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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEXTILE
INDUSTRY IN TEXAS

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CHAPTER I

TEXAS, THE LAND OF COTTON, WOOL AND MOHAIR

The early history of cotton lies in Asia and in the New World, in ages only partially historic and among peoples wholly alien. M. D. Crawford said:

Our first literary record of cotton is in the vague phases of a dead language. The most ancient cotton fabrics are the remains of a civilization that matured and vanished in the New World while Europe was still a barbarous wilderness. As this delicate seed hair first appears in tradition of Asia, or the marvelous grave cloths of pre-Inca Peru, it is already a finished achievement, complex and varied in technique, highly developed in aesthetic values, the fruit of long ages of development and accomplishment, its standards beyond our latest skill.¹

Gradually the culture of cotton was introduced into Europe. The Greeks are credited with having brought the plant to Asia Minor where the Europeans first saw it being grown.

The Greek historians long before the Christian Era knew of the fiber and something of its decoration. Alexander the Great carried back from India cotton cultivators and craftsmen and settled them in Asia Minor.²

The Europeans received their knowledge of cotton from Asia Minor, but it was not until the early part of the sixteenth century that trade in cotton was placed on a commercial basis.

¹M. D. Crawford, The Heritage of Cotton, p. 3.

²Ibid., p. 6.

The history of cotton culture in the New World dates back to pre-Inca civilization in Peru. "Beyond question, the most ancient specimens of cotton fabrics in all the world are those found in the desert graves of pre-Inca Peru."³ Where the Incas learned the art of cotton culture is not known, but from studies made by the author quoted above they were the first in the New World to use the cotton plant and its product.

The next instance of cotton as a New World native and the first record of cotton in America is given by Columbus in a letter he wrote to one of the promoters of his first voyage. He mentions cotton being made into cloth by the Indians with whom he came in contact. His description follows:

The people of this island, and of all the others which I have become acquainted with, go naked as they were born, although some of the women wear at the loins a leaf or a bit of cotton cloth, which they prepare for that purpose.⁴

The first account of cotton growing in Texas is given by Cabeza de Vaca who was shipwrecked on the Gulf Coast in 1528.⁵ He journeyed across the state in search of the Spanish settlements in Mexico after escaping from the Indians. He found the Indians in western Texas using cotton for

³Ibid., p. 46.

⁴Paul L. Ford, The Writings of Columbus, p. 56.

⁵The Texas Almanac, 1931, p. 166.

cloth. In his narrative he tells of the Indians giving him and his party "mantles of cotton."⁶ For almost two hundred years the country remained the same as it was when de Vaca discovered it. The primitive culture of cotton continued in the same way as it had for centuries.

It was not until 1716, when the Spanish began establishing missions in Texas, that cotton production was undertaken by the white man. In 1718 the mission of San Antonio de Valero was officially established by Alarcón, the beginning of present-day San Antonio. Here in fields adjacent to the mission cotton was cultivated to be woven into cloth for the Spanish inhabitants and the Indians.⁷ The San Antonio de Valero mission's weave room is thus described in an early account, ". . . on the second floor there is a large room with four looms and the necessary spinning wheels to weave cotton cloth for shawls, and coarse cloth for the Indians."⁸ This is the first cotton manufacturing in Texas of which we know, other than that carried on by the primitive Indians. The period of mission activity in Texas ended about

⁶F. W. Hodge, "The Narrative of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca," Spanish Explorers in the Southern United States, 1528-1543, edited by J. Franklin Jameson, p. 104.

⁷F. J. Augustin Morfi, History of Texas, 1673-1779, p. 97.

⁸Ibid., p. 93.

1790, and the missions became more or less just churches. By this time permanent settlements had been made and cotton culture was carried on by the early Spanish settlers.

The period between the missions and the coming of the Anglo-American colonists to Texas saw little growth in cotton production. It was not until sometime after Austin's colony was established that cotton became "King." To Jared E. Groce, a wealthy planter who came to Texas with his family and about one-hundred slaves in 1821, is probably due the honor of introducing cotton culture into Texas. He began its cultivation to a limited extent in 1822 or 1823 for home use, and in 1825 for export to New Orleans. In 1825 he established a cotton gin on the Brazos River. Groce's gin was the second gin erected in Texas, as John Cartwright had established one in the "Redlands" of East Texas some time before.⁹

Here, on the banks of the Brazos a little over a century ago, the cotton industry of Texas was born. Even though cotton had been produced in Texas for centuries before, it was left to Groce to plant cotton on a commercial basis for the first time.¹⁰ From this embryonic beginning

⁹Agriculture Year Book of Texas, 1909, p. 46.

¹⁰Ibid.

cotton cultivation has expanded until today Texas has become one of the greatest cotton producing regions in the world.

After Groce began cotton planting the industry grew rapidly. As immigrants from the Southern states came in with slaves, the cultivation of the plant extended.¹¹ In an early report by Stephen F. Austin to the Mexican government he states:

The planting of cotton is very general and well advanced in all parts, and the yield this year will be more than one hundred and fifty thousand arrobas ginned and clean, equal to six hundred arrobas with seed.¹²

In 1835, Colonel Juan Almonte reporting to the Mexican government on conditions in Texas, said:

In the year 1833 they [Brazos Department] exported about two thousand bales of ginned cotton, each bale about 400 or 500 pounds, and it is believed that last year there were not less than five thousand.¹³

By 1841, twenty years after the Austin colony was founded, cotton production had reached 13,237 bales annually.¹⁴

¹¹C. W. Ramsdell, "Natural Limits of Slavery Expansion," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVII (September, 1929), 151-171.

¹²E. C. Barker, Readings in Texas History, p. 133, citing Descriptions of Texas in 1833, by Stephen F. Austin.

¹³Juan Almonte, "Statistical Report on Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, translated by Carlos Castaneda, XXVIII (January, 1925), 177-221.

¹⁴Agriculture Year Book of Texas, 1909, p. 47.

These early figures on cotton production are based on estimates, and their accuracy is questionable. It must be remembered, though, that it was not until 1849 that Texas was included in the census of the United States.

Texas came into the Union in 1845 as a slave state. Early immigration to Texas had come almost wholly from the cotton producing states of the South. Back home cotton was "King," as it was soon to be in Texas. The invention of new machines for the manufacturing of cotton cloth had by this time been perfected and the demand for cotton was greater than ever before. With this ever increasing demand for more cotton the thirst for more cotton land, where wealth could be made and doubled in a short time, arose. In addition to these factors, ". . . the poor crops in the United States plus the panic of 1837 had sent immigrants to Texas in droves."¹⁵

There is no accurate way of determining how many acres of land was issued to these newcomers during the boom days of immigration to Texas. It is possible to tell something of the influence of these new immigrants on cotton production by the increase in the amount of cotton produced from 1835 to 1850. In 1835 annual production was 2,931 bales; in 1840, 7,941 bales, and by 1850 annual production had risen to

¹⁵Curtis Bishop, Lots of Land, p. 115.

65,727 bales.¹⁶ These immigrants were practically all farmers, and to them cotton was the only crop. They had cultivated it in the states from which they came and were now to do so in Texas on an even greater scale.

At this point the question arises, why is Texas land so highly suited to the growing of cotton? The answer lies in the climate and the soil. An authority on Texas geography points to these conditions as the answer to this question:

Among these conditions are (1) a growing season of two hundred or more days, (2) an average temperature of seventy-seven degrees or higher in summer, and (3) an early summer rainfall with drier months in the fall. Moreover, some of the Texas soils are especially good for cotton, as the dark colored clay-lime soils of the Black Lands and the fertile river-bottom lands and the sandy loams of other parts of the Coastal Plains, of the Central Plains, and of the South High Plains.¹⁷

With the immigration to Texas primarily from the Southern cotton producing states, the extension of the political ideas and a slavery economy common to those states were extended into the state of Texas. The number of slaves used in Texas increased rapidly. In 1847, a partial enumeration of the of the population was made which showed a slave population of 39,000 compared to a total of 135,000 for all people.¹⁸

¹⁶Agriculture Year Book of Texas, 1909, p. 47.

¹⁷Darthulla Walker and Harriet Smith, The Geography of Texas, p. 17.

¹⁸The Texas Almanac, 1927, p. 61.

The production of cotton proved so lucrative with the use of slave labor that by the outbreak of the Civil War the aggregate value of all slaves assessed was \$106,688,920.¹⁹

The cultivation of cotton was by far the greatest industry in the state. Cotton, the "King of Crops" was in Texas to stay. The Texas Almanac states:

The first figure upon cotton production in Texas is that of the United States census of 1849--the first taken after annexation of Texas to the Union--when the production was 58,073 bales.²⁰

With this rapid increase in cotton production along with the increase in slave labor, new and far reaching problems arose. The culture of cotton paved the way for the infiltration of slavery and the political factionalism which was to place Texas in the Confederacy. This in turn led to an entirely new system of cotton farming in Texas.

Without going into detail on the part played by Texas in the Civil War, the importance of Texas cotton and its production during this period may be mentioned briefly. By 1860, in the second census reporting upon Texas, the annual production of cotton had jumped to 431,645 bales.²¹ In a

¹⁹R. N. Richardson, Texas: The Lone Star State, p. 219.

²⁰The Texas Almanac, 1931, p. 166.

²¹U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States: 1860, p. xciv.

little over twenty-five years Texas had become the fifth ranking cotton producing state in the nation.²²

Texas cotton played a major role in the Civil War. The other states of the Confederacy had their lands converted into battlegrounds, whereas Texas was virtually free from any military invasions. The ports of the Confederacy were blockaded, and only Texas had some freedom of export. The Mexican border provided this outlet. Across the border cotton was shipped to Mexican ports for reshipment to British and French textile markets. With money obtained from the sale of cotton, military supplies for the Confederacy were purchased. So to the Confederacy cotton had become the medium of exchange and to Texas fell the task of supplying the cotton.²³

The Civil War period saw a drastic reduction in cotton production, falling during the war years to about 200,000 bales annually.²⁴ In 1863 the total production was placed at 300,000 bales.²⁵ In the same year the entire United States produced only 449,000 bales.²⁶ From these figures

²²Ibid.

²³S. B. Thompson, Confederate Purchasing Operations Abroad, pp. 103-127.

²⁴The Texas Almanac, 1940, p. 181.

²⁵H. S. Thrall, A History of Texas from the Earliest Settlements to the year 1876, p. 157.

²⁶The Texas Almanac, 1940, p. 183.

it is readily seen that Texas produced over half of the cotton of the country in 1863. By the close of the war cotton planting had been reduced to about half as much as it had been in 1860.²⁷ It was 1870 before the production of cotton reached the mark set in 1860, with 400,000 bales being produced. The end of the war brought a new era of cotton cultivation. The cotton plantation of the ante-bellum South, operated by slave labor, became a thing of the past.

The effects of the war and reconstruction upon Texas agriculture proved a setback which even today is readily recognized. A brief summation of the period of war and reconstruction is given in R. N. Richardson's book, Texas, The Lone Star State:

The war itself had bankrupted numbers of persons; and the minority of planters and small farmers who had managed to hold on to their estates through the war found themselves land poor, with their livestock depleted, their property in slaves destroyed, and without an adequate supply of labor for the strain of the reconstruction period that followed. Of all their problems that of securing labor was the greatest. . . . Land prices fell to 25 and even to 20 per cent of the 1860 values. Cotton, practically the only crop, declined in value from thirty-one cents per pound in 1866 to seventeen cents in 1870 to thirteen cents in 1875. The total production of cotton declined from 431,000 bales in 1859 to an average of 343,000 bales for the years 1866 to 1870 inclusive.²⁸

²⁷Ibid., 1939, p. 167.

²⁸Richardson, op. cit., pp. 284-285.

Improvements came gradually. Where slave labor had been utilized before to grow the crops of cotton a new system had to be instituted. The answer was the farm tenant method of cotton planting. The chaotic state of agriculture, especially where cotton was concerned, forced the issue. The tenant and share cropping plans had their birth in these adverse conditions which prevailed immediately after the war. Wortham describes the birth of the tenant system of farming in this manner:

The large plantation disappeared and the former slaves became "croppers" and "tenants" on small farms. The most important producer of cotton became the farm-owners, operating his own farm, with the assistance of his family and such hired help as he might require, and the former "planter" gradually evolved into either a "farmer" or landlord. Gradually, also, white tenants began to increase, and the more intelligent and industrious of the former slaves acquired a little land of their own and became farmowners. The process of adjustment took time, however, and during the six or seven years immediately following the war a condition bordering on chaos prevailed in the cotton industry.²⁹

The unstable condition of the cotton industry is readily observed by looking into the amount of cotton produced during the years of turmoil. Annual production during these years amounted to 247,837 bales in 1866; 206,353 bales in 1867; 267,436 bales in 1868; 350,628 bales in 1869; and by 1870 the pre-war total of 400,000 bales was again produced.³⁰

²⁹Louis J. Wortham, A History of Texas from Wilderness to Commonwealth, V., 125.

³⁰The Texas Almanac, 1940, p. 207.

