THE WOOLEN INDUSTRY OF PITTSFIELD

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Preface

The town of Pittsfield, Maine, was dependent on the wool industry for over ninety years. Much of its prosperity and life was greatly affected by the conditions of the mills. In fact it is safe to say that the woolen mills made and almost broke Pittsfield. The town had always relied on one industry, and when the last of the mills closed, Pittsfield suffered until a new industry could be brought in.

In this paper I will try to give an account of the history of these mills. Many of the records and pay books have long been destroyed. It was only by the use of the Pittsfield Advertiser, the local newspaper, and by the accounts of personal experiences of people who had once worked in the mills and were kind enough to relate these to me that this paper could be written. This paper presents the life and near death of a small Maine town.

The Beginnings of an Industry

The town of Pittsfield lies in the southeastern part of Somerset County, twenty miles north of Waterville and thirty-five miles south of Bangor in the State of Maine. The Maine Central Railroad passes through the Southeastern part of the town, with a station at East Pittsfield. From the shape of the town it appears to have been what was left after all the towns surrounding it had taken what land they wanted for their purposes.

The land was fertile and the farmers had for some time given much attention to fruit growing, consequently there were many fine apple orchards. Most of the streams were small except the Sebasticook River, beside which the principal industries of the town were located.

The town was formerly known as Plymouth Gore and was part of the Kennebec Purchase. Its first settlers arrived in 1794. On June 19, 1819, it was incorporated under the name, of Warsaw. Five years later the name was changed to Pittsfield in honor of William Pitts of Boston, who was then a major proprietor of land in the area. During the 19th century the small village grew and prospered until in 1868 it had a sawmill for long and short lumber, a grain-mill, and a large shingle-mill. An excellent private school, Maine Central Institute, had Just been built and the town supported three churches. The population in 1868 was

approximately 1,800 persons and the taxable evaluation, $518,515.[1]

One of the leaders of the town was Going Hawthorn who had moved to Pittsfield, from Gardiner, Maine, in 1832. In 1867 he purchased an old saw mill from Jesse Conners, a local store owner. He improved the mill and built a split-stone and cement dam across the Sebasticook River. In 1868 he added one set of woolen machinery to the mill and was able to persuade Robert Dobson of Lawrence, Massachusetts to purchase the mill.[2]

Robert Dobson had been in the woolen business all his life. He was born in Galashiels, Scotland, March 3, 1823. Both his father's and mother's families were connected with woolen mills and Robert grew up among the woolen mills of his native home. In 1865 Robert took his family to America after having worked himself up to the position of general manager for P.R. Sanderson of Galashiels who operated the largest tweed mills in Scotland. His first Job was with the Hodge Mills in Cherryfield, Massachusetts, owned by the Olney brothers (one of whom Was Richard Olney, Secretary of State to President McKinley). From there he went to Amesbury Corporation where he was employed for four years. Because of his knowledge of yarns he accepted a position to reorganize a company that planned to manufacture yarns and

[1]George J. Varney, A Gazetteer of the State of Maine (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1886) p. 448.

[2]Ibid.

cashmere near Bridgeport, Connecticut. Due to an argument among the stockholders, reorganization became impossible and he was forced to accept a position in Schaghitoke, New York. These mills were known throughout the United States as the “Model Mills of America,” and Dobson built his plants in Pittsfield according to these plans. He afterwards had charge of the shawl mills in Leeds, New York, owned by the Hunt-Tilness Company[3]. To raise money to purchase the mill from Going Hawthorn, Robert Dobson associated himself with a local man, William Davis and his elder son, William, to form the firm of Dobson, Davis and Company. He added another set of machinery and the mill went into operation on January 2, 1869.[4]

Expansion came rapidly for the Dobson, Davis Company. In 1873 the capitalization of the company was $85,000. The mill employed twenty-five men, thirty-two women and three children under sixteen. The wages paid for that year were $25,521.60. The average wage for the men per week was $9.60; women, $7.50; and children, $3.60. The mill operated during 1873 for 11 ½ months.[5] Also during this year the plant was expanded to four “sets.” In 1878 the building was extended eastward and two more “sets”

[3]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 16, 1896.

[4]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser. October 27, 1892.

[5]The Wealth and Industry of Maine for the year 1873 (Augusta: Sprague, Owen and Nash, 1873) p. 203.

added. In 1880 another addition was constructed on the west end of the mill with a brick foundation (the bricks being manufactured in Pittsfield); a dye house was erected and two more sets added bringing the grand total to eight “sets.”[6]

In 1876 Mr. Davis decided to sell his interest in the mill to Robert Dobson's son, Gordon, and his son-in-law, Dennison Walker. The new firm was called Robert Dobson and Company. The production of the mill was valued at approximately $125,000 per year.[7]

The woolen industry was not only growing in Pittsfield but in Hartland, Old Town, Sangerville, skowhegan, and other areas of Maine. Most of the people that owned these mills were from Scotland, and many of the owners had known each other from childhood. It was to become a standard practice during the late 1800's that if one mill got into trouble, the others would try to help it out.[8]

Most of the workers in the mills were also brought from Scotland. Their passage was paid for by the companies and the workers paid the amount back after they began work. In Pittsfield the mill owners now built a series of small homes behind the Pioneer mill for the workers. These homes consisted of two rooms on the first floor plus a shed in the back for wood and storage. Upstairs there was

[6]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser. October 27, 1892.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Personal interview, Mrs. Joseph Buker, March 21, 1969.

a small sleeping room. Outdoor plumbing was the order of the day. The town now became divided. The workers' area became known as “Little Scotland” while the area south and west of the mill became known as the “British” side or sector.[9]

The workers were paid from thirty cents to a dollar a day depending upon their skills. They went to work at six in the morning and worked until six or seven at night according to the business of the mill.

Every summer they were given two week vacations, unpaid, while the mills were closed for repairs. There were also several unscheduled shutdowns during the year due to breakdown or slack periods. Many persons started work in the mills at twelve or thirteen years of age. They were apprentices or water boys who carried water to the weavers and dyers who could not leave their jobs.[10]

The workers were able to get by on their wages for the price of goods at this time were reasonable. For instance the price of flour was $4.50 per barrel while clothing ranged from 75¢ for dresses, $2.00 for a pair of shoes and men's topcoats for $3.00.[11] Most meat and vegetables were seasonal and many lived on deer, duck and fish caught on weekends and vacations.

[9]Personal interview. Mr. William Wayness, February 24, 1969.

[10]Ibid.

[11]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 19, 1884.

In 1883 Dennison Walker disassociated himself from the Dobson firm and decided to build his own mill across the river from the Pioneer Mill. Subscriptions were taken in the town at a minimum of twenty dollars to finance the construction. A committee was formed consisting of H.A. Pooler and R.A. Conant, and a notice placed in the local paper advertising the fact of this stock subscription.[12]

The subscription was met easily, and construction began by July of 1884. The building was designed by one Proctor of Waterville, and architectural work was handled by Preston Hersey of Pittsfield, a man who was to build most of the mills in town.[13]

Building such a plant was difficult work and many accidents took place.

> Ira F. Towle placed his hand on a beam which was being driven down with a sledge hammer just in time to receive a blow with full force on his left hand smashing the little finger badly, although the doctor has some hope of saving it. Allie Noble fell from a staging to the ground, a distance of some twelve feet. He was shaken up, but his injuries were not serious. Cyrus Noble also fell and injured his spine and one leg so badly that he is now home unable to leave. Henry Whitman had two fingers of his left hand cut off in a buzz planer at the planing mill.[14]

Even Preston Hersey the foreman was not immune from accident as he had the toes of his left foot severely

[12]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 19, 1884.

[13]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 24, 1884.

[14]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 21, 1884.

jammed by dropping a large timber on them.[15]

Despite all the problems the new mill went up rapidly, and the dedication for the mill was set for October 3, 1884. The town planned a huge, evening of celebration. Andrews Orchestra, a ten piece group from Bangor, was hired to play at the Town Hall, and an oyster and pastry supper was provided before the ball. The orchestra was unable to play on the date so the event was put off until the following week.[16] As the local newspaper described the gala; "A good time was had by all."

The mill was christened the Maple Grove Woolen Mill as the mill was surrounded by these trees. When it went into production in December of 18-84 it had only two sets of machinery and manufactured flannel. Production was limited as the market was somewhat depressed at time and expansion of the facilities was still continuing.[17] By April the mill was running full time. It had four sets of cards and thirteen looms with a capacity of thirteen more looms. The wool came largely from the West with much of it coming from California. It produced blue and, scarlet flannel of fine quality. The mill was heated throughout by steam, no fires being used except in the boiler room which was located in a brick wing Joining the main structure.[18]

[15]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 28, 1884.

[16]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, September 18, 1884.

[17]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, January 8, 1885.

[18]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 23, 1885.

Fire seemed to be the great fear of the mill owners, as they employed a night watchman to guard the property after the employees had gone home. A force pump was located in the wheel-house and had attachments for two hoses that could be put into action with a few minutes notice, and pipelines were laid to other available points and attached hydrants. All fire fighting equipment was located outside the mill to keep the chances of water being cut off at a minimum. The many windows afforded an opportunity to flood every floor.[19]

The building was three stories high, each story being one big room. Stairs and an elevator were located in a tower on the side of the building. The cost of the building and the share of the water rights was $20,000, while the machinery was worth $15,000.[20] Most of the funds had been subscribed by the town.

The last main addition was added to the mill in October, 1885, when a new fifty-five horse power engine was added and an extension built to house it. The engine was designed to be used only when the water was so low that It could not turn the waterwheel that operated the mill ordinarily. Nine new sets of cards were also added. Most of the new additions were financed through loans.[21]

[19]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 23, 1885.

