal

Florence Shaw

Card Room

Walter Miller

Harold Lee

Chris Creeko

Marbry Horton

Joe Biittig Jr.

Aron Dibble

Robert Hogle

Edward Guy

Bill Williams

Spencer Hotaling

Byron Pulver

Joe Biittig Sr

Walter Biittig

George Hogle

Howard Vanderbogart

Harold Vanderbogart

Larry Stevens Jr.

Larry Stevens Sr.

Inspectors

Hattie Wagner

Jenny Williams

Lottie Teal

Julia Rendert

Pearl Pulver

Cutting Room

Fred [Snick] Shoemaker

Leslie French

Clayton Barnuum

Elmer Kelly

Charles Dawson

Pop Renolds

Boiler Room

Leroy K. Castle

Carl Wittman

Henry Henkle



Office

Mr William D. Mahony Pres.  
Mr. Joe Malony  
Mr. Arthur Butler  
Lucien O'Keefe

William Lance  
Helen Pausley Caird  
Mr George Wentworth  
Veronica Lake

Mule Spinning Room

Tom Thompson —Foreman

Bob Brown  
Edward Warren  
Robert Berry Sr.  
Robert Berry Jr.  
Charles Horton Sr.

Wash Room

George McLaren  
Jim Poulin

Maintance

Steve Wallis  
Walter Werger

Garnet Room {lower Mill}

Wilbur Lasch  
Phil Briscoe  
Edward Ernst  
Earl Knapp

Truck Drivers

Loyd Craver  
Arby Hunt  
Frank Lake  
Henry Leavenworth

Shipping Room-Folding- Pressing

George Gallagher—Foreman  
Lester Smith -----Foreman  
Eve Biittig  
Margaret Berry  
Dorothy Schreiner  
Renee Anderson  
Elsie Loker

Knitting Room

Walt Biittig  
Joesph Chek

Lower Mill- Picking Room

Henry Stanley  
Leroy Castle Jr.

A few more names, but not sure what  
Departments they worked in.

Lena Miller  
Ethel Hankle Buck  
Jenny Harris  
Mildred Ernst Sowalsky  
Lee Grant Hyde  
Minnie Miller  
Mary Yakabates  
Dorthy Barth Castle  
Lillian Kelly  
Grace Leavonworth Warnt  
Doris Castle  
Charle Thompson  
Louis Leavonworth  
Joe Face ---Boarding House  
Bessie Face -Boarding House  
Many of the Paul Malik Family Members  
Also worked in the Mills !  
Mabel Stanley  
Miss Mary Brown  
Hiram Smyth  
H. Erving Moore