During the years 1870 to 1880 conditions in the industry improved rapidly. Production increased as never before. By 1873, cotton production had climbed above the 500,000 bale mark and by 1880 Texas had taken the lead in the production of cotton in the United States. Since 1880 Texas has remained the leading cotton producing state in the Union.³¹ In comparison to other cotton producing states Texas produces almost twice as much as its nearest competitor. In 1914 Texas produced over 5,000,000 bales, which amounted to approximately one-fourth of the total for the entire country. The banner year was 1926, when the largest crop ever produced in Texas was recorded. That year the number of bales was 5,000,000.³² Since 1926 many changes have taken place in the cotton industry. One of the changes has occurred in the amount of cotton produced. This can be partially attributed to boll weevil destruction and to soil depletion, but for the most part it is due to increased foreign production.

Because of the boll weevil pest, which entered Texas from Mexico about 1900, a new variety of cotton was developed.³³

³¹Richardson, op. cit., p. 285.

³²The Texas Almanac, 1940, p. 207.

³³E. J. Kyle, and E. H. Alexander, Agriculture in the Southwest, p. 104.

The new plant had a much earlier maturity date, which enabled the cotton farmer to reap the cotton crop before the weevil could destroy it. The development of the new plant did reduce the destructiveness of the weevil, but at the same time the fiber of the plant was less valuable on the market. The reason was that the length of the lint was shorter. In recent years, through efforts of the Texas Department of Agriculture, new strains of cotton plants have been developed which have remedied this situation.³⁴

Following the boll weevil plague of the twenties, when the greatest damage was recorded, the depression of the thirties descended on the cotton industry. The condition of the industry is aptly described by one author in this manner:

King Cotton is sick. Though his illness was somewhat intensified by the stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing events, it is in no sense due to that episode. He has not been a well monarch since 1923. From that time to the present, with the exception of certain intervals as in 1927 and the first half of 1929, he has steadily been growing worse.³⁵

Murchison's description of the cotton industry is in reference to all the cotton states, and not to Texas alone. The cotton farmer of Texas, however, was having his share of

³⁴Ibid., p. 105.

³⁵C. T. Murchison, King Cotton is Sick, p. 1.

problems with King Cotton. The depression that hit the cotton farmer in the United States, including the Texas farmers, was devastating, as this summary shows:

The emergence of the world depression was felt by farmers as cotton consumption fell sharply and the carry-over of the American crop in the period 1929-30 to 1932-33 increased from 5,000,000 bales to 13,000,000 bales. From 1928-29 to 1932-33 the gross farm income from cotton and cotton seed fell from \$1,470,000,000 to \$431,000,000, with the result that the average gross income per farm family engaged in cotton growing fell from \$735 to \$216. At its new low point in June, 1932, the average farm price of cotton stood at 4.6 cents per pound. Economic distress and actual misery prevailed in practically every section of the Belt, falling most heavily on tenants and sharecroppers, many of whom, reduced below subsistence levels, were forced on public relief.³⁶

By 1933 the situation had become so desperate in the cotton industry that the government stepped in and instituted a recovery program. Various methods were used to place the cotton farmer on his feet again. One plan provided for control of the number of acres a farmer could plant. Another plan was to plow up the cotton that had already been planted. A third plan was the subsidization of cotton prices by the government. At much expense to the government, conditions gradually improved. By 1937 conditions were approaching normal again with continued government support.

Cotton production in Texas during the depression was, in spite of the various curtailment programs, well over the

³⁶C. S. Johnson, E. R. Embree, and W. W. Alexander, The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy, p. 47.

2,000,000 bales annually. Table I, which follows, shows the cotton produced in Texas during the depression years of 1932 to 1936.

TABLE I
COTTON PRODUCTION IN TEXAS DURING THE
DEPRESSION YEARS 1932-1936

Year	Production (in Bales)*
1932	4,500,000
1933	4,250,000
1934	2,401,000
1935	2,950,000
1936	2,933,000

From 1936 until 1940 production increased gradually and by 1940, there were 3,285,000 bales produced.³⁷

After 1940 cotton no longer remained the "King of Crops" in Texas, for in the years following a trend toward less cotton production began. Cotton is still the main cash crop in Texas, in spite of the marked decline in cotton acreage in the past ten years. In past years cotton represented nearly fifty per cent of the total acreage harvested and fifty to sixty per cent of the total value of all crops.³⁸

*A bale is equivalent to 500 pounds in these statistics.

³⁷The Texas Almanac, 1942, p. 207.

³⁸Ibid., 1939, pp. 172-173.

In 1945 cotton represented only twenty-two and thirty per cent of the total acres harvested and the total value of all crops respectively.³⁹ The 1946 cotton crop was the smallest since 1889. Even though the yield in 1946 was abnormally low it amounted to 1,650,000 bales.⁴⁰ By comparison with production for an eight year period, the 1946 crop was only about one-third of what it was during the period which ran from 1925 to 1932.⁴¹

At this point it would be well to look into the causes of this decline in cotton production. By using a table showing the production of cotton from 1940 to 1946 the trend is immediately seen. Table 2, showing the cotton production in Texas by years from 1940 to 1946, follows.

TABLE 2
COTTON PRODUCTION IN TEXAS BY YEARS
FROM 1940 TO 1946

Year	Production (in Bales)*
1940	3,285,000
1941	2,652,000
1942	3,038,000
1943	2,823,000
1944	2,640,000
1945	1,794,000
1946	1,650,000

³⁹Ibid., 1947, p. 196.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 199.

⁴¹Ibid., 1939, p. 172.

*A bale is equivalent to 500 pounds.

The decline of cotton production is easily noted from Table 2.⁴² During this six year period the value of the cotton crop increased even though production decreased.⁴³ This increase in value can be attributed to the inflationary spiral brought on by the Second World War.

The trend toward less cotton production resulted from several factors. For an excellent discussion of these factors and their influence on cotton growing in Texas, the Texas Almanac of 1947 summarizes the cotton farming situation in Texas in recent years:

Cotton's decline in the economy of Texas was caused by many factors. The world-wide depression, which sent prices down to 5.7 cents a pound in 1931, resulted in a series of government controls which affected a drop in acreage beginning in 1934. From 1930 to 1940 harvested acreage dropped nearly fifty per cent from 16,138,000 to 8,523,000. While Texas was cutting cotton production in favor of other crops and livestock, foreign production increased. From 1931-1932 until 1939-1940 foreign production gained from 9,602,000 to 15,508,000 bales and American production dropped almost an equal amount. Texas, which has always exported about ninety per cent of its crop, suffered from the new competition. The Second World War accentuated the decline in cotton by draining off tenants and share-croppers into higher-paid pursuits and making the cost of labor almost prohibitive.

Other factors entering into the decline have been the increase in synthetic fibers, particularly rayon. The tariff has always operated against the cotton grower, forcing him to sell in an unprotected world wide market and to buy his consumer goods in a protected market.⁴⁴

⁴²Ibid., 1947, p. 199.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 197.

This brings the history of cotton cultivation up to the present and makes it obvious that Texas is and has been "the land of cotton" since early colonization by the Anglo-Americans, and especially since 1880, when the state became number one producer of the nation. It is also apparent that Texas has the potential raw materials for a great cotton textile industry.

At this time it is well to show what happens to the millions of pounds of cotton produced annually in Texas. To see what happens to Texas cotton one has only to look at the tremendous cotton warehouses located at Galveston, Houston, Corpus Christi, and other Gulf ports. Almost the entire crop is exported. All of the crop is not shipped by water for much of it is transported by rail to the manufacturing centers of New England and the Southeast. Wortham states:

More than ninety-eight per cent of the cotton grown in Texas in 1919 was shipped to other sections, mostly outside of the United States, to be manufactured into finished products, and some of these products were shipped back to supply the needs of the people of Texas.⁴⁵

Some of the crop is used within the state. In certain industries, such as mattress manufacture, rope and twine, bagging, and to a limited extent in the cotton mills, cotton is used in varying amounts. The negligible amount consumed

⁴⁵Wortham, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 120.

by the cotton mills is indeed a disgrace to the industrial history of the state of Texas.

Within the borders of Texas is produced the raw material for a cotton textile industry which could bring untold wealth to the state and its citizens. Yet, when the textile development of Texas is compared with the other cotton producing states it is noted that one small county in North Carolina has more cotton spindles for textile manufacturing than the whole state of Texas.⁴⁶ Of the 3,000,000 bales of cotton produced in Texas annually, only about five per cent, or 150,000 bales are consumed by Texas cotton mills.⁴⁷ There has been some textile development in Texas, as will be pointed out in the following chapter, but it is only a feeble beginning.

As a producer of cotton Texas ranks first in the nation, thereby giving her a claim to a textile industry. To this may be added two other firsts--the production of both wool and mohair. Taking 1938 as a normal year, the production of wool amounted to 70,000,000 pounds and mohair to 15,000,000 pounds.⁴⁸ As a leading producer of these fibers, Texas outranks

⁴⁶U. S. Department of Commerce, Cotton Production and Distribution, 1946-47, Bulletin 184, p. 29.

⁴⁷The Texas Almanac, 1942, p. 557.

⁴⁸Ibid., 1939, p. 203.

the other states of the Union by a much larger margin than in the case of cotton.

The history of wool production in Texas, though not as old as cotton's, dates back to over four hundred years ago. The first record of sheep being introduced to Texas is found in the narratives of Coronado's expedition which was undertaken in 1540.⁴⁹ The sheep were brought along for food by Coronado and another two hundred years were to pass before they were to be used for wool production. The wool industry then begins its history in 1718 when the missions, around what is now present-day San Antonio, were founded.⁵⁰ The region surrounding San Antonio proved excellent for the raising of sheep and goats. Wool production was considered as being the most outstanding industrial support of the early mission.⁵¹

The industry did not have as progressive a development as was the case of cotton, but grew very slowly until 1900. After this year, when diversification was preached throughout the South, wool production began to increase rapidly.

⁴⁹Pedro de Castaneda, "The Narrative of Coronado," Spanish Explorers in the Southern United States, 1528-1543, edited by J. Franklin Jameson, p. 325.

⁵⁰F. F. Celiz, Diary of the Alarcon Expedition into Texas, 1718-1719, translated by Fritz L. Hoffman, p. 23.

⁵¹H. E. Bolton, Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century, pp. 19-20.

While Texas is one of the oldest states in the sheep industry, its recent development has been startling. The first census of sheep was in 1850, when the state had 99,098 head, or 0.5 per cent of the total United States sheep population.⁵² In the census of 1940, there were 8,447,809 sheep listed for Texas, twenty-one per cent of the total for the country.⁵³ From these statistics it is obvious that Texas not only has a great influence on the national sheep market, but that the excellent wools produced play a leading part in the nation's manufacture of woolen goods.

In the case of wool, as of cotton, the growth of manufacturing has not developed along with the rapid increase in the production of the raw material. Why is this true? Why is the woolen industry located two thousand miles from the greatest source of material for their factories? These questions have their answers in decades past. As problems facing the Texas wool grower, their solution is being unraveled gradually as Texas becomes more and more an industrial giant.

⁵² U. S. Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of the United States: 1850, p. 87.

⁵³ U. S. Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Agriculture, Vol. I, p. 321.

By previous research the conclusion is reached that a textile industry of practically unlimited scope could obtain the raw materials necessary for its factories from the vast amount of cotton and wool produced in the state; however, to these products must also be added mohair to make the picture complete. Mohair is obtained from the Angora goat, which has been known to man since early Biblical times.⁵⁴ To Texas the Angora is comparatively new. The first account of the animal being grown in Texas is found in a paper by Israel S. Diehl, who in making a report to the United States Department of Agriculture in 1863, mentions the Angora goat being raised at Austin, Texas.⁵⁵ By comparison to cotton and wool, mohair is a very recent fiber in the state.

Again, as in the woolen industry, there is no appreciable amount of the product consumed within the state. Some of the mohair is exported to foreign markets, but the bulk is sent to the wool and mohair manufacturing centers of New England and the Middle Atlantic states. The field for the manufacture of mohair is wide open in Texas and a small beginning has been made in this industry at New Braunfels.⁵⁶

⁵⁴"Genesis," The Holy Bible, XXVII, 9-17, King James Version.

⁵⁵William L. Black, A New Industry, p. 1.

⁵⁶U. S. Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Manufactures, Vol. I, p. 42.

The development of Angora goats and the mohair industry has been similar to that of sheep. They are raised in the same geographical region of the state with practically the same economic development. In the production of mohair Texas has a virtual monopoly on the country's supply. In 1940 Texas had 3,599,000 of the 4,241,000 Angora goats in the United States, or roughly eighty-five per cent.⁵⁷ The remainder of the industry is located in the Pacific Southwest, but the states of this region do not produce mohair to any great extent.

As has been noted before, Texas has the textile resources for a complete and large textile industry. The fiber resources began their development in the early stages of the state's history and expanded until at the present-time their production is unequalled by any other state of the Union. From the study of these fibers and their development, as related to Texas, it is obvious that such a wealth of raw materials necessary for textile manufacturing should draw cotton and woolen factories to Texas; however, thus far this long looked for industrial development has not taken place to any great degree. There is and has been some textile manufacturing in the state. The development has been slow but gradual. To the history of cotton mill establishment in Texas the following chapter is devoted.

⁵⁷The Texas Almanac, 1941, p. 220.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF THE COTTON MILLS TO TEXAS

Since cotton has a greater importance in the textile history of Texas its growth and development will be dealt with first. The value of cotton fibers exceeds that of wool and mohair to the extent of over five times the value of these animal fibers. In 1940 the value of Texas cotton was twenty-eight per cent of the total value of all agricultural cash income of the state including livestock.¹

The development of the cotton manufacturing industry in the United States dates back to 1792, when the first cotton mill was built by Samuel Slater in the state of Rhode Island.² Why the industry developed in this region is readily seen. In New England was the capital, the labor force, and the waterpower necessary for the operation of a textile industry. From its early establishment in New England to 1850 practically the entire industry remained in and around this area. By 1850 the manufacture of textiles was beginning to spread to the Middle Atlantic and Southern States. This movement was shortlived, however, for ten years

¹The Texas Almanac, 1942, p. 204.