[20]Ibid.

[21]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, October 29, 1885.

The Pioneer Mill also took precautions against fire at about the same time by fitting the mill with automatic sprinklers. A tower was also erected to hold water and another steam pump added to take the place of the original one in case of emergency. A hydrant was placed above the mill in front of Robert Dobson's house to protect the house from fire.[22]

In order to keep workers of his mill, Walker embarked on a large building program of houses around his mill. The majority of these were double tenements. About six were erected along Detroit Avenue, a road leading east from the village. The rents were low and the better ones were rented to the overseers of the mill.[23] As Robert Dobson had done, Walker located his own residence next to the mill. What made this house different was it had one of the first indoor bathrooms in the town. A huge tub was placed in the bathroom along with other conveniences. Hot and cold water was furnished from the boilers and pumps at the mill. Pipes were laid under the ground to the house, and steam heat was also supplied by the mill.[24]

Wages had Improved since 1873. The average wage for a skilled male worker was $1.50 per day while the unskilled

[22]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 8, 1885.

[23]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 3,1886.

[24]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 22, 1886.

made $1.20 per day. Women who made up a large part of the Dobson Company earned $1.15 for skilled Jobs and $1.05 per day for unskilled Jobs. The value of the Dobson plant had also risen from $85,000 in 1873 to $125,000 in 1883.[25]

In 1886 the Pioneer Mill, because of water problems during the past summer, added an engine room to the west end of the mill. It housed a Putnam Automatic Cut Off Engine which cost $2,500. The engine was huge with a balance wheel eight feet in diameter, thirty-two inches wide and weighing nearly six tons. It was capable of running machinery in the mill, and the new boiler was capable of furnishing steam for the engine and all other machinery. It took nearly eight hundred tons of coal to run the plant for the eight months of operation.[26]

Four new homes were also built by the Dobson Company in "Scotland". The houses measured twenty-four feet by twenty-six feet and had a shed in the rear fourteen feet by fifteen feet. When the houses were completed it brought the total of company-owned tenements to seventeen.[27]

The products of the Pioneer Mill for the year 1886 were 507,560 yards of three quarter inch goods. It required 450,000 pounds of clean wool to manufacture this amount of

[25]Statistics of Industry and Finances of Maine for the Year 1883 (Augusta; Sprague and Son, 10837 p. 164.

[26]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 2, 1886.

[27]Ibid.

goods.[28] The amount of raw wool needed to provide this amount of clean wool amounted to 800,000 pounds. Most of this raw wool came from foreign countries.

Two events occurred in 1886 which show the strength of big business at this time. The majority of woolen mill owners met at Castle Harmony, a local resort in Harmony, Maine, to form a permanent organization known as the Maine Woolen Manufacturers Association.[29] At Dexter a group of weavers struck for better pay and were immediately fired. A black list was now passed around to all the mill owners of the Association giving the names of the "trouble makers" who had been fired from the mills.[30] In the years to come the Association also rose to challenge the tariff policies of the Federal Government, and to keep the conditions of their employees where they wanted them to remain.

On May 2, 1887, a freshet occurred on the Sebasticook. Hard rain had fallen in the state during the past few days the streams and rivers began to flood. The mill yard at the Pioneer Mill flooded and the employees of the mill requested to work Saturday to make up for the time lost the previous Monday. Some of the weavers refused and were dismissed.[31]

[28]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, January 13, 1887.

[29]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 10, 1886.

[30]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 19, 1886.

[31]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 19, 1887,

The Pioneer Mill now began to expand. A new four-story addition, seventy-two feet by fifty-seven feet, was built to accompany twelve "sets" of machinery. The building was made of hard pinewood timbers, and hardwood floors. A building was constructed to house a new 125 horsepower boiler.[32] A machine shop was added, and power for this shop was furnished by an endless belt which ran from the wheel of the old grist mill Included in the original mill. In the machine shop was an iron planer, the first in Pittsfield.

In the summer the old picker house, a twenty feet by thirty feet building, was demolished. Its demolition nearly caused severe injuries to the men working on it.[34]

Robert Dobson also erected a bridge behind the mill, across the Sebasticook River.[35] This bridge connected "Scotland" with the mill, and instead of having to walk a half a mile to get to work the workers came across the Bridge.

[32]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, January 19, 1888.

[33] News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 19, 1888.

[34]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 19, 1888. Mott Mersey, Eben Waldron and two. others, after removing the wooden roof covering the brick arches, were engaged in taking off the latter sections from one end. All four were standing on one of the brick arches. The sides of the building suddenly fell inward raising the arch hard, then all coming down together, men, bricks and timbers. No one was seriously injured. Hersey had a long cut over his right eye, and was otherwise scratched and bruised. The others escaped with only slight scratches.

[35]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, November 14,1889.

The Maple Grove Woolen Mill, still concerned about fire, built a four-story tower to house a large water tank and installed a gravity feed sprinkler system.[36] The Maple Grove Fire Company was organized with W. C. Lucas as its first captain.[37] A new office building was erected on the east end of the mill while the old one was turned into a cloth room.[38]

The Robert Dobson Company made its largest expansion soon after (and, in my opinion, its greatest mistake). For years Robert Dobson had dreamed of building another mill in Pittsfield. It was decided to build the new mill at the Douglas Dam site. Work on the project started in December of 1891 with the stone blocks being quarried for the foundation.[39]

The company could not afford to build the mill on their own, so a subscription for construction was begun. On Monday afternoon, March 7, 1892, a meeting was held at the Masonic Hall anteroom to discuss the matter. D. E. Vickery was chosen chairman and the great Pittsfield attorney J. W. Manson elected secretary. William Dobson, son of the founder and now proprietor of the Pioneer Mill, explained the details. The firm would take $20,000 of

[36] News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 16. 1887.

[37]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 11, 1889.

[38]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 10, 1889.

[39]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 11,1891.

the stock, and Dobson had received assurances from capitalists in Boston and other cities that they would subscribe at least $40,000 more to the stocks. A subscription committee was chosen consisting of Oramel Murray, W. R. Hunnewel J. P. Connor, Emery Whitten, F. D. Jenkins, William Dobson, D. M. Parks, C. E. Vickery, H. C; Pooler and I. H. Lancey, all local business and professional men.[40]

It was proposed to (build a mill large enough to accommodate eight "sets" of cards; to put in four "sets" at first and later if business warranted to put in the other four "sets". The Dobsons and their associates were to put up $60,000, and the citizens of Pittsfield the remaining $40,000. A corporation was organized with a capital stock of $150,000.[41]

At first the response to the subscription was slow, so to prod the people into action the Dobson threatened to withdraw the offer. This apparently frightened the people for by April 14 the town had raised $25,000 and planned to raise the rest the following week. The reason for this sudden surge of community spirit was that other towns such as Newport were interested in the mill, and the thought of Pittsfield losing her prestige to a surrounding town hurt more than the loss of money from a Scotsman's pocketbook.

[40]News item In the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 10, 1892.

[41]News item In the Pittsfield Advertiser, March 10, 1892.

William Dobson now went to Augusta where he was able to raise $11,000 in a few hours, and as the money began to roll in the idea of a bigger mill began to grow. The idea of a twelve "set" mill circulated through the town. The Pioneer Mill was a twelve "set" mill and employed three hundred hands. As the idea grew more people wanted to subscribe, but as the Advertiser stated, "our citizens all had a good chance to invest, and, if any now desire to join, and find it too late, they certainly cannot blame the soliciting committee."[42]

After two weeks William Dobson returned to Pittsfield laving raised the required amount of money. The subscriptions now totaled $157,500. The large stockholders felt it best to start with $160,000 and while many people wanted to buy more stock the subscription was closed. The break-down in round figures of money raised was; Pittsfield, $63,000; Boston, $23,000; Waterville, $3,000; Bath, $5,000; Augusta, $20,000; and Bangor, $25,000.[43]

On the local scene the businessmen raised the following amounts. Robert Dobson $20,00.0; A. P. McMaster $5,000; F. O. Jenkins $3,000; J. F. Connor, J. C. Connor, F. H. Lancey, J. W. Manson $2,000; G. H. Hunter, N. L. Perkins,

[42]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 21, 1892.
[43]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser. May 12, 1892.

Dr. Drake, the Haskills, and Emman B. Longley $1,000. Sixty-eight other people contributed lesser amounts.[44]

One hundred thousand dollars went Into the building of the mill while the extra amount was used in the purchase of the Douglas Dam and the property of the water power company. An electrical system was put in the mill and other additions added as William Dobson saw fit. One of these additions was a new street called Waverly Avenue.[45] The avenue was to run from North Main Street to the new mill, a distance of a half mile. A town meeting was held which voted $5,000 for a new bridge to cross the Sebasticook from the west end of the Park's estate to meet Waverly Avenue. It was used to accommodate people coming from Hartland and other western areas who had business at the mill, and would save over two miles of travel.[46]

Events now moved rapidly. A large boarding house, was built at once near the site of the mill and numerous other buildings began to go up to accommodate the workers. The new mill was to add at least a thousand people to the population of the town, an increase of almost 50 percent.[47]

On June 20, 1892, a meeting was held at the law office of J. W. Manson. At this time the stockholders

[44]Sanger M. Cook, Pittsfield on the Sebasticook (Bangor: Furbush-Roberts Printing Co., Inc., 1966) p. 75.
[45]News item In the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 5, 1892.
[46]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 5, 1912.
[47]Ibid.

ratified the increase in capital stock to $160,000 and accepted the resignation of officers. The number of officers was then increased from three to seven. Robert Dobson was elected President, Gardiner Cushman of Boston, Edward Blake of Banger, Oscar Holway of Augusta, and Robert Dobson, William Dobson, J. F. Connor, and F. O. Jenkins, Directors. J. W. Manson was elected Secretary-Treasurer.[48] The Board of Directors consisted of those men who had invested the largest amount of money in the new operation.

