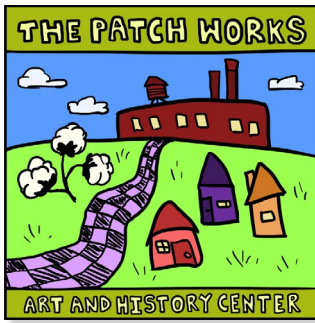


FBCM: RAW COTTON IN, FINAL PRODUCT OUT

By Nina & Jake Elsas, The Patch Works Art And History Center



Sorry about our absence in last month's Cabbagetown Neighbor. We realize this article has become important to the two adoring fans out there. It will be our mission... nay, our DUTY... to produce a blurb worthy of y'all's forgiveness. And one day, we shall!

Whew. THAT'S done...

Last November, the The Patch Works' stalwart "staff" toddled over to Georgia Tech and the Atlanta History Center, diving head first into the seemingly bottomless collections stored in their archives. Only after coming up for air did the intrepid researchers realize the amount of history that's been left untouched: heaps o' treasure just waiting to be discovered and discussed.

A panoply of architectural drawings, photographs, artifacts, documents, and letters (including one from Albert Einstein asking Norman Elsas to lunch). It's like... it's like... it's like... no one ever threw any-friggin-thing OUT. What a bunch of Hoarders.

And not to be out-hoarded by Tech and the AHC, The Patch Works recently snagged a sizable donation of relics from none other than the esteemed Aderhold family. Ha! In your collective FACE larger institutions!

Any-huh-waaaay, suffice it say, for years to come, we'll be producing plenty of articles for your firepits and grills. (Matches not included.)

Seeing today's pared-down Mill, it's hard to imagine how massive – literally and figuratively – Fulton Bag & Cotton Mills was. In its heyday, the Atlanta location dwarfed other mills in the vicinity; satellite factories operated across the United States; business went overseas.

FBCM was doing what few others in the textile industry were doing: EVERYTHING. What does that mean? Well, in short, raw cotton came in and finished products went out. One journalist deemed FBCM to be a city unto itself, it was that big. So, to provide some perspective on the scale of operations, this month's article will list ALL seventeen stages of production. (82.67% of readers will now be turning immediately to the *Real Estate Report*.) Fun!

STATION #1: Cotton arrives and is unceremoniously scrutinized. Cotton is graded based on quality (e.g: it's full of crud, or its fiber-size is... lacking).

STATION #2: Cotton is assembled based on previous grades. Hoity-toity specimens get earmarked for finer cloths (e.g.: flour sacks); the cruddiest get to schlep potatoes and beans.

STATION #3: Cotton hits the spa. After a nice steam and deep massage, Cotton relaxes in a tub, where it gets evenly moist.

STATION #4: Cotton gets sucked. Up it goes, into "pickers," which give Cotton a nice comb-over. No more motes! Mote-less Cotton then gets "lapped." Cotton is wound up into laps, each one being exactly the same in length and weight.

STATION #5: Cotton takes a ride on an elevator.

STATION #6: Cotton gets carded. Cotton gets plopped on a "card"

and is unwound into Carding Machine, which has toothy cylinders that nip and bite and separate Cotton. Carding makes Cotton clean and very fine... very fine indeed... but only briefly. Carded Cotton gets coiled into Cotton Rope.

STATION #7: Cotton Rope gets a "drawing." Our Mill doubled-down on this... why draw once, when you can draw twice??? First draw: six Cotton Ropes (at a time) get yanked through Drawing Machine's tiny hole, getting drawn and rolled, drawn and rolled, until the six Cotton Ropes become One Rope. This One Rope can weigh no more than the next six ropes following behind it. Different machines repeat this, eventually achieving Almost Yarn. Second draw: Almost Yarn gets drawn even more, until it is wee enough to fit on Bobbin. But Almost Yarn must also be made tense, but not TOO tense. Lightly tense. Ready-For-Bobbin Almost Yarn earns Roving Cotton status. Roving Cotton also gets a liiiiittle twist, making it easier to handle. Magically, one bale of Cotton will soon become miles of Yarn. Wowza.

STATION #8: Like #7, but Roving Cotton gets tinier still, depending on the size of Yarn desired.

STATION #9: A Yarn is born. Roving Cotton gets the "spinning" spindle treatment, turning into many sizes of Yarn. Two types of Yarn get produced – "Filling" and "Warp" – with each going its own, separate way. Filling Yarn travels straight to LOOOOOOMS, but not Warp Yarn...

STATION #10: Warp Yarn heads here! Warp Yarn hits "Automatic Spooler," which ties a Warp Yarn thread to the end of another thread flailing on top of Spooler Machine. Spooler then unspools Warp Yarn from Warp Bobbin... like... warp-speed fast!

STATION #11: Warp Yarn gets "warped." Spools from Spooler Machine get spooled on to Big Beam Cylinder. Big Beam Cylinder ensures desired number of Warp Yarn threads per inch, prepping Warp Yarn for the next station.

STATION #12: The horror... Warp Yarn gets "slashed." Machines collect Warp Yarn from Big Beam Cylinder, not only slashing and hacking, but also bathing Warp Yarn in starch. Stiff and slashed Warp Yarn is wound onto smaller Warp Beam.

STATION #13: Operation "Warp Tying" (aka Gettin' Ready to Weave). OCD Warp Tying Machine tediously rolls and threads and ties slashed Warp Yarn, making it easy peasy to keep those Warp Beams a-comin' – each connected to its respective "pattern," ensuring that weaving will be fast and furious.

STATION #14: LOOOOOOMS! Warp Yarn of all sizes gets its weave on in the Weave Room. Weave Room is soggy. Always.

STATION #15: More LOOOOOOMS. Yarns galore gettin' a weave. Shuttles at each end of LOOOOOOMS fly back and forth, carrying Filling Yarn (remember it?) into the mix. The weaving goes on and on... with automatic refills. Houston, we have Cloth.

STATION #16: "Waterproofing." Cloth Canvas is made perma-dry.

STATION #17: Waterproofed Canvas is made into stuff... ice tote bags; tents; tarps; swimming pools (for reals), etc.

All this chugged furiously along until 1956. We call that year, "The Beginning of the End" – unlike this article, which just... won't... stop...