²C. J. Grossmann, The Possibilities of Cotton Manufacturing in Texas, p. 12.

later the Civil War disrupted southern industrial development for the next twenty years.³

The cotton industry began to revive in the South about 1900, but until after World War I the New England monopoly was not threatened because of the scarcity of capital in the South.⁴ After 1920 the industry began a general exodus to the southern states where cotton was cheaper and labor plentiful.⁵ The industry tended to regionalize itself in the Southeast, much to the misfortune of the Southwest. Texas and the Southwest were yet very new in comparison to the "Old South" and the trend toward industrialization was still dormant, even though some textile manufacturing plants had been established in the state as early as 1858.⁶ The history of the textile industry of Texas begins at this date.

The construction of cotton mills in Texas which began about the time of the Civil War were not of a permanent nature. Of the several mills built in the state none survived to the present day.

³Broadus Mitchell, The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South, p. 110.

⁴Grossmann, op. cit., p. 12.

⁵Mitchell, op. cit., p. 177.

⁶G. G. Benjamin, The Germans in Texas, p. 69.

Probably the earliest instance of an effort to begin a textile manufacturing industry in the state was by the German settlers who had located at New Braunfels. As R. L. Bieseke states:

An effort was made early in 1854 to secure a charter for the Comal Cotton and Woolen Mills, but lack of time killed the proposition in the legislature. It was not until the Civil War that the cotton mill was built.⁷

The Texas Almanac notes that "probably the first cotton mill of the power type was the one constructed by John F. Torry on the Comal River at New Braunfels about 1850, and operated by water power."⁸ The author of this thesis would question the validity of the date stated by the Almanac, since in this research of the various histories of the German settlements no mention was found of this mill established by Torry. Olmsted, who visited New Braunfels in the early eighteen fifties, tells of a cotton factory being contemplated, but he does not mention the mill of Torry's or of any other earlier mill having been built.⁹ Shortly after Olmsted's visit a mill was established at New Braunfels, according to G. G. Benjamin in his book, The Germans in Texas.

⁷R. L. Bieseke, The History of the German Settlements in Texas, 1831-1861, p. 210.

⁸The Texas Almanac, 1939, p. 233.

⁹F. L. Olmsted, A Journey through Texas, p. 178.

He writes, "In 1858 a large manufacturing establishment was constructed at New Braunfels for the making of coarse fabrics."¹⁰

The first chartered mill in the state came about five years later than the previously mentioned mill which was operating in 1858. In all likelihood these are the same mills. The mill that was chartered is described thus:

In 1863 the Comal Cotton Manufacturing Company was chartered. It began manufacturing in 1865. From 1865 to 1867 there were manufactured 160,000 yards of domestics, 35,000 Osnaburgs, and 35,000 pounds of yarn. The labor was white with the exception of three or four negro children.¹¹

Five years later, in 1868, a woolen factory was established at New Braunfels with a capital of \$40,000.¹² This was the New Braunfels Woolen Manufacturing Company. The mill produced "forty blankets and two hundred yards of tweeds or yarns a day."¹³ Raw materials were furnished from the neighborhood and labor from the town.¹⁴

The woolen factory proved very successful at New Braunfels. This fact is evidenced by a report of the factory's success in 1876 made by a visitor who writes of the marketing of the mills products:

¹⁰Benjamin, op. cit., p. 69. ¹¹Ibid., p. 70.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 71.

Already she New Braunfels treads the path of destiny. Here is a woolen mill whose cassimers and blankets are sold all over the West, and recently invaded Broadway with success. Uncle Sam buys them for his boys in blue.¹⁵

Further proof of the mill's success is found in the statistics of the census of manufactures for 1880, which is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
STATISTICS FOR NEW BRAUNFELS WOOLEN
MANUFACTURING COMPANY*

Capitalization	Number of		Labor Force	Wages Paid-1880
	Looms	Spindles		All Employees
\$97,500	12	600	25 M 8 F 3 L	\$25,700

The initial success of the mill was too good to continue for shortly after the above report the mill failed. The reason for its failure is told in a letter by Senator Coke:

Where is the New Braunfels Woolen Mills, the cloth products of which of the same class, unequalled in the East, were worn all over Texas and retailed in

¹⁵N. A. Taylor, 2000 Miles in Texas on Horseback, revised edition, p. 89.

*U. S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880, Manufactures, p. 4.

every store in the state ten or twelve years ago? This splendid industry, by hostile discriminations of the railroads in co-operation with the Eastern manufacturers, has been driven absolutely out of existence.¹⁶

The mills that were founded by the German settlers were not the only mills to be established during the early period. At several places throughout the state mills were built. Another one, which was constructed about the same time that the woolen mills were established at New Braunfels, was located at Bastrop. The exact date of its establishment is not clear, but the archives of Bastrop County state that "a cotton and wool factory in 1867 was said to be turning out 800 to 1,000 yards of material daily in addition to yarn."¹⁷ The census of manufactures of 1870 verifies this record and states that "the mill was capitalized for \$20,000 and employed thirty persons."¹⁸

In 1863 a cotton mill was built at Waco by J. B. Earle, and is reported by a history of McLennan, Bell and Coryell counties of Texas.¹⁹ This report is substantiated by the Dallas Morning News of 1935 as follows:

¹⁶B. B. Paddock, Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest, Vol. II, p. 455, quoting Senator Coke, The Fort Worth Gazette, August 3, 1889, p. 7.

¹⁷The Texas Historical Records Survey, County Archives of Texas, no. 11, Bastrop County, p. 14.

¹⁸U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States: 1870, Manufactures, pp. 535-536.

¹⁹Standard and Memorial History of McLennan, Bell and Coryell Counties, Texas, p. 133.

Cotton was hauled by oxen to Brownsville, where the boat ran the blockade and the cotton was traded in England for machinery to equip the mill and transported by oxen to Waco. Because the mill was used to make uniforms for Confederate soldiers, it was confiscated by the Federal government in 1865. The owner redeemed his plant with borrowed money.²⁰

The cotton mill at Waco continued to operate until sometime after 1876, when Eastern competition forced it to cease operation.

Shortly after the Civil War an attempt was made to establish a mill at Houston, but not until 1872 was the venture successful, when the City Cotton Mills plant was erected by a group of Houston businessmen. The principal stockholder was B. A. Shepherd, who became the first president.²¹ The cost of the construction of this mill was \$100,000.²² Its life was very short, for it was destroyed by fire three years later. As one author states:

. . . the mill was just beginning to do a good business, when, in August, 1875, it was destroyed by fire. The loss was complete, being \$200,000, with no insurance.²³

A few years after the destruction of the City Cotton Mills plant another attempt to establish a mill was made by

²⁰The Dallas Morning News, October 1, 1935, p. 8.

²¹J. A. Ziegler, Wave of the Gulf, p. 293.

²²Ibid.

²³S. O. Young, A Thumb-Nail History of the City of Houston, Texas, From its Founding in 1836 to the Year 1912, p. 135.

E. H. Cushing and J. F. Dumble about five miles from Houston. This attempt also failed in a few years.²⁴ The failure of these early mills did much to retard the development of the textile industry in Texas, in that the example they set offered only discouragement to other prospective builders.

During the Civil War the lack of a textile industry was manifested by the action of the state government in setting up a cotton manufacturing plant within the state prison at Huntsville. It is interesting to note that at this early date the government had to enter a business which private enterprise had not undertaken on a scale necessary to supply the needs of the populace. The following description of the Huntsville mill reveals its activities:

The penitentiary at Huntsville, under control of the state government was busied in manufacturing cotton and woolen cloth, and made each year over a million and a half yards of cloth, which under the direction of the government was distributed first to supply the soldiers of the army, second, to the soldiers' families, and their actual consumers.²⁵

The prison cotton factory continued to operate some years after the war, for in the census of 1870, mention is made of a cotton manufacturing establishment in Walker county.²⁶

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵F. W. Johnson, A History of Texas and Texans, revised by E. C. Barker and E. W. Winkler, I, 546.

²⁶U. S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States: 1870, Manufactures, pp. 735-36.

By 1880 the post-Civil War period of cotton mill construction was at an end. Of the various mills established in the state during the first phase of mill building only one had managed to continue operation until 1880 when a more permanent basis for the cotton textile industry was begun. The mill in operation was located at New Braunfels.²⁷

The second stage of cotton mill expansion in Texas began in 1880 and ended in 1907. In 1880 it could truly be said that Texas had no cotton textile manufacturing. As previously noted, only one mill was in operation and that was a woolen mill.²⁸ In the next ten years the textile industry began to expand slowly. The census of 1890 disclosed that there were in operation in Texas four woolen manufacturing plants and one cotton factory.²⁹ The four woolen mills were located at Waco, Fort Worth, Houston, and the idle plant at New Braunfels.³⁰

The cotton factory was located at Dallas. In the centennial edition of the Dallas Morning News, October 1st, 1935, an account of this factory was reported:

The manufacture of cotton piece goods, which attained great importance here in the nineties and

²⁷U. S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880, Manufactures, pp. 74-75.

²⁸Ibid., p. 75.

²⁹U. S. Bureau of the Census, Elementh Census of the United States: 1890, Manufactures, Vol. I, p. 600.

³⁰Ibid., p. 681.

later, had not yet begun fifty years ago. Work was begun January 2, 1888, on the foundation of the Dallas Cotton and Woolen Mills. This factory, owned by a company, of which S. D. Blake was president, was completed at Corinth and Cockrell Avenue in the following autumn and opened with 250 hands employed. In a single day in the summer of 1895, Sanger Brothers shipped to retailers in North Texas 1,000 bales of duck, manufactured by the Dallas mill.³¹

Following the founding of the Dallas factory other mill development began increasing at a rapid pace. By 1907, when the second phase of mill building terminated, thirteen new mills had been established.³²

These thirteen new mills were located at Belton, Bonham, Brenham, Corsicana, Cuero, Denison, Galveston, Gonzales, Hillsboro, Itasca, Sherman, Waxahachie, and West. The first of these to be constructed were the mills at Galveston, Corsicana and Sherman.

The Galveston mill was one of short duration. It began operation in 1889 and closed its doors ten years later in the early part of 1900.³³ A brief history of the Galveston Cotton and Woolen Mill, as reported by the Galveston Daily News, follows:

One of the largest manufacturing plants established here during the later 1880's was the Galveston Cotton and Woolen Mill, which was incorporated on April 23, 1890, with an authorized capital of \$500,000. The plant occupied a large building at Fortieth and G.

³¹The Dallas Morning News, October 1, 1935, p. 3.

³²Grossmann, op. cit., p. 25.

³³Clarence Ousley, Galveston in 1900, pp. 175-176.

In the September first edition of the News in 1891, it was reported that from January to July the mill had operated 443 looms, running 18,000 spindles and producing 300,000 yards of cloth. From July to September 1, it turned out 8,250,000 yards of sheeting, drilling and shirting. The payroll was about \$102,000 a year, and it was planned to add several thousand spindles and about 225 looms. In 1893 it was reported that the mills had 30,000 spindles and employed 650 persons.

On August 3, 1898, the News reported that the plant of the Galveston Cotton Mills, a new concern which had been organized by the bondholders with \$325,000 capital, had been sold at trustee's sale by J. P. Alvey, secretary and manager of the Texas Guarantee Trust Company, which held a deed of trust executed May 20, 1896, for \$51,000. John Sealy, representing the bondholders, was high bidder for the properties. John Reymershoffer was elected the new president, and it was planned to continue operation of the mill under a committee of three directors who included Mr. Sealy, Mr. Elder, and Robert Bornefield. At the time of the 1900 storm the mill was not in operation, and the plant was for sale. Two years later, in 1902, the mill was sold to the Seaboard Rice and Milling Company.³⁴

By 1900, mills had been established at Sherman and Corsicana. The census of 1900 credits Texas with four cotton manufacturing plants; these were the older mills at Dallas and Galveston, and the new mills at Sherman and Corsicana.³⁵ The number of spindles had increased from 1,900 in 1890 to 43,756 in 1900.³⁶ The capital invested in these mills totaled

³⁴The Galveston Daily News, April 11, 1942, pp. 13-14.

³⁵U. S. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900, Manufactures, Vol. VIII, p. 872.

³⁶Blue Book of Southern Progress, 1923, p. 133.

\$2,227,000.³⁷ The two new mills were small in comparison to Eastern mills. The Corsicana Cotton Mill, established in 1896, was capitalized for \$100,000 and operated about 11,000 spindles. George T. Jester and other leading citizens of the town promoted the original mill.³⁸ The mill at Sherman was established some years before the one at Corsicana and was much smaller. The Sherman Manufacturing Company, as it was chartered for that town, had 8,000 spindles and produced single fill-duck.³⁹

Between 1900 and 1903 mills were built at Belton, Bonham, Brenham, Cuero, Gonzales, Itasca, Hillsboro, Waxahachie, and West. Mills of this group were built almost entirely by promoters, and nearly all had to undergo a reorganization process before they became financial successes.⁴⁰ In order to show the instability of the mills built during these years, the history of the Bonham Cotton Mill is presented briefly as an example.