Ground was broken for the construction of the mill Tuesday, July 2, 1892, at 7:30 in the morning. Robert Dobson threw out the first shovelful of dirt at the north-east corner in the presence of a large crowd of workmen and others. He then made a short address to the onlookers. He said that this additional industry was to be a great factor in the future of the town, and he hoped the products of the Waverly Mill would become as well known throughout the world as were the celebrated Waverly novels from which the mill derived its name.[49]

The mill was 298 feet long, 60 feet wide and three stories high. A wing sixty feet by seventy feet ran south from the western end of the main building, and another, wing, sixty feet by sixty feet, east from the southern end of the west wing - forming a roomy court. The wings were only two

[48]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser. June 23, 1892

[49]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser. July 4, 1892.

stories in height. The wheel house and other buildings were additional and also of brick.[50]

Some idea of the major undertaking of such a project may be seen in the amount of materials used; 1,800,000 bricks, 600,000 feet of lumber and a large amount of granite in the foundation. It would require 350,000 feet of four-inch spruce and 65,000 feet of one-inch hardwood for floors, and upwards of 150,000 feet of hard pine.[51]

W. H. Snow of Lockwood, Green, and Company was the supervising engineer; Preston Hersey in charge of the construction. M. C. Poster of the firm M. C. Poster and Son had the contract and was ground superintendent. The excavation for the eastern end of the mill was quite extensive. The crew was gradually" enlarged, "and things will hum for the next few months", said the local newspaper in the commentary on the building.[52]

The contract provided that the roof of the new building had to be on not later than the first of December and the buildings completed by February.

The mill was located on what had been for years known as the Pecker farm on the east side of the river, and the farm house was already opened as a boarding house for the

[50]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 4, 1892,
[51]Ibid.
[52]Ibid.

men. "No pleasanter, lighter, or healthier location for a large factory and its surroundings can be found anywhere. High and live is the site and it seems by nature to have been designed for the purpose to which it is now being put. A park is to be laid out and perpetually dedicated to the public." Unfortunately the future park never took shape, but the location of the factory did live up to its expectations.

Robert Dobson now began to build two two-dwelling houses with two more planned for the fall.[53]

The foundation was started in July and a spur track from the Sebasticook and Moosehead Railroad was put in to handle the six hundred freight cars that were needed to haul the materials for construction.[54] By August the work on the foundation was nearly completed and two steam and a hand derrick were in use to build the foundation and chimney, which was some twelve feet high by this time.[55]

The building fever now spread to the residents of Pittsfield. The Towle brothers completed two new homes on Waverly Avenue and began a third one for Justin Jackson.

[53]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 4, 1892.
[54]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 28, 1892.
[55]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 18, 1892.

Further down the street a Mr. Basford from Detroit, Maine, began a house, and across the street Jason Pinnell was ready to build one for a Mr. Tibbetts as soon as the foundation was prepared.

On September 29 the chimney was ready and the society editor of the paper handled it this way.

> Mrs. Wilbert Quinn went to the top of the tall chimney at the Waverly Mill, 100 feet high, and triumphantly laid the first brick. Mrs. Quinn showed herself to be a lady of nerves as she displayed no trace of uneasiness under circumstances that would appall most women, not to say a few men. Contractor Poster at once presented her a check for ten dollars as a memento of the occasion.[57]

The walls of the new mill began to rise, and as the cold weather of fall set in the crew began to take more than coffee and tea to stay warm. One Saturday night a large amount of spirits was consumed and over forty men on Foster's crew failed to report for work Monday morning.[58] The local chapter of the W.C.T.U. rose to the occasion and for the next few months the evils of "devil rum" were the subject of church sermons and pot-bellied stove discussions in the Pittsfield area.

By December the walls were up, floor beams in place the smaller buildings almost completed.[59] As December progressed the roof was tarred and the boiler put into place.

[57]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser. September 29, 1892.
[58]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser. October 20, 1892.
[59]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 8, 1892.

First steam was raised in the boilers by January and the water wheels set into place.[60] By February the contracts for the shafting, lighting and piping were let and it looked as if the completion date for the new mill would be met.

The mill was completed by April and the end result was slightly different than had been originally planned. The main mill was 298 feet and eight inches long and sixty feet wide. On the west side of the tower was the "picker building fifty by forty feet, three stories high. South of the picker house was the dye house, fifty by seventy-four feet and two stories high. Running easterly from the picker house to the chimney was the boiler and heating house. The chimney was eleven feet square at the base and one hundred feet high. The wheel house was thirty by forty feet and rested upon solid ledge. It contained two Hercules water wheels.[61]

The mill and all connecting buildings were built brick with stone trimmings. All buildings with the exception of the tower were covered with flat roofs coated with tar and gravel. The tower was seventy-nine feet high and contained a 10,000 gallon tank to supply the automatic sprinklers. There were also two wooden tanks of 1,500 gallons each, one to supply the sinks and the other for wool and cloth scouring purposes. The tower also contained

[60]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, January 18, 1893.

[61]News item In the Pittsfield Advertiser. April 11, 1893.

a spiral staircase connecting the floors and provided a fireproof stairway. There was another fireproof stairway at the northeast corner of the mill. Automatic sliding fire doors were provided on all inner doors to prevent the spread of fire from room to room.

The floors were covered with four-inch spruce plank covered with maple flooring. A part of the first floor, where the wet finishing was done, was laid in concrete. About 200 feet of the easterly end of the first floor was to be used for finishing purposes; next on the same floor was the machine shop 20 by 46 feet, and that part between the machine shop and picker house was used for storage of wool. The dye house floor was laid with slits in the floor for the water to drip through. Underneath was concrete. A shaft tunnel, 13 by 48 feet, 7 feet high, covered with bush arches, ran from the wheel house under the dye house to the sheave pit.

The second floor was devoted to weaving and the third to carding and spinning.

The mill was heated by a Sturtevant steam hot blast apparatus. It consisted of brick subterranean flues connecting with upright flues similar to chimneys. Through these the hot air was forced into the rooms by a rapidly revolving fan seven feet in circumference. The shafting was put in by Jones & Laughlins, Ltd., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the Mather Company, Boston, put in the electric lighting plant. The automatic sprinkler,

steam piping, and all the water piping was supplied by the General Fire Extinguisher Company of Providence, Rhode Island. The fire pump service consisted of one Hercules power pump and one steam underwriters pump furnished by the Dean Steam Pump Company of Holyoke, Massachusetts; two Hercules water wheels, furnished by Holyoke Machine Company, Worcester; boilers by the Portland Company, Portland, Maine.

The textile machinery was furnished by the following; cards and machinery for dressing and spooling by Cleveland machine Works, Worcester, Massachusetts, mules by Johnson and Bassett, Worcester, Massachusetts; extractor by W. H. Rolhurst & Sons, Troy, New York; for pulling and scouring by J. Hunter Machine Company, North Adams, Massachusetts; cloth dryer, by Kenyon Brothers, Raritan, New Jersey; gigs, brushes and shears, by Parks and Wooson, Springfield, Vermont; cloth press by Miller Press and Machine Company, Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

The wool pickers were located on the second floor of the picker house and the stock was conveyed by the Sturtevant system of blowers to the third ready for the cards. The same system also conveyed the colored wool from the extractors to the wool dryer. All in all this mill must have been constructed in as modern and safe a fashion as any of its time.

The mill was to commence production in June and manufacture fancy cassimires [a smooth, twilled wool fabric] and Scotch cheviot [a heavy, rough-napped plain or twill fabric of coarse wool or worsted]. The

mill started with four sets of cards and thirty looms. The cards and spinning had to be run extra time to keep up with the looms. Employment began with eighty hands and the owners expected to increase this to two hundred when ten more sets of cards were introduced into the mill. According to the builders of the mill "it was one of the most modern in the world."[62]

In conjunction with the opening of the mill the town held a grand two-day celebration. The first night a group of young ladies were secured from Old Town by William Dobson to give a program of "amateur minstrelsy" supplemented by readings of three talented Pittsfield ladies.[63] The account of a local historian deserves quotation.

> The concert and ball the following evening was a magnificent affair – one of the finest ever to be put on in Pittsfield. Special trains brought guests from all parts of the state. Businessmen from Boston and representatives from nearly every woolen mill in Maine were present. Even though there was a snow storm of considerable proportions early in the evening, it did not dampen the enthusiasm of the crowd that made their way to the mill by private teams or by D. E. Fiske's five barges. The interior of the mill was bathed in a flood of electric light. The floor was in charge of T. G. Lancey, with H. F. Libby and E. M. Shaw as assistants. At 8:30 Pullen's Orchestra mounted the platform in the center of the immense room and played five concert numbers. Dancing began at 9:30 and 130 couples appeared for the grand march led by S. R. Haines and Miss Hattie Dobson. The order of dances consisted of eighteen numbers.[64]

[62]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser. April 11, 1893.
[63]Ibid.
[64]Cook, op. cit., p. 76-78.

A supper was served at twelve to over six hundred people. The corps of eighty waiters was led by D. M. Parks.[65]

A shifting of the office building and the erection of a new one now took place at the Robert Dobson Company. The old office building at the Pioneer Mill was moved up to Waverly Mill to be used as a superintendent's office.[66] Robert now built himself a new building of Queen Anne architecture. It measured forty by forty and was built by Preston Hersey.[67] The other problem that arose was that the whistles on the two mills sounded alike so a new one was placed on the Pioneer Mill. "Now the Waverly Mill has its own distinctive toot."[68]

[65]Cook, op. cit. p. 76-78.

