

The Geneva Cotton Mill - Heritage book

In early Geneva County, the timber and cotton farming industries were the leaders in employing the counties people. Through the early years, the timber was being depleted, the sawmill industry was slowly going out of business, and some kind of work was needed to provide for those losing their jobs at the sawmills.

Sixty-six citizens saw the need for new industry. In July 1923, the Geneva Cotton Mill was organized, its founders being Jim Johnson, Sr. and D. H. Morris, Jr. They formed an organization and contracted the Robert & Co. of Atlanta, Ga., to build the building. By 1924, the mill was completed with C. C. Cobb serving as the first Superintendent. Other Superintendents through the years were: Henry Jones, Ab Bryant, and Hugh Owen, Jr.

In 44 years (1924-1968), employees increased from 63 to 300. Payroll increased from \$36,000.00 to \$1.5 million.

There were employees working at the Geneva Cotton Mill who started with the opening of the mill. Many had children and even grand-children working there. In 1968, the oldest employee in the mill, in terms of service, was B. H. (Red) Peel, who started on May 25, 1923.

In 1972, Fabrics America Corporation acquired the Geneva Mill along with others. In June 1977, Clinton Mills, Clinton, SC, purchased the Geneva Mills. They renovated, expanded, and diversified production of different blends and sizes of cloth.

The mill whistle which blew for the last time on Tuesday, August 23, 1977, was the same whistle used by W. H. Morris, Jr. in Noma, Florida at the Alabama-Florida Lumber Company. Parts of the lumber mill were moved to Geneva in 1921.

The company maintained the employees' insurance program throughout temporary layoffs and the company also paid insurance on the dependents which were billed back to the employee after he went back to work. The mill switched from a payday every two weeks to a weekly payday on Fridays. The shift hours were also changed. Shifts were from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., 4 p.m. to Midnight and Midnight to 8 p.m.

In 1987, Clinton Mills of Geneva had 575 employees, produced 60 million yards of fabric per year, and had a payroll of \$7,384,000.00.

In the years following, the North American Free Trade Act was passed which contributed to the demise of the cotton industry as companies closed their mills and shifted their sewing operation to foreign countries where labor was drastically cheaper. *Submitted by: Book Committee Source: Parts from the History of Geneva by the Geneva Women's Club.*