The Bonham Cotton Mill was organized in 1900 and began operations in 1901. The outstanding promoter of the mill

³⁷Ibid., 1928, p. 234.

³⁸Annie Carpenter Love, History of Navarro County, Texas, p. 123.

³⁹J. B. Bagley, Cotton Mill Development in Texas, p. 11.

⁴⁰J. B. Bagley, "Cotton Mill Operation and Opportunity in East Texas," East Texas, II (June, 1928), p. 16.

was J. C. Saunders. The firm secured its capital by the issuance of shares of stock, which had a total value of \$150,000.⁴¹ In 1904, the mill was idle due to an insufficiency of capital. By 1914, however, the mill had been reorganized and the capitalization increased to \$200,000.⁴² After operating for several years under this management, the mill was sold to the Consolidated Textile Corporation in 1920. Because of good management, due to more experience in the textile industry, the corporation was able to operate the mill with a greater degree of success. In 1930 the mill was again sold and reorganized. At this time local interests once more gained control of the factory.⁴³

Here it might be well to look into the factors which contribute to the success of a cotton mill. As pointed out by J. B. Bagley, head of the Department of Textile Engineering at Texas Agriculture and Mechanical College, they are:

Factors that contribute to the success of a cotton mill are, in their importance--and we might add in order of being available: adequate financial backing, labor, power, management, selection of goods to be manufactured, well designed and balanced plant, proximity to raw cotton, and proximity to markets.⁴⁴

⁴¹The Texas Almanac, 1904, p. 11.

⁴²Ibid., 1914, p. 129.

⁴³John Moody, "Industrial Securities," Moody's Manual of Investments, 1932, p. 2402.

⁴⁴Bagley, "Cotton Mill Operation and Opportunity in East Texas," East Texas, II (June, 1928), p. 17.

These factors played a leading part in mill development in Texas and to poor management can be attributed most of the failures of the early mills.

Another exceptionally successful mill is the one operated by the Itasca Cotton Manufacturing Company.

The Itasca Cotton Manufacturing Company is one of the oldest, most versatile and most stable mills in Texas. It was organized in 1901 and began operations soon after. The plant at first had 6,172 spindles and 200 looms, and originally made nothing but ducks, osnaburgs, and drills. In 1923 the mill was enlarged from its capacity of 6,172 spindles to one having 11,288 spindles, and during the last World War, served as a plant which manufactured Army duck.⁴⁵

Without going into detail on all the mills built during the years 1900 to 1903 the others may be mentioned here briefly. The mill at Gonzales was established in 1901 and was capitalized for \$200,000.⁴⁶ The Hillsboro Cotton Mill was built in the same year with a capital of \$90,000.⁴⁷ A third mill was erected at Brenham. This mill was somewhat larger than the other mills and its capitalization amounted to \$175,000.⁴⁸ Another mill, and one of the oldest mills in the state, was built at West. The West Cotton Mill, as it

⁴⁵ Itasca Manufacturing Company, A Brief History of the Itasca Cotton Manufacturing Company, pp. 1-10.

⁴⁶ Bagley, Cotton Mill Development in Texas, p. 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ The Texas Almanac, 1904, p. 386.

was originally chartered in 1900, later became the Brazos Valley Cotton Mill.⁴⁹ Cuero had a 5,000 spindle mill in operation by 1901.⁵⁰ The mill at Waxahachie was established in 1903, and a yarn mill was erected at Belton in the same year.⁵¹

The expansion of cotton manufacturing continued after 1903, but the pace had slowed considerably. The Texas Almanac of 1904 listed ten mills in operation and seven idle.⁵² Two of the mills listed as idle had just been constructed; so it is quite likely that these mills, the American Cotton Spinning Company's mill at Denison and the Perrin Cotton Mill at Celeste, had not yet begun operations. From 1903 to 1907 two other mills had been built and were in operation at Weatherford and Dallas. These mills were very small and after about ten years both had failed.⁵³

By 1907, when the second phase of mill building ended, Texas was the proud possessor of no less than seventeen cotton mills. These mills were equipped with 112,336 spindles or about twice the number that were in place in 1900.⁵⁴ The value of manufactured products had increased from

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 257. ⁵⁰Ibid., p. 251. ⁵¹Ibid., p. 212.

⁵²Ibid., p. 213. ⁵³Ibid., 1914, p. 129.

⁵⁴Agriculture Year Book of Texas, 1909, p. 59.

\$1,200,000 in 1900, to \$2,815,000 by 1907.⁵⁵ In addition to these strides in manufacturing a larger market for the cotton grower was created. The mills of Texas were consuming, in 1907, over 20,000 more bales of cotton than had been used by the mills in 1900.⁵⁶

The next era of growth in the cotton textile industry began in 1907 and ended in 1920. The development of this period was characterized by slow but gradual expansion of the industry. The number of spindles in place in 1920, excluding those that were idle, numbered 131,454.⁵⁷ This represented an increase of over 32,826 spindles during the period 1907 to 1920. The value of manufactured products created by the mills had risen to \$13,920,000 by 1920. These statistics do not paint a clear picture of the textile industry, however, since business conditions could hardly be classed as normal during the war years and the years immediately following the war.

Although the development of cotton mills was slowed to a great extent, some mill construction did take place in

⁵⁵Blue Book of Southern Progress, 1930, p. 82.

⁵⁶Ibid., 1931, p. 234.

⁵⁷U. S. Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920, Manufactures, Vol. X, p. 152.

Texas during the period. From 1907 to 1920 three new mills were built, one each at Waco, Post, and McKinney respectively. These mills were much larger than those built during the previous period of mill construction. It is also notable that the capitalization of these mills was much greater than had generally been the case.

The factory at Post, owned and promoted by C. W. Post of "Postum" fame, had many interesting aspects. For one, it was not a local undertaking as was the case in the founding of the previously built mills. The mill was built in 1912 and was capitalized for \$555,000.⁵⁸ Another interesting aspect was its manufactured products. The Postex Cotton Mill, as it was chartered, was one of the first mills to produce a completely finished product ready for the market. Its specialty was the manufacture of sheets and pillow cases.⁵⁹

The Postex Cotton Mill has had a very successful record since the founding in 1912. In 1923, eleven years after operation began, the Dallas Morning News reported the following concerning the mill at Post:

The cotton mill represents an investment of \$1,250,000. It operates 11,520 spindles, and has

⁵⁸ Bagley, Cotton Mill Development in Texas, p. 10.

⁵⁹ Grossmann, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

about 2,000 men and women on its payrolls. It is running to capacity and its percentage of production during the last four weeks has been the highest of any similar period since it was established in 1912.

About 3,000 bales of cotton are converted into bleached sheets and pillow cases annually at the mill, all of the cotton being purchased from Garza county farmers. While the bulk of the product is sold in the Southeast, a market for it also has been developed in every state in the Union, Canada, and Mexico.⁶⁰

Since this report the mill has continued in operation and is today one of the outstanding industrial plants of West Texas.

The other two mills built during the period 1907 to 1920, were at Waco and McKinney. Both were large mills compared to mills erected prior to this time. The mill at McKinney was built about 1911 with a capital stock of \$190,000.⁶¹ It was originally chartered as the Texas Cotton Mill Company, but was sold after about ten years to another interest. Two years after its founding in 1911 the capitalization of the mill was increased to \$220,000.⁶² By 1920 its capital stock had been increased to \$440,000.⁶³ The mill was never an outstanding success during the management

⁶⁰The Dallas Morning News, April 8, 1923, p. 11.

⁶¹Biennial Report of the Secretary of State, Texas, 1914, p. 97.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Bagley, Cotton Mill Development in Texas, p. 10.

of the original owners, and in 1922 the C. R. Miller Manufacturing Company of Waco bought the enterprise.⁶⁴

The third and last of the mills erected during the period 1907 to 1920 was located at Waco. This plant was the first mill of the present-day Texas Textile Mills, probably the most successful of the Texas textile business thus far. This mill was originally chartered as the Miller Cotton Mill, with a capitalization of \$1,000,000.⁶⁵ Since its founding in 1920, the mill has remained in the hands of the original owners and was organized as a part of the Texas Textile Mills in 1924 under the control of the same management.⁶⁶

With the erection of the Miller Cotton Mills at Waco the third phase of mill development came to an end. The period which began in 1907 saw very little expansion in the cotton textile industry. As noted, only three mills were built during this period. The next stage of expansion of the textile industry was to bring some unique developments.

⁶⁴Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas, Directory of Texas Manufacturers, 1947, p. 120.

⁶⁵Bagley, Cotton Mill Development in Texas, p. 10.

⁶⁶Information received from Henry Amlin, Personnel and Public Relations Officer, Texas Textile Mills, Dallas, Texas, personal interview.

The first World War had enabled most of the mill owners to operate their factories with a greater degree of success than had been the case previously. The general industrialization scheme for the Southwest was getting underway about this time and cotton mill construction again became a favorite field for local investment. Another factor which gave added interest to mill construction from 1920 to 1933 was due to the additional capital which was available after the war. C. J. Grossmann, in a summary of the conditions which led to the rapid increase in the number of mills, said:

By 1920 the economic foundation for industrial development was established. Agriculture was developed to a point where it seemed necessary to call on other sources of income if the pace of progress was to be maintained. In the early years of the industry, the pioneers in manufacturing had found opposition, but by the close of the first World War a popular demand for mills had replaced that attitude. The cotton textile industry had benefited largely from this change of attitude. The number of spindles practically doubled from 1920 to 1927.⁶⁷

The latter part of the period 1920 to 1933 witnessed a very different situation in the cotton textile industry than had been the case during the early 1920's. After 1927 the construction of new mills ceased almost entirely. The expansion in the industry turned from new construction to what might be called internal growth. Following this internal expansion came the lean years and later the world-wide

⁶⁷Grossmann, op. cit., p. 25.

depression which had a devastating effect on the entire Texas textile industry.

A closer look into the period 1920-1933 reveals that the expansion of the early 1920's took place. As has been pointed out previously, the number of spindles practically doubled between 1920 and 1927.⁶⁸

Between the years 1920 and 1922 new mills were erected at Kingsville, San Antonio, Corsicana, and a cotton twine mill at Waco. At San Antonio two mills had been established: the San Antonio Cotton Mill and the Star Cotton Mill. The Star Cotton Mill was much larger than the San Antonio Cotton Mill but unfortunately had a much less successful life. When operations first began the Star Mill had 10,000 spindles, but in 1926 reorganization of the management along with new ownership cut the number of spindles to 9,282. The mill was subsequently operated as the Adams Cotton Mill.⁶⁹

The mill erected at Corsicana, the second mill for that city, was chartered the Navarro Manufacturing Company. This mill was quite small and was an immediate failure. The small sum for which it was capitalized would indicate that its financial backing was too inadequate, thus insuring its failure.⁷⁰ It was forced to close its doors in about two years.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 26. ⁶⁹The Texas Almanac, 1927, p. 230.

⁷⁰Bagley, Cotton Mill Development in Texas, p. 10.

At Kingsville, the mill that was built about 1921 had many similarities to the Corsicana mill. It, too, was small and produced cotton yarn. This was a local undertaking but seemed to have adequate financial backing, which enabled it to succeed somewhat better than the Corsicana mill. Consistent with the pattern set by the other small mills, it, too, proved to be a loss to its stockholders. This mill operated sporadically for about six years, and was then sold about 1925 to the operators of the San Antonio Cotton Mill. The new owners reduced the number of spindles and began the production of tire fabrics.⁷¹ After the San Antonio Cotton Mill took over the Kingsville mill a greater degree of success was obtained.⁷²

With this flurry of mill development in the early 1920's, the movement toward larger cotton mills was begun. About this time practically every mill in the state increased its spindle capacity and its capital stock. By 1927 the number of spindles in place in Texas numbered 268,848, and of this aggregate only 22,000 were permanently idle.⁷³

The enlargement of the mills was a forward step in the Texas textile industry. The owners and operators of textile

⁷¹Ibid., p. 10. ⁷²The Texas Almanac, 1927, p. 230.

⁷³Grossmann, op. cit., p. 25.

mills by this time had gained much valuable experience in the operation of the mills. The management of the mills had found that it was more profitable to operate a large mill than a small one and that they could increase their production at the same time.

The attitude of the operators toward the small mill is shown by the following excerpt from the Dallas Morning News of April 8, 1923. The manager, interviewed by the News, stated:

I am opposed to the little mill of 5,000 or 6,000 spindles, as they are too small and the overhead expenses are too great--practically as great as it would be in the operation of 20,000 spindles. Speaking as one on the inside, I believe it would pay the small mills to consolidate and where several towns contemplate putting in small mills, to bunch them together and put in one large mill at one town. A mill of 20,000 spindles, it requires the same kind of expert superintendent, the same office force and similar employees.⁷⁴

It was this kind of wise thinking that stimulated the movement to enlarge the mills and construct larger mills so that competition from Eastern manufacturers could better be met.