[66]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 20, 1893.

[67]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 16, 1892.

[68]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, February 23, 1893.

Depression and Doldrums

While a bright future seemed to be the prospect for his town, fate had other ideas. Less than a month after the opening of the Waverly Mill it was shut down entirely and the Dobson Company gave notice to the employees that they planned to shut down one-half of the Pioneer Mill after August 18. The other half of the mill was to be run shorter tours until the situation improved. Dobson answered the people of Pittsfield's questions by saying that he "firmly believes that relief is to come speedily and it is evident to all that a conservative course now on the part of the mills is better for the entire community than running full time, which under the circumstances might result in large loss to the proprietors and perhaps a permanent shut down. The pinch does not arise from lack of orders, but scarcity of money throughout the country."[69] The mills of course were caught up in the Panic of 1893.

Dennison Walker did not seem affected by this money shortage. His mill continued to run full-time and he and his wife left for a trip to California. Upon his return to the east he stopped off in Westerly, Rhode Island, and made an oral agreement to purchase a nine "set" mill.[70] This purchase looked good at first but later proved to be his undoing.

[69] News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 17,1893.

[70]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 8, 1892.

By January of 1894 the woolen industry in Pittsfield was languishing. Most of the machinery in the mills lay idle and the Robert Dobson Company now announced a reduction in wages effective February 1. The reason the Company gave was that the other manufacturers throughout the country had also reduced their wages and had placed goods upon the market on the basis of such reduction. They had to do likewise in order to compete. They assured the town that they would continue to employ all their old hands.[71]

The town found itself in serious financial difficulties. Many were unemployed, and in order to keep hands that would be needed at the mills in case of a sudden upswing in production local stores were forced to issue credit slips. In turn they had to buy their merchandise from the wholesalers on credit and they slowly slipped into deep trouble. To further compound the problem the Dobson Company now demanded that the Waverly Woolen Company be given a ten-year tax exemption. The town fathers fought this measure to the Superior Court in Skowhegan for the Waverly Mill was one of the main sources of revenue for the town. The powerful Maine Woolen Manufacturers Association backed up the Dobson Company, and due to their powerful lobby the Dobson Company won the suit.[72]

At the Maple Grove Mill the weavers went on strike claiming that their wages before the cut down should be paid.

[71]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, January 18,1894.

[72]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, September 21, 1893.

Dennison Walker explained that this was impossible due to a shortage of orders. The weavers mulled the problem over during the weekend and then returned to work Monday morning.[73]

Throughout the remainder of 1894 the depression continued. At the annual meeting .of the stockholders of the Waverly Woolen Company in February of 1895 the company announced that it had managed to stay in the black and the directors felt that prospects for the coming year looked good.[74] The depression unfortunately did not let up and many of the mill hands now left town to seek jobs. Local merchants were left holding credit slips, foremost of the workers' had nothing that could be foreclosed upon in order to receive payment.

At the stockholders meeting of 1896 the company again issued a favorable report concerning the future of the Waverly Mill and voted that the Dobsons should if they saw fit increase the machinery of the mill to full capacity, Apparently they did not see fit to do so.

Dennison Walker was now in serious trouble. He had made only partial payment on his mill in Westerly, Rhode Island, and due to the national depression that was occurring his creditors demanded full payment. His Maple Grove Mill

[73]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 18, 1894.

[74]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, February 21, 1895.

[75]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser. February 20, 1896.

was assigned to his brother Joseph Walker, and the mill in Westerly was leased to another group. The income was used to defray the interest costs on the balance.[76]

People in the town now became quite alarmed for if this mill closed, approximately one third of the labor force would be out of work. Two weeks later Walker's creditors met in Boston and the local editor reported that "the meeting was a most amicable one in every respect, and all were disposed to extend every courtesy and accommodation at this time."[77] Walker was loaded with an impossible debt that finally forced him to sell the mill. Courtesy and accommodation could not save him.

The second tragedy to strike was the death of Robert Dobson in April. Dobson who had not been feeling well for the past few months went to Hot Springs, Virginia, for the cure. On his way home he died of Bright's Disease.[78]

The remainder of 1896 was quiet. The mill's production was cut back even more during the summer. For a mill to get orders samples had to be sent to the buyer for his approval. Samples were made and sent to the buyers in New York City for approval for fall production. These samples were rejected and with lack of orders the Pioneer

[76]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 16, 1896.
[77]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser. April 30, 1896.
[78]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 16, 1896; he was buried in the Pittsfield Cemetery where his grave stone remains one of the more prominent in the cemetery.

Mill was forced to cut back. By October, the Pioneer went on an eight-hour shift and twenty-five looms were stopped, cutting the capacity of the mill by two-thirds.[79]

As the country began to come out of the depression in 1897 large quantities of raw wool began to arrive in Pittsfield. In the first two weeks of January, twenty-five car loads were received with more on the way.[80] Word spread through the nearby towns that the mills were hiring and people began to filter back to Pittsfield. "Little Scotland" which had been somewhat vacated during the past three years began to fill up as more people were brought from Scotland to continue work on the mills. This immigration differed greatly from the trend of workers in the rest of the state. Most of the other mills had French-Canadian workers.[81] The reason for Pittsfield's differences was that Robert Dobson made several visits to his homeland to recruit cousins and other distant relations to come and work in his mills. Over the years immigration had snowballed and many families came to work in Pittsfield and other nearby mills. The adjustment was made more easily knowing one had friends in the area.

[79]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, October 11, 1896.

[80]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, January 28, 1897.

[81]Arthur Harrison Cole, The American Wool Manufacture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926) p. 115.

In February the Joint Committee of Labor from the State Legislature arrived to inspect the mills. Led by the Honorable A. H. Burse of Pittsfield, a member of the Committee, the members were led on a tour by William and Gordon Dobson. They dined at the Lancey House and returned to Augusta on the afternoon train. Before departure they expressed themselves as very much pleased with the appearance of the thriftiness among the labor population in town.

In August an unfortunate accident occurred at the Waverly Mill. A pair of work horses owned by Charles O. Burns were at work on a scraper excavating earth near the flume on the west end of the mill. The work involved the horses being driven near the edge of the wall. In hauling out, the scraper caught on a rock throwing the near horse off its feet into the flume, dragging the other horse on top of her. The water in the flume was eighteen to twenty feet deep. The horses thrashed around desperately entangling themselves in the harnessing. One of them drowned before the water could be drawn off. A derrick was rigged and the horses hoisted out. The live horse lay in the sling very quietly while he was swung over the wall "'til he made things lively by starting a 2:40 gate" suspended in mid air. His struggles broke the chain and he came down on top of the wall, he would have gone over the wall had not the crowd rushed

[82]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 19, 1897.

in and pulled him back. One workman had his left hand quite badly injured by being caught in the ropes of the windlass.[83]

The last two years of the nineteenth century proved to be very poor for both the Dobson interests and the Maple Grove Mill. Gordon Dobson began to take more trips to Boston, New York and Washington, D.C., in search of new business, but little was found. In the early summer of 1898 the mills were on short time again and continued this way on and off until July. The Pioneer Mill shut down completely with the Maple Grove and Waverly soon following[84]. Most operators began to give up hope. The industry had now reached its low point and when and if production would begin again was unknown. In August a few orders came in but not enough to get the mills rolling.[85] To keep some hands employed the Dobson Company erected a building on the island between the bridges connecting the Pioneer Mill to North Main Street. The building was two stories and occupied by Hersey and Delano who were to run a machine shop. It was hoped that a foundry would be added later.[86]

With little money coming in the town now decided to raise the taxes of the Dobson Company. Gordon and William

[83]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 19, 1897.
[84]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 9, 1898.
[85]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 28, 1898.
[86]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, November 17, 1898.

Dobson sued for an abatement before the County Commissioners, saying that the appraisal of the mills were more than they could possibly be sold for.[87] An abatement was granted.

The Maple Grove Mill was finally closed in 1899. Dennison Walker, hard hit by the depression and heavily in debt due to his purchases of the Westerly Mills, was forced to go through bankruptcy. His mill in Pittsfield was sold to Fred Smith. Smith had started as a bookkeeper for the Robert Dobson Company in 1892 and stayed with them as paymaster until 1900. He bought Walker's Mill in partnership with Ernest Maxfield and T.B. Knowles,[88] and it now became known as the Riverside Mill. Walker quietly moved his family from Pittsfield to New Hampshire where he managed a five-set mill. Later he went bankrupt and retired to a farm in Massachusetts. While at the farm, he went blind in his late seventies and died in poverty at the age of ninety.

In retrospect it was unfortunate that Walker could not have been able to hang on for one more year. 1900 brought with it new prosperity. The Riverside Mill began to boom with orders that required the mill to operate day and night so that the mill could make a May 1 deadline.

A new self-regulating engine plant was introduced. The

[87]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 22, 1898.
[88]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 29, 1918.

plant operated all twenty-four looms day and night and employed one hundred men. The mill adopted a policy to hire none that were not of local origin. Apparently they had some trouble with "bum weavers."

Four of these wandering workers began work for the mill and a few evenings later a messenger arrived at Smith's house with a note that the looms had been shut down, and the workers felt that the rates being paid were not fair. The other owners were now notified and they hurried to the mill. A short conference was held with the workers and they were informed that the rates would not be changed and it was for them to decide if they wanted to continue working. The four "bum weavers" were notified to don their coats and get out, the other help returned to their jobs, "and harmony prevailed."[89]

These "bum weavers" were independent agents and had no union connection whatsoever. Unionism at this time was almost nonexistent. A small group in Lawrence, Massachusetts and Woonsocket, Rhode Island had united into a special and distinct "trade" union and were admitted into the United Textile Workers, but this is as far as unions went in this time period. The reasons for little unionism was the short stay of many workers and their replacement by recent arrivals from abroad.[90]

[89]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, February 1, 1900.
[90]Arthur Harrison Cole, The American Wool Manufacturer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), p. 124.

