

## **Mill Village and Factory: Voices** <sup>[1]</sup>

*These interviews were part of a larger collection of oral histories collected in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The interviewers were interested in capturing the experiences of the men and women who were part of the early textile industries in North Carolina at the turn of the twentieth century.*

*The interviews were the basis of* Like A Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World *published by University of North Carolina Press in 1987. You can learn more about this project and listen to more interviews at the* [Like A Family website](#) <sup>[2]</sup>.

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## **Flossie Durham**

**In 1976, at the age of ninety-three, Flossie Moore Durham spoke with Mary Frederickson and Brent Glass about her experiences working at a mill in Bynum, NC. Durham began work at age ten and stayed on the job until she married at eighteen years old. She remembers mill work fondly. The hours were long, but while at work, she felt like part of a community.**

Flossie Durham talks about beginning work at the mill in Bynum. [See transcript](#) <sup>[3]</sup>

Flossie Durham describes her first wages. [See transcript](#) <sup>[4]</sup>

Flossie Durham talks about her first day of spinning. [See transcript](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

Flossie Durham talks about her friends in the mill and the mill village as one big family. [See transcript](#) <sup>[6]</sup>

## Eula McGill

Eula McGill had to leave school and begin work in a textile mill at age fourteen. During the Great Depression, her family had moved to Alabama and McGill had become active in her union, eventually becoming a leader in the labor movement in Selma. In the early 1970s, McGill did three oral history interviews with the Southern Oral History Program, discussing her lifelong involvement in the southern textile mill world.

Eula McGill talks about her first job as a spinner. [See transcript](#) <sup>(7)</sup>

Eula McGill talks about her dislike of work and how she would get through her day. [See transcript](#) <sup>(8)</sup>

## Mary Thompson

In 1979, Mary Thompson sat down with a Southern Oral History Program interviewer to describe her experiences as a skilled mill worker and a union member in the textile industry. She faced obstacles as a single mother in an industry that offered little support for women in her position, but her upbringing prepared her to be a good worker and a strong advocate for workers' rights, and the communities of mill workers she shared her life with gave her strength as well.

Mary Thompson talks about drawing in. [See transcript](#) <sup>(9)</sup>

Mary Thompson talks about the gardens and animals her family kept in the mill village. [See transcript](#) <sup>(10)</sup>

Mary Thompson talks about going to work over the summers when she was 14. [See transcript](#) <sup>(11)</sup>

Mary Thompson talks about the lack of competition among coworkers. [See transcript](#) <sup>[12]</sup>)

Mary Thompson talks about company support for the churches in mill villages. [See transcript](#) <sup>[13]</sup>)

Mary Thompson describes the close-knit community of the mill village. Her husband, Carl, speaks as well. [See transcript](#) <sup>[14]</sup>)

Mary Thompson talks about workers singing on the job. [See transcript](#) <sup>[15]</sup>)

Mary Thompson talks about workplace pranks and practical jokes. [See transcript](#) <sup>[16]</sup>)

Mary Thompson and her husband Carl discuss injuries in the workplace. [See transcript](#) <sup>(171)</sup>

## Naomi Trammel

Naomi Sizemore Trammel grew up in the country but found it necessary to move to a nearby mill town at the age of ten when her parents died and she and her older sister had to support themselves. Trammel began a lifetime of textile mill labor in the spinning room of Victor Mill in Greer, South Carolina. Trammel began work as a child, but her job did not prevent her from having fun. In fact, for the duration of her employment in the mill industry, she recalls working at a comfortable pace and finding time for recreation. This interview offers a modicum of insights into mill work in early twentieth-century South Carolina and one mill worker's experience of some of the formative events of the era, including the Great Depression and the 1918 influenza epidemic.

Naomi Trammel discusses her first job spinning. [See transcript](#) <sup>(181)</sup>

Naomi Trammel talks about long hours and playing in the mill. [See transcript](#) <sup>(191)</sup>

Naomi Trammel discusses the work hours and pay in the spinning room. [See transcript](#) <sup>(201)</sup>

Naomi Trammel describes her work routine. [See transcript](#) <sup>(211)</sup>

Naomi Trammel explains how workers got lunch without having a lunch break. [See transcript](#) <sup>[22]</sup>)

Naomi Trammel talks about transferring to the weave room, but transferring back to avoid illness. [See transcript](#) <sup>[23]</sup>)

Naomi Trammel explains how she learned to weave from her husband at Poe Mill. [See transcript](#) <sup>[24]</sup>)

Naomi Trammel talks about entertainment in the mill village. [See transcript](#) <sup>[25]</sup>)

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#### Source (Interview) Citations:

*Flossie Moore Durham interviewed by Mary Frederickson and Brent Glass*, Bynum, North Carolina, September 2, 1976. Interview # H-66 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

*Eula McGill interviewed by Jacquelyn Hall*, Atlanta, Georgia, February 1976. Interviews #G-39 and G-40 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

*Carl and Mary Thompson interviewed by James Leloudis*, Charlotte, NC, July 9, 1979. Interview #H-182 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

*Naomi Trammel interviewed by Allen Tullos*, Greenville, South Carolina, March 25, 1980. Interview # H-258 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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[history](#) <sup>[26]</sup>

[industrialization](#) <sup>[27]</sup>

labor <sup>[28]</sup>

mill villages <sup>[29]</sup>

North Carolina <sup>[30]</sup>

North Carolina History <sup>[31]</sup>

Page <sup>[32]</sup>

Students <sup>[33]</sup>

Teachers <sup>[34]</sup>

women <sup>[35]</sup>

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