A second factor which gave impetus to the movement toward even greater expansion of the textile industry in Texas is that of technological development. The climate of Texas has been a drawback to a large extent to the development of its textile industry. C. R. Miller, the most

⁷⁴The Dallas Morning News, April 8, 1923, p. 11.

outstanding textile manufacturer in Texas, in a speech to the Cotton Manufacturers Association of Texas at their annual meeting in 1925, stated:

Time was when the manufacture of cotton textiles was confined to areas close to the seacoast as the spinning and weaving of cotton fabrics, especially of fine cotton fabrics, demand a warm, moist atmosphere, the nature of cotton staple being such that strands of cotton or threads in process will ravel and break in a dry atmosphere. . . . it was responsible for the tardy development of the industry in our own state of Texas and in states similarly located and enjoying similar atmospheric conditions.⁷⁵

The handicap of dry climate has been overcome by the invention of humidifiers, which regulate the atmospheric conditions within the mills. This technological development has done much to aid the textile industry in Texas.

Along with the internal expansion of the cotton mills that had been built prior to 1920, many other new mills were erected. As it has been noted, from 1920 to 1922 five new factories had been founded. For the next five years this building of cotton mills was to continue. From 1922 to 1927 new cotton mills were established at San Marcos, Mexia, Bowie, New Braunfels, Dallas, Fort Worth, El Paso, Marble Falls, Galveston, Houston, and a cotton twine mill at Waco.⁷⁶ The

⁷⁵C. R. Miller, The Textile Industry, p. 4.

⁷⁶The Texas Almanac, 1927, p. 230.

combined spindleage of these mills increased the state's total number of spindles by about 73,656, exclusive of the mill at San Marcos which had not yet been completed.⁷⁷

The new mills were beginning to take into consideration the necessity of marketing their products in local markets, since competition with Eastern manufacturers was out of the question. This is clear from the change that had come about in the type of goods that the new mills were manufacturing. Whereas the great majority of the older mills were producing such products as duck, drills, denims, and osnaburgs, the new mills were concentrating on specialties like tire cord, tire fabrics, cotton yarn, flannelette, gingham, and rayon dress goods. This was not the case of all of the mills, however, since some of them continued to produce unfinished fabrics as had been produced by the older mills.

Two of the most outstanding mills that were built after 1922 were located at Fort Worth and Galveston. Both of these factories were exceptionally large mills as Texas mills go. The mill at Galveston, chartered as the Galvez Cotton Mill, was erected in 1926 at a cost of \$1,200,000.⁷⁸ It produced cotton yarn only and did no weaving at all. The product was sold to other mills for use in their weave rooms. The Galvez

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸"The Galvez Cotton Mills," East Texas, I (October, 1926), 26.

Cotton Mill was quite successful for about seven years, but with the depression of the 1930's they were unable to continue.⁷⁹

The Worth Cotton Mill, which was located at Fort Worth, had a better time of it. This mill was probably the largest cotton mill ever built in Texas. There were others that had more spindles after expansion but no other had as many spindles when it was first constructed. This mill operated 16,000 spindles and was capitalized for \$1,022,000. The factory operated for a number of years as the Worth Mill, but was later sold to the Firestone Rubber Company. Under the new owners the mill continued to produce tire cord fabrics. About 1945 the mill was sold again. This time the Horvath Cotton Mills of New York were the purchasers; they ran the mill for a time and when profits became too small for continued operation they closed the factory and sold the machinery to mills elsewhere.⁸⁰

The other mills that were founded from 1922 to 1925 were, in some cases, no more or even less successful than the Galvez and Worth Cotton Mills. The mills at Bowie, San

⁷⁹The Texas Almanac, 1933, p. 410.

⁸⁰R. S. Jamieson, personal interview. (R. S. Jamieson was connected with the Dallas Cotton Mill for several years and has had an active part in the Texas textile industry for many years at various levels as an executive. At present he is vice-president of Miller Brothers of Texas, a firm which acts as the wholesale merchants for the Texas Textile Mills.)

Marcos, Marble Falls, and the cotton twine mill at Waco, all failed in a short time after operation began.⁸¹ Again the cause of failure seems to have been the inability of these small mills to compete with large Eastern manufacturers producing the same type of product. Further, the whole of the nation-wide textile industry was entering upon a period of stagnation and wholesale failure of textile mills because of the depression became a daily occurrence.

The remaining mills, founded during the years 1922 to 1927, had a much better record as business successes. These factories, located at El Paso, Dallas, Mexia, New Braunfels, and the two mills at Houston, were quite profitable. They are yet in operation and, except for short periods during the depression, have operated continuously. All of these are rather small mills and none of them have over 10,000 spindles.⁸² The mill that was built at Dallas was constructed as a third mill of the Texas Textile Mills Company. Since the mills in this group have much in common, the activities of the Mexia Textile Mill can be used as an example for the

⁸¹The Texas Almanac, 1936, pp. 386-451. (This information was located by studying the reports of the county and the cities on industries in the respective cities, which was given to the Texas Almanac.)

⁸²Ibid., 1927, p. 230.

others, in order to better understand the pattern of development of these factories.

The Mexia Textile Mill was organized in 1925 with a capital stock of \$442,000. The enterprise was promoted by local citizens. The most active of these were J. K. Hughes, J. S. Smith, J. H. Sweatt, W. D. Freeman, J. S. Mussbaum, J. Desenberg, J. Womack, J. Perry Burrus, and Blake Smith, who had been active in the organizing of the Dallas Cotton Mill many years before. The mill was quite small and had only 5,000 spindles. Its production was limited to cotton duck, drills, and osnaburgs, which placed it in competition with most of the longer established mills in the state. Since its establishment the mill has been very profitable to its owners and recently has been enlarged to 9,384 spindles. This is one of the most outstanding textile businesses in Texas, in that it has had such a fine record as a going concern.⁸³

Since 1927, the textile industry has undergone very little in the way of expansion. Most of the activities have been more in the line of consolidation and continuation. The problem of continual operation has been so great that interest in building new mills has lagged. By 1933 when the

⁸³Letter from J. G. Coman, Manager, Mexia Textile Mill, Mexia, Texas, March 1, 1950.

fourth period of mill building had come to a halt, the cotton mill was no longer an oddity in Texas.

The cotton mill had come to Texas and it had come to stay. During the various phases of mill construction over forty different mills had been built in Texas. Of this number about half eventually failed and were never reopened. By 1933 the mills that had gained a permanent place in the industrial picture of Texas numbered twenty-four. These cotton factories have become stable business enterprises and have contributed greatly to the wealth of Texas.

For the small towns of Texas probably no other type of industrial plant contributes so much to the wealth of the community as the cotton factory. To better show the value of a cotton mill to a community the Bonham Cotton Mill, located at Bonham, Texas, is a good example. J. B. Bagley states:

To illustrate the value of a cotton mill to a town, take the figures of the Bonham Cotton Mills. They have nearly 16,000 spindles, and consume about 3,600 bales of cotton annually. Two hundred people are employed, and a population of 600 is added to the town. The payroll is \$150,000 a year. When the stock was held locally, the return to the community was about \$400,000 to stockholders, laborers, and suppliers of all kinds, out of the gross sale of something like \$770,000.⁸⁴

⁸⁴J. B. Bagley, "Cotton Mill Development in East Texas," East Texas, II (June, 1928), 45.

This is indeed a convincing argument for the establishment of cotton mills in Texas. These figures were recorded in 1928, and even though obsolete they are recent enough to give a picture of the value of cotton mills to the town of Bonham and to the state as a whole.

In conclusion, a textile industry has become a part of the industrial might of Texas. The industry is composed mostly of cotton textile factories, but in recent years there has begun a movement toward development of wool factories as well. The cotton mill is here and producing; the development of wool and synthetic fiber manufacturing plants has its beginnings already in many localities in the state. A closer study of how and where the manufacture of the other fibers are carried on, and how their history has been written into the industrial pattern of Texas, will be set forth in Chapter three.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOOL, MOHAIR, SYNTHETIC FIBERS, AND SILK FIBER MANUFACTURING

The history of wool manufacturing has its beginning in the mission era of Texas. As previously noted, the manufacture of woollen goods in the modern sense of the word began about the time of the Civil War at New Braunfels. This factory operated for several years, and quite profitably, until freight rates became so high that it could not market its products and still compete with the large manufacturers in the East.¹

The manufacture of wool has not expanded as cotton manufacturing has done. There are reasons for this retardation of the wool industry. The major reason is that wool must be processed before it can be woven into cloth. This processing consists of cleaning, or what is known as scouring the wool. It might very well be said that the wool scouring plant has been and is yet an oddity to the state of Texas. Without the wool scouring plants to clean and process the raw wool, the manufacture of wool can never be carried on at a profitable rate.

¹B. B. Paddock, Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest, II, 454.

The wool scouring plants are found as a rule near the woolen manufacturing centers of New England and in and around Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These factories prefer to do their own wool scouring at the factories, because at the same time they can mix different types of wool and consequently produce a more desirable kind of yarn.² This has forced the establishment of wool scouring plants at the factory rather than at the source of the wool.

At this point it would be well to look at the effects on the wool grower of the lack of wool scouring plants in Texas. In 1936, when Texas wool growers paid \$750,000 for freight on dirt and grease to the markets in Boston and Philadelphia,³ there were no wool scouring plants in the state. This alone should provide the incentive for the establishment of wool scouring plants in the state. Unfortunately, however, the scouring plants have not as yet been established to any great extent.

The wool manufacturing plants that have been established in Texas from time to time have had to secure the wool they used from scouring plants in the East, thereby forcing up the

²Texas Industrial Committee, *The Feasibility of a Wool Scouring Plant in Texas*, 1936, pp. 98-99.

³The Texas Almanac, 1936, p. 282.

cost of the products to such an extent that competition from the large Eastern manufacturers has been too much for the small Texas manufacturers. The result has been that the manufacture of wool in Texas has not developed to any appreciable extent.

There have been many attempts to manufacture woolen goods in Texas, and some have proved successful for a period of years; however, except for those factories that have been established in recent years, all eventually were failures. There are several causes for failure of the woolen manufacturing plants. Generally speaking, Eastern competition, absence of wool scouring plants to process the raw wool, and the inexperience of both management and labor have done more to cause these factories to fail than any other reasons.

Among the earliest efforts to establish a wool factory in Texas was the plant at New Braunfels which has been considered already. Another factory of note, and probably the most outstanding woolen mill ever built in Texas was erected at Waco in the early 1880's. The following is a description of this factory:

The Slayden-Kirksey Woolen Mills were begun in 1883, and by the end of six years they had a payroll of \$75,000 a year, 100 looms, four sets of cards, and over 300 operatives--a colony in itself. Up to the present [1892] the growth has been even greater in many phases, and they now employ from 500 to 600 hands, with buildings, machinery, cottages, and trade to match.

This is undoubtedly the largest and most far reaching enterprise in its results on Waco, of all that she can boast.⁴

The Slayden-Kirksey Woolen mill continued its operations until about 1912 at which time it was closed because it could no longer be operated at a profitable rate.⁵ The mill, while in operation, did a complete job of manufacturing. It took the raw wool and processed it from beginning to end. The manufactured product of this enterprise consisted of wool coatings and suitings.⁶

Late in 1890 an attempt was made to establish a woolen mill at Marble Falls, but these plans collapsed after the factory building had been completed, and the mill was never operated. The factory building was later used as a cotton mill.⁷

Other efforts to establish woolen mills were made by the promoters of cotton mills, but these attempts also were abandoned. The Dallas Cotton and Woolen Mills were chartered to manufacture cotton and wool, but the plans for building the woolen mill were never fulfilled.⁸

⁴Standard and Memorial History of McLennan, Bell and Coryell Counties, Texas, p. 135.

⁵Ibid.

⁶The Texas Almanac, 1949, p. 294.

⁷Denton County News, August 3, 1903, p. 3.

⁸Statement by R. S. Jamieson, personal interview.

The wool manufacturing industry had its greatest year in 1890, when four establishments were engaged in the production of woolen goods of some nature. The Bureau of Census recorded in 1890 four woolen goods manufacturing plants in Texas, with a capitalization of \$371,270, and operating 1,900 spindles.⁹ Their products consisted of 98,000 square yards of blankets, valued at \$41,000, and 85,300 pounds of woolen yarn, with a value of \$51,000.¹⁰ Of the four plants reported, one was idle at the time of the census report.¹¹

By 1900 only three woolen factories were still in operation and the total capitalization had decreased to \$285,663.¹² The Slayden-Kirksey mill at Waco was one of these, and the other two were not directly and fully engaged in the manufacture of woolen goods. One of these establishments was a carding mill, which is a different type of plant entirely.¹³ The ensuing description makes this clear:

These carding mills are small concerns, generally operating the simplest kind of carding machine, usually 24 inches in width. On this machine are made wool rolls for use in the household spinning industry from wool brought to the card by the farmers in the neighborhood.¹⁴

⁹U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eleventh Census of the United States: 1890, Manufactures, III, 74-75.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²U. S. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900, Manufactures, VIII, 874, 883.

¹³Ibid., IX, 80.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 85.

The other woolen goods establishment that was reported was located in a state institution, but its location was not disclosed.¹⁵

The products of these plants consisted of wool-filling cassimers, doeskins, jeans, tweeds, coatings, suitings, and other cotton warp goods for men's wears. The total value of all woolen manufactures of the three plants was \$196,000. Of this total, the factory at Waco accounted for about \$150,000. The carding mill's products were valued at \$1,200, and the value of the remainder of the products was attributed to the mill under the control of the state.¹⁶

By 1905 none of the mills were in operation, and the woolen manufacturing industry was dormant.¹⁷ This situation remained unchanged for the next thirty years, until, in 1939, a small mill was built at Eldorado, Texas. During the dormant period there was much agitation for the establishment of a woolen manufacturing industry, but little was ever done. In 1932 an effort was made by the people of New Braunfels to erect a woolen and mohair mill in that city. The mill was to be a locally financed project. Early in 1933 a site

¹⁵Ibid., VII, 461.