The company also informed the town that they planned to expand the mill and when offered a tax abatement, until they were financially capable, they issued this statement, "No, we do not ask for an abatement of our taxes, the most we ask for is a nominal value placed upon our plant until we shall have got firmly established then we will be willing to pay our proportionate part of the tax whatever that may be."[91] One assumes the Dobsons simply observed this exchange politely.

The Pioneer Mill also began to introduce advanced machinery. A new system of conveying wool from the picker house to the mill was added and a system of blowers was installed.[92]

Not only did production improve but the treatment toward the worker changed. Saturday was payday at the mills and the workers instead of picking up a check at the end of the day got paid in cash during the afternoon. As assistant from the bookkeeper's office would go to each room with a large tray. On the tray were piles of money. Each worker had his own pile and it was given to him.

The Pioneer Mill which employed the most men had a payroll of $3,900 during the peak season. The men were paid bi-monthly. The Riverside Mill paid $2,500 for two weeks' work or about $25 per person.[93] The highest paid

[91]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, February 1, 1900.
[92]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 5, 1900.
[93] News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, March 20, 1902.

persons working in the mill were the overseers of the various parts of the mill. They earned three dollars a day or thirty-six dollars for every two weeks.

This money went far for some because prices were still reasonable in relation to these salaries. Clothing was somewhat inexpensive. Ladies' cloaks ranged from $2.98 to $8.00; night robes, 98¢; flannel, 3 ¾ cents per yard; and dress goods were 23¢ per yard. Large size linen towels were 19¢. Suits for the men ran from $3.00 to $8.00. Food was also about the same. A barrel of flour cost $4.00; a pound of tea, 45¢; a dozen cans of peas, 60¢. Beef ran 12¢ per pound, while other meats were available from the Pittsfield Produce Market. Pork was 6 ½ cents per pound, fowls 8 to 12¢ per pound, English herring scaled and packaged 20¢ per box. Salt was 20 cents for a fourteen pound bag.[94]

Paternalism on the part of the owners ran high. For the bosses of the mills, the Dobson family made sure that they had the best of rents. Dr. T. N. Drake's house was purchased, papered, painted, and bathrooms added and let to James Dodd, superintendent of the weave room at the Pioneer Mill.[95] Contractor Bowman had the work of remodeling the large double tenement on Park Street. The

[94]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 20, 1902.
[95]item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 25, 1903.

cellar was extended full length and a new cement bottom put in. New chimneys were built and rooms on both floors converted to bathrooms. Other conveniences were added to make them the best tenements in town. The upper tenement was occupied by Mr. Bedwell, the boss finisher at the Pioneer Mill and the lower floor occupied by Mr. Cathcart, boss dresser at the same mill.[96] Luxury decreased as one went down the labor scale. The several cottage houses located in "little Scotland" occupied by the mill operatives were shingled and received a new coat of paint. In the past they had been painted the color of the Pioneer Mill but the new shade was a slate color.[97]

The mills also sponsored baseball teams. The games were well attended on Sunday afternoon and the spectators sometimes let their enthusiasm get the best of them. Over the years the umpires supplied by the home team had life and limb threatened for some of their calls. It was generally their own townspeople who did the threatening. If a team got beaten too badly or did not like the officiating they did not show up for the next game. The local papers then wrote editorials on the poor sportsmanship of that team, or if it was the local team why it was a good idea not to show up.

[96]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 13, 1903.

[97]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 21, 1907.

The owners also looked after their own.

> A small riot in the weave room of the Pioneer Woolen Mill caused considerable excitement Friday and in the general matter of discussion among the employees of the mills. Two of the young weavers got into a wordy argument which ended in a rough and tumble fight. In the excitement a number of friends of the combatants got into a mixup and for a short time, the event made things lively and interesting for the numerous hands employed in the room. Some of the principals in the fight are minus front teeth and several eyes are dressed in deep mourning as a result of the blows which were struck. Most of those who were directly concerned in the trouble were rounded up in the mill office and severely reprimanded for the disturbance while the two weavers who started the trouble were taken before Judge Drake to answer the charge of disturbing the peace and affray. Both partners promised to let the matter drop where it stood and not attempt to settle the difficulty more fully, and on the promise of good behavior in the future, the judge let them off with a reprimand and cost which were settled.[98]

Had they not been employed by the mill they would have been shipped off to the county jail.

During this period the Robert Dobson Company had mild corporate shakeup. At the annual meeting of the Waverly Woolen Company A. P. MacMasters was elected President; Gordon Dobson, Treasurer; J. W. Hanson, Clerk. Directors were A. P. MacMasters, William Dobson, James Connor, Melvin Halloway, E. H. Blake, G. S. Cushman and S. R. Haines. A two and a half per cent semi-annual dividend was declared.[99]

[98]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, March 20, 1902.

[99]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, February 20, 1902.

Of special note was the election of Samuel R. Haines as director. Haines had worked for the Dobson family for some years when he married Mae Dobson, daughter of William Dobson. He was later promoted to superintendent of the Waverly Mill on merit not marriage. Haines soon became one of the king pins of the Dobson Company and later went on to be an executive with the American Woolen Company.[99]

Haines's marriage to Mae Dobson was one of the social events of the year. The wedding was held in the Dobson home with all the social elite of Pittsfield attending. After the wedding the couple made their way to their new home next to the Waverly Mill that had been built for them by her father, William. There a large reception took place. The next morning Samuel Haines reported to work at 7:00 A.M. as if nothing had ever happened. Marriage did not interfere with work when you married into the Dobson family.[100]

[99]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, February 20, 1902.
[100]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 6, 1895.

The Early 1900's

The early 1900's saw the last great expansion of the local mills under private ownership. Soon they were to be taken over by outside interests, but before this happened the Dobson Company made their last improvements to keep up with the modern woolen industry.

The mills had been concerned in the past with lack of water. However with the general improvement in steam engines these mills began to put in these engines and change from water power. The Riverside Mill had a foundation for an eighty horsepower engine,[101] while the Pioneer planned to double its horsepower capacity and use the old engine as an auxiliary.[102] Samuel Haines went to New York City and purchased a 125 horsepower boiler to supply auxiliary power in case the water ebbed or they had trouble with the main engine.[103]

The Pioneer Mill did most of the expansion during the 1900's. By December of 1903 a new steam plant had been built and two new boilers were in place. Miss Mary Dobson was given the honor or starting them. The reason for building the new plants was a great increase of business and the need for more power to be used independently or in conjunction

[101]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, January 11, 1900.
[102]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, March 19, 1903.
[103]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, October 29, 1903.

with the water wheels. The building and equipment were placed under the direction of Chief Mechanic Nathaniel B. Rummal. Rummal made his own plans and blueprints and selected all the equipment.[104]

The power house was built of brick 120' by 50' with a wing on the south side 20' by 40' to be used as repair shop. The building was covered with a flat gravel roof. The foundation of the chimney was 18 feet square, built of trimmed granite. The base was ten feet square and built in cylindrical form of radial chimney brick imported from Germany. The boiler room was 40' by 50' and had ample space for six 125 horsepower boilers, The fuel for the boilers was fed by a Jones Underfeed Automatic Feeder. The coal was forced into the boilers through a trench, with an air blaster to make sure that all the gases were consumed making the furnace absolutely smokeless. The stokers were all automatic and the engineer had complete control of the steam pressure at all times. By using the stokers the fireman was free to make sure the iron coal bin was kept full. The boilers were connected by a flange-bend pipe with a fourteen inch steam main eighty feet long extending into the engine room. The steam main was set upon substantial brackets with roll blocks to allow expansion and contraction without any unnecessary strain or friction

[104]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 3, 1903.

on the pipe which may cause a leak or break. This idea was devised by Rummal, and was the first to be used in New England in this class of piping.[105]

The engine room was 30' by 46'. The engine was a 50 horsepower moderate speed Harris Coiles Form Valve Engine, eighteen by twenty-two feet and was manufactured to order by the Harris Coiles Engine Works of Providence, Rhode Island. It was capable of developing 300 horsepower. The power was transmitted to the main shaft of the mill by six wire belts running over a fourteen foot drive wheel weighing eight tons. The belt pockets in which the big wire belts ran were heavily trussed and braced to prevent any undue strain on the frame work of the mill. An automatic shutoff was placed near the main shaft in case of accident. The engine had sufficient power to run the entire mill or could be used in conjunction with the water wheels. Underneath the engine room was a 700 horsepower water heater which heated the water for the boilers feed to 180 degrees. In this room there was a large Knowles Steam Pump capable of pumping 1,000 gallons of water per minute. The pump was connected with the town water system and was ready for use in the case of emergency to supply plenty of pressure. Another large steam pump was placed in the same room for tank service and boiler feed.

[105]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 3, 1 903.
[106]Ibid.

At the end of the steam main was an automatic pressure reducing valve which could be set to cut the steam pressure from 150 PSI to whatever pressure was needed as it continued to the other parts of the mill.[107] It is to the credit of the chief mechanic that so many modern innovations could be added by local talent. The Dobsons selected excellent personnel to keep the mills running.