¹⁶Ibid., IX, 149-153.

¹⁷U. S. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910, Manufactures, X, 44-56.

including buildings was purchased, but here the plans ended and the project was abandoned.¹⁸

Even though there were no factories devoted to the manufacture of woolen goods exclusively, some wool was being used by the cotton mills in the state. The Census of 1920 reported the production of worsted goods, and the census of later years reported some activities along this line. The Sixteenth Census of the United States, in 1940, stated that in 1937 Texas was manufacturing certain goods from woolen yarn.¹⁹ The plant engaged in this activity was the Oriental Textile Mills in Houston. They were producing worsted goods, but not to any great degree.²⁰ This mill was a cotton mill primarily, and its production of worsted goods was probably on a contract basis. Therefore, its production was not a continuous affair.

In 1913 an attempt was made to establish a woolen mill at Waco. The venture terminated in what became the English Woolen Mills. A charter was granted in February of 1913, and the capital stock amounted to \$1,000. This mill never left the charter stage, and consequently, never began operations

¹⁸The Texas Almanac, 1933, p. 217.

¹⁹U. S. Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Manufactures, Vol. II, p. 327.

²⁰Bureau of Business Research, Directory of Texas Manufacturers, 1933, p. 122.

in the manufacturing of woolen products.²¹ Thus, the woolen industry, other than small plants which operated hand powered looms for weaving, did not get started again until 1940.

The present-day woolen industry in Texas began in 1940 with the founding of a wool scouring plant at San Marcos.²² It was first equipped to scour wool and mohair. The plant was a locally financed venture; Walter E. Haby, a local wool grower, became the first president of the company. When first chartered, the company was known as the Cen-Tex Wool and Mohair Company.²³ The company operated as a scouring plant until November of 1940, at which time the company announced that "the company will install a complete operating woolen mill in connection with their scouring plant."²⁴ The company then purchased the entire plant of the Huntingburg Woolen Mills, Inc., of Huntingburg, Indiana, and moved this factory's machinery to San Marcos.²⁵ By February, 1941, the Cen-Tex Wool and Mohair Company was producing woolen-filled

²¹Biennial Report of the Secretary of State, Texas, 1914, p. 47.

²²Bureau of Business Research, "Current Industrial Developments," Texas Business Review, XIV (March 28, 1940), 8.

²³Paul C. Yates, "Cen-Tex Gets Going," West Texas Today, XXI (February, 1941), 11.

²⁴"Peepings in on West Texas," West Texas Today, XX (November, 1940), 13.

²⁵Ibid.

comforters.²⁶ In 1945 the company was reorganized and re-chartered as the Lone Star Woolen Mills.²⁷ Since this date the mill has been sold twice. In 1946 it was sold to Brown and Nussbaum, a New Jersey company, who operated the plant as the Blue Bonnet Blanket Mill until May, 1947, at which time the mill was again sold.²⁸ The new owners rechartered the plant as the Bollman Industries, and began producing blankets in 1948.²⁹ Since this reshuffling of ownership the plant has remained in operation. The mill uses Texas wool and operates its own scouring plant. Its products are known by such names as "Texan de Luxe," "San Jacinto," and "Alamo" blankets.³⁰

The establishment of the woolen mill at San Marcos served as a starting point for the founding of other wool manufacturing plants. About the same time that the San Marcos plant was begun, plans were being made to build a woolen mill at Eldorado, Texas. The West Texas Chamber of

²⁶Paul C. Yates, "Cen-Tex Gets Going," West Texas Today, XXI, (February, 1941), 11.

²⁷Bureau of Business Research, Directory of Texas Manufacturers, 1946, p. 20.

²⁸"News about Mills," Textile World, XCVI, (June, 1946), 242.

²⁹Ibid., XCVIII (June, 1948), 282.

³⁰Yates, op. cit., p. 11.

Commerce, in its publication, West Texas Today, reports on the mill at Eldorado as follows:

Eldorado, in the heart of the fine-wool growing section of Texas, is to be the home of the first woolen mill in this region.

Location of the West Texas Woolen Mills in Eldorado is announced here Eldorado by J. M. Christian, son of J. B. Christian, Eldorado banker and ranchman for nearly a half a century. He is to be in charge of operations.

Machinery for the Eldorado mill has been purchased, Mr. Christian announced, for carding, spinning, and weaving wool. Earlier plans for a scouring plant have been dropped because of establishment of the Cen-Tex Wool and Mohair Company at San Marcos.

The Eldorado plant, according to Mr. Christian, is to be equipped for making the finest types of 100 per cent virgin wool blankets, as well as ordinary camp and army styles. Highgrade woolen suiting, yarn and woolen batting are also to be manufactured at the plant.³¹

The West Texas Woolen Mill at Eldorado became a reality, and with due ceremony the mill was dedicated February, 1941.³² After its completion the mill was described as follows:

Housed in a building of native stone construction, the modern machinery of the plant occupies 5,800 square feet of floor space. Including a three-unit carding machine, spinning mule of 324 spindle capacity, warp dressing machinery, two power looms, auxiliary equipment, fulling mill, napper and finishing machines, the mill is able to do dyeing, carding, spinning, weaving, pre-shrinking and finishing. The mill at

³¹Kate McKinney, "Eldorado Selected as Site for First Woolen Mill," West Texas Today, XX, (January, 1940), 21.

³²Kate McKinney, "A New Industry for West Texas," West Texas Today, XXI, (April, 1941), 16.

present is capable of manufacturing 100 blankets every twenty-four hours, of any shade, color, checks, plaids, or reversibles using both fine and medium West Texas wool. The plant will consume approximately 600,000 pounds of raw wool per year.³³

Since its organization in 1939 the West Texas Woolen Mill has been very successful and is today running full time. Its production has been confined to producing woolen blankets, at the present turning out forty-eight all wool blankets per day. Early in 1940 the mill was incorporated.³⁴

Another woolen manufacturing plant which stemmed from the establishment of the scouring plant at San Marcos was built at New Braunfels. This plant was for wool combing, which prepares the wool for manufacture into yarn. The establishment of this combing plant is thus described:

. . . while Robert R. Pent Company of Philadelphia is completing the installation of the first woolen combing plant ever established outside of the North Atlantic Seaboard area. This plant with four sets of working cards and four English Bradford combs, together with miscellaneous equipment, is located at New Braunfels, 17 miles from San Marcos. It is slated to start operations before March 1 1941. It has a capacity of 50,000 pounds of grease wool per 40 hour week. It has entered into a contract with the Cen-Tex Company to take a minimum of 800,000 pounds of Texas grease 12-month wool annually.³⁵

³³Ibid.

³⁴Letter from J. M. Christian, President, West Texas Woolen Mill, Eldorado, Texas, March 10, 1950.

³⁵Yates, op. cit., p. 17.

The woolen manufacturing industry, as the preceding discussion makes obvious, has not developed to any great extent in Texas. The earlier established woolen mills were eventually failures in every case. The present-day mills in Texas are small and produce only such coarse products as blankets and wool-filled comforters. This is a poor record for a great wool producing region, which honor Texas so richly deserves.

Closely related to the woolen manufacturing industry is the manufacture of mohair. And, like the manufacture of wool, the manufacture of mohair is an oddity to Texas. In the history of industrial growth in Texas, there has never been recorded the establishment of a mohair manufacturing plant.³⁶ In 1932 this statement was made: "producing 40 per cent of the wool and 80 per cent of all the mohair grown in the nation, Texas has not a single factory for the processing of either."³⁷ In 1950 the statement as to mohair could be made again and be just as accurate. The question immediately forms in ones mind,

³⁶In this research of various reports on manufacturing in Texas, made by the Bureau of Census, and other agencies, the author has not found any mention of the establishing of a mohair plant to produce a finished good from this fiber.

³⁷"Palm Beach" Cloth? 'Tis West Texas Mohair," West Texas Today, XIII (April, 1932), 23.

what happens to the millions of pounds of mohair grown in Texas every year? The answer is, it leaves the state in the raw stage and is processed in the manufacturing plants of the Atlantic Seaboard and in the factories of Great Britain, and in other textile mills throughout the world. It can be concluded that there has not been any manufacture of this product in Texas thus far and the development of mohair manufacturing lies in the future.

In the last fifty years the textile industry has been presented with many new type fibers, which have been developed by the scientists of the chemical industry. From such natural resources as coal and petroleum, the chemists has been able to produce fibers which, after being woven into cloth, are as desirable as the older "natural fibers." These fibers are known by their trade names of "nylon" and "rayon."

The manufacture of chemical fibers or "synthetic" fibers as they are called, is of recent origin in Texas. The development of the chemical industry is actually just in the early stages, and consequently the manufacture of synthetic fibers is just beginning. Prior to the Second World War there were no plants in Texas engaged in the production of these synthetic fibers. The great demand for these newer fibers, coupled with the fact that Texas has all the basic resources necessary for their manufacture, caused some factories to be established here.

A close look at the synthetic fiber industry will reveal that the process of this kind of manufacturing is not a complete process.³⁸ Elmer H. Johnson writes of the two plants in Texas engaged in the production of synthetic fibers describing their activities:

. . . Likewise in plastics and chemical intermediates Texas has the basic materials in quantity and quality, together with adequate fuel resources, all at costs attractive to industry, for the production of a variety of intermediates--or ingredients for the manufacture of the finished substances. But these intermediates to a large degree, are shipped out of the State to be further processed elsewhere. Illustrations of these features are at Bishop, Texas, and by du Pont at Orange. In the latter case only the ingredients of nylon are to be made at the Texas plant; these ingredients are to be made into flake and yarn at du Pont's nylon plants at Seaford, Delaware, and Martinsville, Virginia, where of course nylon production will be increased.³⁹

From the preceding discussion it is easily seen that the production of synthetic fibers in Texas is not at this time an accomplished fact. The fibers are only partially produced in the State, and the finished yarn as commonly known must be shipped back to Texas, after being processed further in other areas.

The question in order at this time is: Does Texas industry require these synthetic fibers? The answer is very definitely yes. The manufacture of hosiery has become

³⁸Elmer H. Johnson, "Industrial Potentialities of Texas," Texas Business Review, XIX (April, 1945), 6.

³⁹Ibid.

an outstanding industry in Texas requiring each year hundreds of pounds of rayon and nylon yarn.⁴⁰

According to the Census of Manufactures of 1947 there were in Texas six mills engaged in the production of full fashioned hosiery and one mill producing seamless hosiery.⁴¹ In addition to the use of synthetic fibers in the hosiery manufacturing industry, the cotton manufacturing plants use a small amount of the synthetic fibers in the production of certain fabrics. This is especially true in regard to rayon. The New Braunfels Textile Mill produces large amounts of rayon dress goods.⁴² So the logical conclusion is that if factories were established in Texas to produce the synthetic fibers they would find a ready market for their products.

The production of hosiery, which requires a great amount of rayon and nylon yarn, has grown to be one of the largest divisions of the textile industry. In Texas, as stated before, there are seven hosiery mills, producing both women's and men's hose. Even though hosiery manufacture is considered a part of the textile industry, it is an entirely different process from what is commonly known as textile manufacturing. The

⁴⁰U. S. Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Manufactures, Vol. II, pp. 335-336.

⁴¹U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Manufactures: 1947, Knitting Industries, Table II, p. 4.

⁴²Bureau of Business Research, Directory of Texas Manufacturers, 1946, p. 69.

difference is found in the type of machinery used to produce hose. Hosiery manufacture is actually the finishing of the synthetic fibers, after they have been made into yarn by specially equipped plants to produce the yarn. The hosiery mills of Texas do not produce any of the yarn they use, but secure it from the chemical plants in the East which produce the synthetic fibers from which hosiery is made.

The largest manufacturer of hosiery in Texas is the McGaugh Hosiery Mills, which operate three factories. One mill is located in Dallas, one in New Braunfels, and a third is at Mineral Wells. The New Braunfels mill is the oldest of the three, it was established in 1929. The Dallas plant was founded in 1931, and the mill at Mineral Wells in 1946. All are in operation at this time, and produce such nationally known products as "airmaid," "airmate," and "starlett" hosiery for women.⁴³

Other hosiery mills in the state are the Vanette Hosiery Mills, the Service Hosiery Mills, and the Baker-Moise Hosiery Mills, all located in Dallas, and the Comal Hosiery Mills of New Braunfels. Most of these mills were established since the end of the war, and at present they are operated with a great deal of success.⁴⁴ These mills produce women and men's hosiery and socks.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 343, 345, 283.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 288, 286, 283.

In the past five years a new textile fiber has found its place in the family of Texas' textile resources. This new fiber, although produced for hundreds of years elsewhere, has only been produced in Texas since 1945.⁴⁵ At Mineral Wells, Texas, in 1945, the culture of silk worms began with the objective in view of producing raw silk. In 1944, a company chartered as the Texas Silk Industries, Inc., was formed to engage in the production of raw silk.⁴⁶ Robert Wear, in the publication West Texas Today, describes it as:

In the first meeting 60 Mineral Wells business men organized the Texas Silk Industries, Inc., with a capital stock of \$10,000. [In 1946 this amount was increased to \$50,000.]