As it happened the mills did not have difficulty with too little, but rather too much water. In April of 1901 a freshet raced down the Sebasticook towards Pittsfield, when it reached the upper dam of the Waverly Mill the waters backed up causing the bridge at Palmyra to be buffeted by blocks of ice and pushed off its foundation and down the river. The town of Palmyra sued the Waverly Mill owners for $1,751.51.[108] The case reached the State Supreme Court in 1905. The court decided that the mill was not at fault. It said that there had been other freshets during the ten year period that the dam had been built. Some of them had been unusually high and water had never passed over the bridge. In this case water also had not passed over the bridge and it was the ice that had taken it out. Therefore the defendant was not at fault.[109] The decision was a feather

[107]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 3, 1903.
[108]Maine Reports No. 99; Cases Argued and Determined the Supreme Judicial Court in Maine, 1905 (Portland; Wm W. Roberts, 1905) p. 99.
[109]Ibid., pgs. 136-138.

in Attorney J. W. Manson's cap and boosted his reputation throughout the state. He also had much to gain from the decision for he was a director of the mill.

William Dobson died on January 15, 1905, which left Gordon as the last of the original Dobsons that had started the mills.[110] He now rose to prominence throughout New England and on March 4, 1909, was elected the first president of the newly formed Maine Woolen Manufacturers Association. The Association was made up of most of the woolen mill owners in the state. The primary function of the new group was not to keep an eye on local conditions, but to watch what was happening in Washington, D.C. The Association had strong connections with the Carded Woolen Manufacturers Association that was formed that year to look out for their interests when the Payne Aldrich tariff came up for passage.[112]

The battle over the tariff on wool had been going on since the end of the Civil War. The types of wool imported into this country varied greatly upon the quantity of grease and dirt contained in the fiber. A ratio was worked out that four pounds of raw wool equaled one pound of clean wool. This so called "shrinkage" of raw wool

[110]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, January 19, 1905.
[111]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, March 11, 1909.
[112]Arthur Harrison Cole, The American Wool Manufacturer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 192b) p. 23.

varied greatly among the different types of wool fleeces imported. It ranged from twenty to seventy-five per cent in extreme cases. The ratio selected for tariff purposes was based on the maximum degree in the real manufacturing purposes.[113] The intent of this ratio was to place the American manufacturer in a position to use any type of imported or domestic wool and still let him be a competitor on equal terms with foreign manufacturers. This ratio was fine as long as the mills were carded type mills. When the worsted process was introduced the ratio took on a completely different meaning and had drastic effects on the competition between the carded and worsted mills.

The shrinkage rate of raw wool needed for worsted material was much less than that of carded wool. If both types of mills imported four thousand pounds of raw wool the worsted manufacturer could get three thousand pounds of clean wool while the carded mill could get only one thousand pounds. Yet both these men paid exactly the same duty on the raw wool.

Using the same amount of imported wool but figuring the amount of duty paid per pound of finished wool the worsted manufacturer paid only fourteen and three fourths cents per pound, while the carded manufacturer had to pay forty-four cents per pound.

[113]Arthur Harrison Cole, The American Wool Manufacturer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926) p. 23.

Another problem was the carded mills, making a better quality of wool such as cashmere, could only use certain types of wool so when one reduced the eleven cents pound duty to an ad valorum equivalent the duty on worsted wool ran down as low as twenty-two per cent while the ad valorum equivalent of the same duty on wools for the carded mills ran as high as seven hundred and thirty-three per cent.

The solution, it would seem, would be for the carded manufacturers to use more domestic wool. However, wool products from the western states were of a poor grade and quite unacceptable to the mill owners.[114]

Gordon Dobson went to Washington, D.C. to appeal to the members of the Senate for a lower tariff or to equalize the differences between the carded and worsted mills. His appeals went unanswered for he now clashed with the largest controller of the woolen industry in the United States, the American Woolen Company. William Wood, President, had long held back on an opinion of the Payne tariff. The bill, as read, favored the worsted industry and since American Woolen owned mostly worsted mills they were not willing to advocate change. Wood made a statement denigrating the tariff as a factor and Gordon Dobson sent a stinging open letter to Wood.[115]

[114]News item in the Boston Herald, March 18, 1909.
[115]See Appendix A.

Apparently this letter impressed the other carded manufacturers for Dobson was elected first Vice-President of the National Carded Wool Manufacturers.

By July the first phase of the fight over the tariff ended and the carded manufacturers had lost their case, Congress claimed that the carded manufacturers had not stated their needs therefore Congress had no idea on how to change the tariff. Dobson now became very indignant and hastily published a copy of a letter sent to Senator Hale.[117]

It is interesting to note that Senator Aldrich was from Rhode Island where the main source of income at that time was wool manufacturing. Checking the lists of mills owned by American Woolen Company in that state all eight mills were worsted mills.[118]

The fight to get the tariff modified continued for the next two years. The same arguments of shrinkage were used over and over again. The directors of the Carded Woolen Manufacturers Association issued an appeal to all Senators and Representatives to prevent a specific duty from being placed on wool. Rather than pay a high tax upon wool grease and dirt they would rather pay a premium upon wools of lighter shrinkage. The Ways and Means Committee paid heed and levied a fixed duty of five -cents a pound on

[116]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 27, 1909.
[117]See Appendix B.
[118]American Woolen Company Mills (Boston: Livermore Knight, 1921) pgs. 81-82.

wool.[119] The pressure on the Carded Owners now became very intense and it is probably for this reason that Gordon Dobson later decided to sell out to the American Woolen Company.

While Gordon Dobson was off fighting the tariff wars the local mills continued along at full production. There was a general slow down throughout the country in 1907, but it apparently did not affect Pittsfield.[120]

The thing that did affect the mills were strikes. The first took place, at the Riverside Mill (the old Walker Mill). On Tuesday, August 6, some of the weavers became unhappy with the system of fining weavers for imperfect work and the discharge of one of the employees.[121] The matter was quickly settled and the weavers returned to work. Two days later the weavers went out on strike again and Smith was forced to close down the mill. All the workers were paid off and sent on their way. The mill had been running on overtime and apparently the workers missed the extra pay for they were back the next week under the same terms as before.[122]

A month later the spinners at the Pioneer and Waverly Mills went out on strike over the wage scale. Instead of firing the workers as had been done in the past a workers committee met with the mill owners and mediated

[120]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, November 28, 1907.
[121]Twenty-first Annual Report of the Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics for the State of Maine (Augusta: Kennebec Journal Press, 1907) p. 117.
[122]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 8, 1907.

for a satisfactory wage scale. The matter was settled and work resumed the following Monday.[123] Obviously the profits and production overruled the previous discharge response.

The mills continued at a strong pace for the next seven years and prosperity in the town continued. In 1913 William McGilvery, a superintendent at the Waverly Mill became associated with D. E. Cummings of Old Town, and they set up the first shoddy mill in the state at Pittsfield. A shoddy mill takes woolen remnants from other mills and makes them into woolen cloth to be used for the manufacturing of cheap woolen goods.[124]

The mill they bought was the old Bryant Saw Mill that had gone bankrupt. It was continued as a lumber mill until McGilvery and Cummings bought the place and sold the lumbering equipment and shipped it out of state. The mill was located on the Sebasticook River next to Hunnewell Avenue near the railroad tracks. It had a spur line running from the mill to the main tracks.[125]

From its purchase the mill was equipped with the latest equipment. The size of the mill was about 40,000 square feet and it was equipped with an automatic sprinkler system, electric lights, and the machinery was run by electricity throughout.

[123]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, September 19, 1907.
[124]The term "shoddy" dates from the Civil War and manufacturers who attempted to cheat the government on uniform cloth.
[125]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, March 19, 1914.

Between thirty-five and forty people including several women were employed at the mill. The weekly payroll was about $1,200 to $1,500.

The capacity of the mill to process wool was 50,000 pounds of wool per week and most of the finished product was sold in Maine.

The owners were fortunate to have L. P. Menard in charge of the carbonizing department, the most important part of the mill. Menard had been with the John T. Slack Company of Springfield, Vermont, the largest shoddy mill in New England. The other departments were headed by Charles Boston; boss carder, F. Leslie Dinsmore, machinist; and F. J. Pooler, in charge of the picker room.[126]

The business partnership was a bit unusual. McGilvery had been associated with the Robert Dobson Company for fourteen years and had married the other daughter of William Dobson. His business partner was from Old Town, served as President, but did not take an active part in the running of the mill. The corporation was capitalized at $30,000.[127] While Dobson money may have built the mill, it was not part of the Dobson complex.

The Riverside Mill which had been idle the first few months of 1913 now reorganized itself into the Smith

[126]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, March 19, 1914.
[127]Ibid.

Textile Company. A certificate of organization with a capital stock of $100,000 was filed with the Register of Deeds Office in Skowhegan. The Company had produced woolen goods but with this reorganization they expanded into the production of cotton textiles along with the woolen production. The local directors were Fred R. Smith, Elmer D. Smith, Esther Smith, Lou Hutchinson and George H. Morse. Fred Smith continued as President.[128]

[128]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 17, 1913.

American Woolen Takes Over

The era of the local mills in Pittsfield came to an end of 1914. The Robert Dobson Companies were absorbed by the American Woolen Company. What caused the sale of the Robert Dobson Company is hard to say. Some feel that Gordon Dobson felt he would do better if he sold it. The tariff was no doubt hurting the business and the pressure being exerted by the American Woolen Company was very strong. I, myself, believe that Gordon was worn out by his tremendous fight over the tariff. Reading his letters that were sent in defense of the carded mills one sees a complete dedication and even a trace of paranoia. With his ideals now shattered and without the aid of his departed father and brother he just gave in to the pressures of the modern day world that had broken forth so violently on his once peaceful world.

Very quietly an announcement was made in the local paper that the Pioneer Mill had been conveyed to Henry P. Binney of Canton, Massachusetts, agent for the American Woolen Company. Samuel Haines was renamed the manager of the mills while F. W. Briggs, grandson of Robert Dobson, was renamed superintendent of the Pioneer Mill, and Ernest Maxfield, superintendent of the Waverly Mill.[129]

[129]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, November 19, 1914.

The transition of ownership proceeded in an orderly fashion. The workers remained on the job and the transfer of personnel was almost non-existent. Yet from personal insight into the articles then written in the local paper and in interviews with persons connected with the mills an air of sadness existed in the town. The old personal touch of local ownership, and the close relationship, between the workers and owners was dying rapidly. The mills now were beginning to become just a cog in the massive and impersonal wheels of the American Woolen Company. The Company which Gordon Dobson had fought so hard against now owned what was once his and his family's.

Gordon Dobson passed away May 21, 1915. He was sixty years old. In his lifetime he had been President of the Robert Dobson Company, Treasurer of the Waverly Woolen Company, Director of the First National Bank of Pittsfield, Newport Woolen Company, Sebasticook Power Company, Trustee of the Pittsfield Union Hall, Vice-President of the National Association of Carded Woolen Manufacturers, and President of the Maine Woolen Manufacturers Association.[130] Samuel R. Haines also left Pittsfield for Boston where he was promoted to assistant manager of the American Woolen Company.[131] George E. Mayo was appointed agent of the Pioneer Mill to fill Haines's place.[132]

[130]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 27, 1915, Obituary.
[131]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 10, 1915.
[132]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 13, 1915.

With the advent of World War I the mills now went into full-time production and the town of Pittsfield went to war.

Perhaps the largest order for the mill during the war came from the Russian Army. The Russian government had signed a contract with the American Woolen Company for 5,000,000 yards of heavy woolen cloth to supply overcoats for one and one quarter million Russian soldiers. The contract was the largest single order or purchase ever made of any one particular style and quality of cloth in this area.[133]

The order was expected to take six months to complete with 85,000 operatives using 1,800 weaving machines and looms[134] consuming 13,000,000 pounds of clean wool stock. The cloth would then be sent to the Russian factories to be made into uniforms. These shipments of material would take place in January, February, and March and would be sent directly to Vladvostock and Archangel.[135]

In a speech given at the contract signing, Mr. Wood, President of American Woolen said the following.

> These overcoats are to serve the Russian soldiers both as a uniform and as a blanket. As may be known the Russian Army does not furnish

[133]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, November 4, 1915.
[134]The contract had been signed in Washington at the Russian Consulate by Colonel Nicoli Golyevski, military attache, and Lieutenant Mikhail Alexeew, a Russian fabric expert. William Wood signed for the American Woolen Company. The total amount of the contract was $7,350,000.
[135]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, November 4, 1915.

its soldiers with a blanket as a part of the general equipment. Instead the long overcoats are made with hoods which the soldier draws over his head for protection when asleep on the field.[136]

Wood also pointed out in his speech that an order as large as this came to the United States because of the wartime conditions. Normally because of the higher wages paid to American workers the Russians would have given the contracts to European firms who paid lower wages and would have been able to underbid the United States manufacturer.[137]

Wood's concern with post-war protection was brought up when he suggested that it might be a good idea for a protective tariff to be enacted to keep out cheap European goods when its industry revived. He felt that the Payne Aldrich tariff was too low in this respect.[138]

On December 14, 1915, a meeting of the stockholders of the Waverly Woolen Company met to dissolve that corporation and sell it to the American Woolen Company.[139]

During that same year the Linn Woolen Mill failed and the Pittsfield Bank was forced to foreclose its mortgage. The mill had been built with Dobson money and had been closely linked with the Dobson enterprise. Since it was the main

[136]News item in the Pittsfield. Advertiser, November 4, 1915.
[137]Ibid.
[138]Ibid.
[139]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 2, 1915.
[140]News item In the Pittsfield Advertiser, February 4, 1915.

Industry of Hartland (a town located next to Pittsfield), an attempt was made to raise the $146,000 needed to keep it going.[141] The attempt failed and the American Woolen Company bought it at auction for $95,000. Leon Haines (brother of Samuel R. Haines) was kept on as superintendent.[142]

The Smith Woolen Company had been idle for the past year and the American Woolen Company had decided it would be a good idea to control the entire production of wool in Pittsfield. They purchased this mill as well.[143]

This was the final phase of acquisition for the American Woolen Mills. They now had control of sixteen mills in Maine and fifty-six mills in New England thereby making them the largest manufacturer of woolen and worsted fabrics in the world.[144]

A readjustment of wages for the workers took place after the purchase of the new mills in Pittsfield. Under the new schedule the workers with the lowest wages received the greatest pay raise. The schedule read: all employees earning less than $7.50 per week received a 2% per hour raise; $7.51 to $8.26, 1 ¾% per hour raise; $8.27 to

[141] News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 17, 1916.
[142]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 4, 1916.
[143]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, March 8, 1917.
[144]American Woolen Company Mills, (Boston: Livermore and Knight, 1921) Preface.

$9.50, a 1 ½% per hour raise; $9.51 to $10.90, a ¾¢ per hour raise and above $10.91 a straight 5% raise. Piece workers also got a 5% raise.[145]

As the United States entered the First Would War, Pittsfield and her industry became quite involved. Patriotism soared and the town became war-minded. The American Woolen Company announced that it was placing what vacant land it held in the hands of the Food and Provision Committee of the local Public Safety Board. The land would be tilled by the mill workers and their families for additional food.[146]

The war not only worked hardships on the people but also in the mills. In February of 1918 the Pioneer and Waverly Mills were forced to shut down due to a lack of coal. Clarence E. Bodfish, agent for the Waverly Mill, went to Boston to see what could be done. He was able to get an emergency supply shipped to Pittsfield and after a two-week layoff the mills resumed production.[147]

The workers of the mills readily dug down in to their wallets to help the boys who had left the mills to join in the fighting and the organizations that aided the soldiers. The subscription to the Liberty Loan was tremendous for the

[145]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, January 6, 1916.
[146]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 19, 1917.
[147]News item In the Pittsfield Advertiser, February 21, 1918.

workers, In total they subscribed $24,250. The breakdown according to mills was:

Waverly $11,000
Sebasticook (Riverside Mill) $2,300
Pioneer $10,000
Pittsfield Yarn $950[148]

Two local boys, who were at Camp Devens and about ready to leave for France received a gift package from the Sebasticook Mills. It contained ten boxes of tobacco, ten packages of Camel cigarettes, six packages Durham tobacco, seven packages chewing gum, two boxes of Nabiscos, four boxes of candy, two suckers, one soap cupid and seven packages of cigarette paper.[149]

As the war closed the American Woolen Company hired Otto Nelson of Hanger to build four bungalow-type houses on North Main Street for the employees at the Waverly Mill.[150] Other benefits were also introduced into the mills. A group insurance plan was issued by the Travelers Insurance Company for the workers, free sick and accident benefits were introduced, and a Homestead Association was set up whereby workers were able to obtain loans for new or used houses.[151]

[148]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 16, 1918.
[149]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, September 26, 1918.
[150]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 5, 1918.
[151]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 14, 1919.

The result of these innovations was probably brought about by the strike of 1919. The workers were discontented with their wages and their working conditions. They left the Pioneer Mill on Monday, May 12, 1919. On Wednesday, Horace A Reviere of Manchester, New Hampshire, a union organizer affiliated with the American Federation of Labor arrived in town and a mass meeting was held that night at the Union Hall. Conferences with the mill management were held on Thursday. The settlement reached consisted of a raise in wages and a guarantee to the employees that a certain scale of payment per week would be made even if the mill had to be shut down for repairs or for other reasons. The workers were satisfied and returned to the mill the following Monday.[152]

While wages and benefits went up orders for the mills decreased. The war had caused a heavy overproduction of wool material and had created a false prosperity. The mills continued production for the next two years but a raging [sic, perhaps flagging, i.e., dwindling] market caused the following notice to be published in the local paper:

> There is no fact more firmly established in the public mind than the long continued and consistent friendliness to labor in general, and to the labor of his own mills in particular of Mr. William W. Wood, President of the American Woolen Company. In season and out for many years past he has fought for liberal wages to his employees and has often announced his intention of continuing to do so in time to come.

[152]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 15, 1919.

But at the present Mr. Wood is between the 'devil and the deep blue sea' as an old saying goes. On one hand he does not want to reduce earnings of his employees and on the other he is confronted by the fact that unless he does so the mills will have to stand idle to a less or greater extent. That he has a duty towards the stockholders as well as to his employees is self-evident. At a meeting of the representatives of the company held in Lawrence, Massachusetts, recently, he stated the situation as follows.

I am advised by our selling agent that we cannot hope for any substantial business from the clothing manufacturer until they learn that not only have the raw material markets been liquidated, but all other items going to make up the cost of cloth which of course include labor, [sic, are going up]. Today orders are not obtainable.

Commodities have receded in prices yet notwithstanding all this there have been something wanting to invite confidence to start-the public buying.

We stated to you that we should be among the last to reduce. We have kept our word. But economically reduction seems inevitable for we are confronted with the serious question of competition. We cannot hope to secure orders for our mills against both foreign and domestic competition if they pay wages lower than ours.

It is necessary that we should put on the market the very best goods at the lowest possible price to meet all competition, in order to secure the necessary work that you all may be constantly employed, or nearly that as possible. And it must be obvious to you that this cannot be done by paying higher wages than our competitors.[153]

[153]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, January 20, 1921.