Next the project backers interested W. S. Roberts of New York, head of a concern utilizing the newly patented cocoon unreeling machine, to use some of the Texas grown cocoons. He agreed to buy all cocoons produced, and his American Raw Silk Corporation now has two of its machines installed in a building on the south side of the city.

As the next step, the Mineral Wells business men persuaded C. C. McGaugh of Dallas, hosiery manufacturer, to establish a plant there to manufacture silk socks and stockings. . .

The first mulberry trees were planted in March, 1944. They were budded with large-leafed stock in October that year. In March, 1945, silk worm feeding began, in the "filature" or "cocooney" established in a former American Legion Hall.

Ernest Mims and the other members of the Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce have been sternly intent upon keeping this home industry a Texas affair, for as Mims explains: "Various groups, representing 14

⁴⁵Robert Wear, "West Texas Silk," West Texas Today, XXVII, (March, 1946), pp. 7, 11.

⁴⁶Bureau of Business Research, Directory of Texas Manufactures, 1946, p. 343.

hosiery mills, have visited Mineral Wells to see the project in operation. Each of them have been enthusiastic over prospects of being able to purchase American-grown silk. One company offered to purchase the production for the first five years. This offer was refused. We advised him that we were not interested in shipping Texas silk East. We told him if they move their hosiery mill to Texas, we would talk business with him."

... This year, [1946] the "cocoonery" here will employ perhaps 50 persons, most of them disabled veterans; the reeling and the thread-making firm will employ a dozen others; and the hosiery plant, when it reaches its peak, will employ 250. The first pair of silk socks and hose were manufactured in 1945.⁴⁷

Thus far the Texas silk industry has been very profitable. The three industries in cooperation with each other turn out a finished product ready for the consumer. The three separate operations include the growing of the silk cocoons by the Texas Silk Industries, the unreeling of the cocoons and making of the silk into thread by the American Raw Silk Corporation, and the manufacture of the silk thread or yarn into hosiery by the McGaugh Hosiery and Manufacturing Company.

Only the years ahead will determine the future of the silk industry in Texas, but from its past history, it seems that it will progress and expand. Since the establishment of this plant at Mineral Wells, no other plant has been erected in Texas. In future years a profitable silk industry may develop in the state.

⁴⁷Wear, op. cit., pp. 7-11.

In the preceding pages the development of wool, mohair, synthetic, and silk fiber manufacturing have been related. Of this group, wool manufacturing has attained the greatest importance in Texas, and wool manufacture has been carried on longer. The woolen industry in Texas had been dormant for many years, however, when it was re-established in 1939. Since woolen goods manufacture is of recent date, and, also, other fiber manufacture, its development has been brought up-to-date in this chapter. The following chapter will be devoted to cotton manufacture, and its present status.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN TEXAS

The purpose of this chapter is to relate what has happened in the textile industry since 1933. The chapter will largely be concerned with cotton manufacturing, since in preceding chapters the history of wool, mohair, synthetic, and other fiber manufactures was developed from their recent beginnings to the present time. By 1933 the expansion of the textile industry in Texas had come to a halt, when because of the world-wide depression which began in 1929 the entire textile industry of the world began to curtail operations.

After the stock market crash in 1929, the depression rapidly descended on the textile industry of Texas. In 1930 the mills in the state began a struggle for existence that was to last for the next ten years. Of the twenty-six cotton mills engaged in the manufacture of cotton goods in 1929, only twenty-one were still in operation by 1939.¹

¹U. S. Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Manufactures, Vol. II, p. 289.

In some years during this period even fewer mills were producing; in 1936, for instance, only eighteen cotton mills were in operation.²

As conditions in the textile industry grew steadily worse, because of reduced consumer purchasing power due to unemployment, the cotton mills could not continue their operations. The demand for textile goods had ceased. Mills were forced to close or operate at a loss to their owners. Several mills shut down. Others managed to operate even though they were making little profit.

The mills that had been built from 1928 to 1930 were hit the hardest. In 1927 cotton mills were under construction at Bowie, San Marcos, and Marble Falls. These were never completed, and as a result of the depression never began producing. The Bowie Cotton Mill did reach the production stage, but was closed in a few months after it began production.

Other failures soon followed the three mills mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The Planters and Merchants Cotton Mill at New Braunfels was closed in the summer of 1930.³ The cotton mill at Bonham, owned by the Consolidated Textile Corporation, was closed and sold to local

²Bureau of Business Research, Directory of Texas Manufacturers, 1936, p. 83.

³"Fine Cotton Goods in Texas," Texas Industrial Resources, IX (March, 1932), 15.

interests in the same year.⁴ The number of failures increased, and by the end of 1931 the following mills had been closed: the Galvez Cotton Mill at Galveston, the Adams Cotton Mill at San Antonio, the Gonzales Cotton Mill, the Waco Cotton Twine Mill, the San Antonio Cotton Mills plant at Kingsville, the Brenham Cotton Mill, and the Belton Yarn Mill. Of the twenty-one cotton mills in Texas in 1931, four were closed, six were working on half time and eleven on full time.⁵ Such were conditions in the textile industry of Texas in the worst of the depression years.

After 1932 business conditions began to improve throughout the country. The Federal government instituted recovery programs that aided business activities to increase. These programs gave employment to many persons, and as a result money was placed in the hands of the consumers. With the increase in buying power, demand for textile goods began to increase. As cotton manufacturing became more profitable, more of the mills resumed operations.

On August 15, 1931, the cotton mill at New Braunfels was reorganized with the objective of opening the mill at

⁴Letter from H. A. Burow, Manager, Bonham Cotton Mill, February 24, 1950.

⁵"Texas Cotton Mills, Texas Industrial Resources, VIII (October, 1931), 6.

a later date. Stock subscriptions were taken by citizens of New Braunfels and the firm of William Iselin and Company of New York.⁶ The mill was put into production eight months later, in March of 1932, after repairs had been completed. The mill was rechartered as the New Braunfels Textile Mills Company.⁷ Originally this plant had been the Planters and Merchants Cotton Mill. A second revived factory, the Bonham Cotton Mill, after it was sold by the Consolidated Textile Corporation to local interests, was immediately reopened by the new operators.

For many cotton mills, the depression was too severe to resume operations until a few years prior to the Second World War. Several factories that had remained in operation during the early years of the depression had to cease production by 1933. Among these were the El Paso Cotton Mill, the San Antonio Cotton Mill, the Waxahachie Cotton Mill, the Oriental Textile Mill at Houston, and the Brazos Valley Cotton Mill at West. Two of these plants, the Waxahachie and the Oriental, were never again reopened.⁸

⁶"Increase in Texas Cotton Manufacturing," Texas Industrial Resources, IX (May, 1932), 14.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Bureau of Business Research, Directory of Texas Manufacturers, 1932, pp. 13-24; 1936, pp. 7-48.

Some of the larger and better organized plants did manage to weather the depression without becoming bankrupt, but none of the factories were operated without certain adjustments.⁹ In this group of more successful mills were the Post Cotton Mill, the Denison Cotton Mill, the Corsicana Cotton Mill, the Hillsboro Cotton Mill, the Houston Cotton Mill, the Mexia Textile Mill, the Dallas Cotton Mill, the Sherman Manufacturing Company's plant at Sherman, the Itasca Cotton Manufacturing Company's mill at Itasca, the Guadalupe Valley Cotton Mill at Cuero, the Worth Cotton Mill at Fort Worth, and the three mills of the Texas Textile Mills located at Dallas, McKinney, and Waco. Also included in this group, though reorganized entirely in the first years of the depression, were the New Braunfels Textile Mill, the Bonham Cotton Mill, and the plant at El Paso which was sold to the Western Cotton Oil Company, who put the El Paso Cotton Mill into production late in 1933.¹⁰ As heretofore noted, none of these factories weathered the depression without some changes. Some were reorganized at times, others decreased their capital stock, while still others were operating only on a part time basis.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 1936, pp. 7-46.

After 1937 the American textile industry was beginning to resume more normal operations. In Texas, the industry was beginning to show signs of activity. Many of the mills began programs of modernization and expansion. In August, 1937, it was reported that the South Texas Cotton Mill at Brenham had been purchased by the operators of the Bonham Cotton Mill. The Brenham Cotton Mill was to be improved, both in buildings and in equipment, and to be operated as a branch mill of the Bonham Cotton Mill Company.¹¹ About the same time as this merger occurred, work was underway to modernize the machinery of the mill at Mexia and the Texas Textile Mills' plant at Waco.¹²

During the last months of 1937 plans were made to reopen other mills that had been closed for several years. The Gonzales Cotton Mill which had been closed since August, 1931, was reorganized in October, 1937. The mill was acquired by new interests headed by S. M. Ainsworth, Ross and Fred Boothe, all of Gonzales. In April, 1938, after the machinery had been overhauled, the mill went into production.¹³

¹¹"Textile Mill News," Textile World, LXXXVII (August, 1937), 122-124.

¹²"Textile Mill News," Ibid. (February, 1937), p. 113.

¹³Ibid., LXXXVIII (April, 1938), 130.

In November, 1937, the Houston Cotton Mill Company leased the cotton mill at Kingsville, which had been idle for more than two years. The mill had been owned by the San Antonio Cotton Mills. Plans were made to modernize the plant and operate it as a branch factory of the Houston mill. The Kingsville plant was put into production early in 1938.¹⁴

Between 1938 and 1940 the textile industry of Texas recovered rapidly. The mill at Mexia embarked on a program of expansion which cost about \$75,000.¹⁵ The cotton yarn mill at Belton, which had been idle for several years, was reorganized and plans were made to reopen early in 1940.¹⁶ The San Antonio Cotton Mill, which had ceased operations in 1936, was scheduled to resume operations by the end of 1940.¹⁷ Thus, in 1940, with prosperous years ahead because of the war which had started in Europe, cotton mills were in operation at New Braunfels, Fort Worth, Bonham, Belton, Brenham, Sherman, Denison, Itasca, El Paso, McKinney, Corsicana, Gonzales, Mexia, Cuero, Hillsboro, Kingsville,

¹⁴Ibid., LXXXVII (November, 1937), 147.

¹⁵Ibid., XC (February, 1940), 180.

¹⁶Ibid., (March, 1940), p. 122.

¹⁷Ibid., (September, 1940), p. 158.

Post, and two mills each in the following cities: Dallas, Waco, and Houston.¹⁸

When in 1941 the country entered the Second World War, the demand for textile products reached an all time high. The cotton mills of the nation were called upon to meet these demands. The cotton mills of Texas did their share, in spite of old machinery in many of them. Some of the mills, such as the one at Mexia, had been modernized, but for many of the plants modernization was just being undertaken.

During the war many changes were to take place in the textile industry of Texas. These changes came in the form of ownership transfers, newly built cotton mills, and modernization of the currently operating mills. As profits rose, due to war production, the large Eastern cotton mill companies began purchasing the cotton mills in Texas. In 1943, the mill at Fort Worth was bought by the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. The Worth Cotton Mill, as it was chartered, had been producing tire fabrics and the new management continued along the same line of production.¹⁹ The mill at Post was sold in June, 1943, by the Post interests to Leslie

¹⁸Bureau of Business Research, Directory of Texas Manufacturers, 1940, p. 115.

¹⁹"Textile Mill News," op. cit., XCIII (April, 1943), 170.

Evans and Company of New York. The Post mill was sold because, according to the management, it could no longer operate the plant at a profit due to the price ceiling imposed on their products by the government. The new operators, however, immediately placed the plant into production.²⁰ Since this transfer of ownership took place the mill has been in continuous operation. In 1945 it was reported that the Brazos Valley Cotton Mill at West, and the Waco Cotton Twine Mill had been purchased by H. Kahn and Associates of New York.²¹ This company operated the plants for a year and then sold them to the Horvath Cotton Mills Company also of New York. The Horvath Company re-chartered the factories as the Southwestern Cotton Mills, Incorporated.²² After operating the plants for two years, the cotton twine factory was sold to the Hollywood Manufacturing Company of Dallas.²³ The cotton mill was closed in 1948 and the machinery sold. The Southwestern Cotton Mills are no longer in operation.

As the war continued and the textile industry enjoyed the new prosperity more of the mills changed owners. The

²⁰Ibid., (June, 1943), p. 174.

²¹"News about Mills," Textile World, XCV (September, 1945), 280.

²²Ibid., XCVI (July, 1946), 254.

²³Ibid., XCVIII (January, 1948), 245.

mill located at Sherman was sold to a local group of investors, who had formed a cotton manufacturing company. The new owners were incorporated under the name of Grayson Textiles, Incorporated.²⁴ The cotton mill recently purchased by the Firestone company was sold in June, 1946, to the Horvath Cotton Mills Company of New York.²⁵ The Horvath mill chain had, prior to this purchase, bought the Dallas Cotton Mill in March, 1946.²⁶ By 1946 the Horvath Cotton Mills Company had controlling interests in three Texas mills. In almost every case these changes in management did not affect the production of the factories or the personnel. There were some changes in the executive staff, but not even much change at this level.

Other changes in the industry occurred from time to time, such as the construction of more cotton manufacturing plants. At Itasca, a yarn mill operating 2,800 spindles was established in 1942 to produce cotton yarn for rugs. Late in 1941 a knitting mill was established at Greenville. The plant was quite small and its capitalization, when organized, amounted to \$40,000. This was a local undertaking and R. B. Love, a local citizen, became the first president

²⁴Ibid., XCV (November, 1945), 264.

²⁵Statement by R. S. Jamieson, personal interview.

²⁶Ibid.

of the company, which was chartered as the Lovkmit Manufacturing Company.²⁷ In 1945 a cotton spinning mill was established at Greenville by the same company. This plant, also headed by R. B. Love, was chartered as the Greenville Cotton Mill Company. It produces cotton yarn for the knitting mill.²⁸ During the ensuing years of the war several surveys were made by large cotton mill companies to determine the feasibility of establishing more mills in Texas, but no other plants were built in the state except those mentioned above.

A third change in the industry which developed during the war years, and forced by more of an internal nature than an outside influence, was the undertaking of many modernization programs by the mill operators. In 1937, when the textile industry in Texas began to awaken after the long years of depressed business activity, most of the mill operators found that their mills were working with antiquated machinery. This situation tended to make competition with Eastern and Southeastern cotton manufacturers even more difficult than it had been in the past. From 1937 to the present time practically all of the mills have been improved at various times. Today, the cotton mills

²⁷"Textile Mill News," op. cit., XCI (October, 1941, 160.

²⁸Bureau of Business Research, Directory of Texas Manufacturers, 1946, p. 106.

of Texas are well equipped with the latest type of textile machinery. The prosperity brought on by the war enabled the operators to run the factories at a margin of profit which would allow these modernization programs.

Since the close of the war there has been much activity in the textile industry of Texas. Several of the mills that had been operating for years are no longer in operation. The Dallas Cotton Mill plant was closed in 1948, and the machinery and buildings were sold separately. The Horvath Cotton Mills Company closed the plant because they could no longer operate the mill at a profit.²⁹ The Fort Worth Cotton Mill was sold by the Horvath Company in 1949 to Joseph List, a cotton manufacturer from Massachusetts.³⁰ List operated the mill for several months, and then closed it. The machinery and buildings were later sold, and no plant now exists at Fort Worth.

Various other mills have ceased operations in the past few years. The Belton Yarn Mill was closed by 1947.³¹ The mill at Kingsville, after it was sold to Paul Danforth

²⁹Statement by R. S. Jamieson, personal interview.

³⁰"News About Mills," Textile World, XCIX (January, 1949), 246.

³¹U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Manufactures, Texas, 1947, p. 11.

in 1945, operated for only two more years before it was a failure and was closed.³² The Lone Star Cotton Mill at El Paso went out of business in the summer of 1948, but recently the plant has been sold and the new owners plan to reopen the mill.³³

The Gonzales Cotton Mill, which had been reopened in 1937, was closed again in June of 1949. In April, 1950, it was sold to Bryan C. Miller, an executive of the Texas Textile Mills; the new owner planned to open the factory immediately.³⁴ The Dallas plant of the Texas Textile Mills is to be closed in June of 1950. The machinery is to be moved to the plants at Waco and McKinney. The reason for closing this plant, according to an executive of the mill, is that labor problems are less troublesome in the smaller cities, where their other mills are located.³⁵

Why the Texas cotton mills were closed is open for speculation. The owners do not give in detail their reasons for closing the mills. The reasons, as given by the owners, always center around the idea that the mills could no longer

³²Bureau of Business Research, Directory of Texas Manufacturers, 1946, p. 106.

³³"News about Mills," op. cit., C (January, 1950), 235.

³⁴Ibid., (April, 1950), p. 284.

³⁵Statement by Henry Amlin, Personnel and Public Relations Officer, Texas Textile Mills, Dallas, Texas, personal interview.

operate at a profit. This viewpoint is rather difficult to comprehend when other locally owned mills continue to operate. In most cases the mills that have been closed are those which have been bought by the large Eastern cotton manufacturing companies. Is this an effort on the part of the larger cotton mill companies to eliminate competition by smaller mills?

At the present time, there are in Texas twenty-one active cotton mills engaged in the production of cotton broad-woven goods, and three plants producing miscellaneous textile goods, such as cotton yarn, mop yarn, cotton rope and twine.³⁶ These mills have an aggregate of 215,000 active spindles.³⁷ With two or three exceptions, they are all backed by Texas capital which is represented by both common and preferred stock. The size of the mills may seem small to an outside observer; but it must be remembered that, since most of the mills spin coarse yarn, their out-put per spindle is large. In spite of the small size, therefore, overhead can be distributed over a relatively large production.

³⁶Bureau of Business Research, Directory of Texas Manufacturers, 1947, pp. 16-173.

³⁷Blue Book of Southern Progress, 1949, p. 89.

The cotton manufacturing industry of Texas is not concentrated in any one location. There has been no development of large textile centers as has been the case in other cotton manufacturing states. In Texas there has been a rather healthy dispersion of the industry. For historical and economic reasons, the cotton mills have largely located in the fertile black land belt. In late years the cotton growing area of Texas has shifted to the western part of the state, and, if and when further expansion of the industry takes place, the mills will probably be located in this newer cotton growing section.

The products of the cotton mills of Texas are many indeed. In the past most of the mills produced only coarse cotton goods, but in recent years several of the factories have begun to produce fine goods. A list of the textile products turned out by the cotton mills of Texas include such goods as household linens, drills, drapery and upholstery fabrics, mop yarns, cotton duck, osnaburgs, cotton blankets, cotton yarns, awning materials, cotton sheeting, suitings, coverts, whipcords, tickings, twills, cotton twine, webbing, cotton rope, laundry felt, denim, and certain fabrics consisting of rayon and cotton yarns, used in producing shirting material.³⁸ These goods are usually

³⁸Bureau of Business Research, Directory of Texas Manufacturers, 1947, pp. 16-173.

sold through commission houses which act as the wholesalers for the mill. A few of the mills have retail outlets located at the mill, but most of the mills rely on the large commission houses of the East to market their products. The manufactured products of the cotton factories in Texas are to a great extent used within the state, even though the goods are marketed by the wholesale commission houses.

At this writing there are twenty-one cotton mills that are active in Texas. These mills are as follows: the Postex Cotton Mill at Post, the New Braunfels Textile Mill, the Brenham Cotton Mill, the Bonham Cotton Mill, the Denison Cotton Mill, the Corsicana Cotton Mill, the Mexia Textile Mill, the Hillsboro Cotton Mill, the San Antonio Cotton Mill, the Greenville Cotton Mill, the Waco Cotton Twine Mill, the Lone Star Cotton Mill at El Paso, the Sherman Manufacturing Company, the Guadalupe Valley Cotton Mill at Cuero, the Texas Textile Mills, with factories at Dallas, McKinney, and Waco, the Itasca Cotton Manufacturing Company at Itasca, and the two mills located at Houston, the Houston Cotton Mill and the Houston Textile Mill.³⁹

³⁹Letter from Texas University, Bureau of Business Research, Austin, Texas, May 1, 1950.

The textile industry of Texas has not developed to such an extent as it was believed it would because of the great amount of cotton produced in the state. Since its beginning in the period shortly after the Civil War, there has been no gradual expansion as in the other cotton producing states. The growth of a textile industry was the expected line of industrial development for Texas in the early days of industrial expansion in the state, but the cotton textile industry moved to the Southeast instead of the Southwest.

The textile industry of Texas does not play a great part in the nation's textile industry. The entire textile industry of Texas, including all establishments which produce goods considered as textile products, numbers only fifty-seven plants.⁴⁰ This figure alone, however, does not give a complete picture of the industry. Broken down into different classes of textile producing establishments, most of these plants are little more than shops or retail businesses. The Census of Manufactures for 1947 discloses that of the fifty-seven establishments engaged in the manufacture of textile products, six had less than three employees, two had four to seven, ten plants employed between

⁴⁰U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Manufactures, 1947, Part II, Table II, p. 2.

eight and nineteen workers, two establishments had between twenty and forty-nine employees, eight factories employed fifty to ninety-nine persons, twenty-five establishments employed between one hundred and five hundred workers, and only four plants had over five hundred employees.⁴¹

The products manufactured by the textile industry of Texas fall into thirteen different groups. The Census of Manufactures of 1947 reported the various groups and the number of establishments in these groups as follows: woolen and worsted fabrics, two; wool scouring and combing plants, one; cotton broad-woven fabrics mills, nineteen; rayon and related broad-woven fabrics, one; finishing textiles, except wool, one; fur felt hats and hat bodies, four; straw hats, three plants; carpets and rugs establishments, one; full-fashioned hosiery mills, six; seamless hosiery mills, one; knit underwear mills, one; paddings and upholstery filling plants, five; processing textile wastes, two factories; and one plant engaged in the production of cordage and twine.⁴²

This is the status of the textile industry in Texas at the present time. The industry at this date seems to be at the crossroads. Over the years that the industry

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

has been located in Texas, there has been ample time for it to grow and expand. Today, more than at any other time the opportunity is present for expansion. The prospects for further growth of the industry in the future is related in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY OF TEXAS

At the present time the textile industry of Texas is seeking to normalize itself after running at a peak production for the last ten years. It is one of the most competitive of our industries. The mills in Texas have always had to compete with the large mills located in the Eastern states, which have many advantages over the Texas mills. The Eastern factories have been in operation for many years, and as a result, they have more skilled workers from which to choose, plus executives in the top positions who know the textile business in its every aspect. A third advantage is found in the size of the larger cotton and woolen mill companies; that is, the larger mills are able to employ the better trained technicians of the industry, because they have more wealth to pay these well trained industrial experts. For these reasons it is not probable that the industry will develop very much beyond its present size. It is certain that the industry that is located in Texas at the present time will remain and there will be some gradual growth, but the long-looked for development is

not coming in the near future, if past developments can be used as a criterion for judging the future of the industry.

The mill operators of Texas reflect varied opinions on the future of the industry in the state. Some are optimistic about the industry's future and just as many, on the other side, see little future for the industry. H. A. Burow, manager of the Bonham Cotton Mill, said, "very good," when asked what his opinion on the future of the textile industry in Texas was.¹ O. S. Smith, personnel director of the Corsicana Cotton Mill, voiced this attitude on the industry's future:

The textile industry in Texas should prosper as long as it is given an even break in such matters as freight rates, etc. The distance from Texas to the textile markets is a handicap that must be overcome before anything else is taken into consideration.²

A woolen manufacturer of Texas, J. M. Christian, president of the West Texas Woolen Mills, on the future of the industry said: "excellent, but will be a slow but sure process."³

¹Letter from H. A. Burow, Manager, Bonham Cotton Mill, February 24, 1950.

²Letter from O. S. Smith, Personnel Director, Corsicana Cotton Mill, March 3, 1950.

³Letter from J. M. Christian, President, West Texas Woolen Mills, March 10, 1950.

Other opinions of the mill operators range from good to uncertainty, and still others are pessimistic about the industry's future.

Those who see very little for the future of the textile industry agree with this statement of one of the executives who has been connected with the industry twenty-three years and whose opinion is highly regarded by the industry:

It is pretty hard to say what the future prospects of the Texas textile industry are. Our industry is handicapped by the distance from its markets, and a heavier freight rate than enjoyed by our competitors. Furthermore, in these days when customers want goods promptly, the time element is also a handicap. Another angle is excessive taxation. Many of the mills in the Southeast with whom we compete have little or no ad valorem taxes whereas most Texas mills are taxed heavily not only by the local tax authorities, such as the county, city and school, but there is a very good prospect that they may be burdened with an excessive state tax in the very near future.⁴

A second attitude, which also reflects a darker outlook for the industry, is given by B. J. Musso, superintendent of the Postex Cotton Mill:

The Texas textile industry in my opinion has reached its' peak unless, the Southeastern states levy unusual taxes on industry such as took place in the New England states. The textile labor market is in the Southeastern states and I don't think that Texas people readily adapt themselves to the textile industry.⁵

⁴Letter from H. C. McKenna, Vice-President, New Braunfels Textile Mill, April 14, 1950.

⁵Letter from B. J. Musso, Superintendent, Postex Cotton Mill, March 6, 1950.

The question of labor for the cotton factories is highly important; in the final analysis it is the difference between good and poor fabrics. In Texas, where other kinds of industries syphon off the better class of workers, the mills have a difficult time of employing the necessary labor. Textile mill workers in the past have been regarded as lower class citizens by the mass of society, and this largely accounts for the unwillingness of workers to seek employment in the mills. As a result of this type of thinking on the part of labor, the mills have had to employ a lower class of workers than most other industries in the state. Mexican labor has been used in the cotton mills located at San Antonio and El Paso; they have been used very successfully, and this could solve the problem of textile workers for Texas. From these experiments may come the answer to the question of whether or not a textile labor pool can be developed to be used by the cotton mills.

In the case of the newer textile fibers a different attitude may be developed. It has been only recently since the manufacture of synthetic fibers began in Texas, and it has not yet been fully completed. At the present time only the ingredients for synthetic fibers are produced in Texas. There is no particular reason why the entire process could not be carried on in the state; unless the labor necessary

for the finishing plants could not be obtained from the local markets. Other industries, such as the aircraft manufacturers, have moved their essential workers with their plants; why not the synthetic fiber producers? Because Texas has the natural resources for a tremendous chemical industry, and the greater increase in demand for synthetic fibers in recent years, this seems to be the most probable line of development for the textile industry of Texas in the future. Cotton and wool manufacturing may develop gradually, but in the field of synthetics appears the greatest opportunity for a future textile industry in Texas.

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