The effects were also felt on the McGilvery Mill for it had to close for lack of orders. All mills reopened in the spring of 1921.[154]

As business picked up and the "Roaring Twenties" commenced, the great age of advertising took command over the American Woolen Company. Not one to be left behind advertisements began to appear under President Wood's name such as the following:

> From the backs of sheep to the backs of men the story of wool and how it is converted into one of life's greatest necessities by the American Woolen Company reads like a romance. The transportation of raw wool thousands of miles to the mills, the operation of fifty-nine modern mills, where intricate textile machines scour, card and spin and weave with dexterity surpassing that of human hands the activity of 35,000 skilled workers and finally the distribution of more than 30,000 weaves and patterns of woolen and worsted fabrics the world over – all are the achievements of shoulder to shoulder co-operation and fair play.
>
> Fairness to employees and fairness to the public – both weave value with every thread on the looms of this company.[155]

In May of 1923 the spring runoffs were faster than usual causing major flooding at the Pioneer Mill and McGilvery-Cummings plant. The flood waters were so swift that it was impossible for the workers to get at the office the Sunday the flood started. Some wearing hip boots were able to reach

[154]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, February 17, 1921; News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, March 10, 1921.
[155]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, February 7, 1923.

the Pioneer Mill to get the stock and other materials to upper floors for safety. Several families living in "Scotland" behind the mills were forced to flee from their homes early Monday morning as the waters rose higher. Efforts to return to the mill Monday were hampered as large amounts of cord wood cut into stove lengths came floating down the river. Several cases of carbonizer and acid were also floating about the area. McGilvery's plant was completely crippled by the waters entering the first floor.[156]

Several transfers took place that year. Albert Spaulding, the agent for the Waverly Mill was transferred to another American Woolen Mill in Manchester, New Hampshire. Leon Haines came back from Hartland to take Spaulding's place, a position once held by his half-brother, Samuel.[157]

Business continued at a rapid pace throughout the twenties. The auditor for the American Woolen Company reported a very bright future for the mills in 1925, for instance.[158] Unfortunately this prophesy did not work out.

[156]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 3, 1923.
[157]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 26, 1923.
[158]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, September 17, 1925.

The Depression

In 1929 the bottom dropped out of the stock market and with it went the woolen business. Since the mills were the main industry of the town the following depression caused the near death of Pittsfield. It took the town almost thirty years to recover from the effects and even today the town still remembers the devastating effects of the depression.

In 1929 the Waverly Mill was closed for lack of work. It never reopened as a woolen mill, but was sold some twelve years later to a shoe company. When the Waverly closed one third of the townspeople became unemployed. In this same year William McGilvery was forced into retirement and the McGilvery-Cummings Mill was now run by his wife. It continued operation as a shoddy mill, and was sold in 1932 to Lancey Milliken. Milliken had been the chief salesman for the mill.[159]

The only mill in operation for the American Woolen Company was the Pioneer Mill. The first thing the company did was to ask the town for a tax relief on its property. The townsfolk met and voted not to reduce the taxes. After much talk a special town meeting was called in June to reconsider the vote. The American Woolen Company told the people that if they could not reduce the taxes they would be

[159]Personal Interview, Mrs. Joseph Buker, March 21, 1969.

forced to close the Pioneer and the remaining 160 employees would be out of work. Since the mill was the chief industry the voters had no choice. In a heavy turnout and by a vote of 5 to 1 the tax relief was given.[160]

With so many out of work emotions ran high. People searched for a scapegoat and too often it was the wrong person. One such person was the boss of the weave room. In a parting letter to the Advertiser he made clear the feelings of the town and the pressure upon him.

> I hope that the people of Pittsfield do not credit me with the present depression that exists throughout the whole nation. The town of course is hit hard because of lack of industries. Other towns that have different kinds of industry are not feeling the depression so bad because there is something else to do besides depending wholly upon a woolen mill like our town. I have worked at the American Woolen Company ever since they organized and have seen depression before in other towns. It seems to me that the people in the town of Pittsfield take hard times more to heart than in other towns. It seems that the town's people can and do appreciate the good times like good people should do, but when hard times strike it seems that the people are [too] willing and ready to blame someone for the cause.
>
> There are 166 weavers in the town divided as they were 40 in the Waverly, 40 in the Sebasticook and 86 in the Pioneer. The Waverly Mill has been closed for some time, also the Sebasticook. At the Pioneer Mill looms have been doubled up so that the weavers run two looms, throwing out of employment about 40 more weavers making a total of 120 weavers out of work and only 40 at work. Is it humanly possible for any boss weaver, may he be who he may, to give employment to the 120 that are lingering around town waiting for the boss to leave so that they may all get a job at the Pioneer?

[160]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 11, 1931

> If any of you venerable gentlemen who think that you can overcome the difficulty, you will please apply to the management of the Pioneer Mill, and I am sure the job will be given to you. I much rather think that if each and every one of us would put our concentrated effort into our own business and let the other fellow run his we would all be much better off.
>
> Upon leaving June 12, the help of the Pioneer weave room presented me with a handsome traveling bag and a beautiful fountain pen. I was surely surprised when bringing my books completed to the Pioneer office that night when the paymaster handed me a small box. Upon examination found that the overseers of the mill had presented me with a twenty dollar gold piece. I want to thank the people of the weave room and the overseers who so generously contributed for these gifts.
>
> Mr. F. Ramm[161]

Not only were the workers suffering but the town now ran into serious financial difficulty. The tax base of the town was completely wiped out in 1933, when American Woolen decided to sell all property not connected with [the] manufacturing end of the business. Over the years the mills had built homes for the owners and workers. When American Woolen bought the mills, these homes also went with the sale.

The American Woolen now transferred all its property to a subsidiary with instruction to liquidate as soon as possible. In Pittsfield the company owned twenty-two cottages, five two-family homes, two four-family, homes and sixteen automobile garages.[162]

An auction of this property was held. Samuel T. Freeman & Co. were the auctioneers. The terms were 75 per

[161] News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 18, 1932.

[162] News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, November 24, 1931.

cent down and a 6 per cent mortgage.[163] The cottages brought an average of $75 while the beautiful homes of the former owners went for $900 to $1,500.[164] Today these homes would sell for $20,000 and could not be built for under $50,000. With the tremendous drop in tax valuations the town almost went bankrupt.

The Pioneer Mill was forced to close down for a period of time due to lack of orders. By May of 1933 however it reopened with nearly every department in operation as the National Recovery Administration created a short boom. The company also announced a 12 ½ per cent raise in wages. Milliken's mill was also running at capacity with forty men employed and they too raised the workers' wages 12 ½ per cent.[165] Much of this was due to the N.R.A. codes that were being put into application in national industries.

Life in these early years of the depression were not the easiest. Joe Buker, the chief salesman for the Milliken Company, was forced to take a fifty per cent pay cut. He now earned $25 a week. Out of this he gave his wife $10 a week for shopping and bill paying. Because of the high price of coal the Bukers purchased pulp wood for fuel that a local dealer was unable to sell. The cost was five

[163] News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, November 24, 1932.

[164] Personal Interview, Mrs. Seymore Birch; March 16, 1969.

[165] News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 25, 1935.

dollars a cord for debarked hard wood. The winter of 1932 was very cold and Mrs. Buker remembers stoking the furnace late at night as the temperatures surrounded her home.[166]

A great shift in ownership of the mills now took place. In the early thirties the American Woolen Company underwent a strike in Massachusetts. The old mechanics and machinists were notified to get the Waverly Mill ready for reopening to be used in strike breaking. The Central Maine power Company ran in new lines and truck loads of machinery were sent up from Massachusetts. The old looms were torn out and automatic looms put in. New machinery was also placed in the other departments and it looked as if things would soon be humming. Machinery from the striking mill also began to arrive, and it was made known that if the strike was not settled by the night the last truck left for Maine from the striking mill, it would be closed. The strike was settled one half hour before the truck left, the new machinery was pulled out of the Waverly Mill, one reinstalled in the Pioneer and the rest sold to the other mills in the area.[167]

The Old Yarn Mill owned by the American Woolen Company was sold to Carl Weymouth of Newport, given a new coat of paint and was run as a wool pullery.[168] The

[166]Personal Interview, Mrs. Joseph Buker, March 21, 1969.

[167]Personal Interview, Morice Morgan, March 19, 1969

[168]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, June 7, 1934.

storehouse of the yarn mill was purchased by Frank M. Fairbanks and turned into a saw mill to produce short and long lumber.[169]

On December 6 the Sebasticook and Waverly Mills were put up for auction to the highest bidder. All the machinery was removed and what could not be used by the American Woolen Company was sold or scrapped. Willard Cummings of Newport bought the Waverly Mill for $9,200.[170] He turned it into a storehouse for the next few years. Cummings was remembered in Pittsfield as having gone into partnership with McGilvery. His interests were bought out a few years later and he went on to found and operate Guilford Industries which are still in operation.

The Sebasticook Mill was purchased by Clyde Martin for $3,500. A small piece of property near the Waverly Mill was sold to the town for $100.[171] A year later Lancey Mllliken bought the Sebasticook Mill for his shoddy plant, tore down his old factory and moved into the new mill.[172]

The Pioneer Mill began a series of improvements in 1935. It installed its own generating, plant and only used Central Maine power in case of emergencies.[173] The old

[169]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 12, 1934.

[170]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 13, 1934.

[171]Ibid.

[172]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 4, 1934

173News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, October 1, 1936.

flume that had been built in Robert Dobson's days was taken out and replaced. It took two shifts of men and several trucks to cart away the rocks and earth and replace it with clean fill. The job lasted four months and a call went out to all able-bodied men who wanted to work to show up at the site. The mill itself was working at full capacity with employment at over 300.[174]

The mills now entered the war years of the forties going full steam. While no records are available for production it seems that the mills were concerned with the making of cloth for uniforms and blankets. Since many men left for the war a large number of women were employed. Many of the employees of the mill left every day covered with blue from the dye house where thousand of yards of material were dyed for the Navy.[175]

The Waverly Mill still remained closed and many local people thought the factory could be used in the war effort. Clyde E. Martin proposed a plan whereby the town would purchase the mill and sell it to another corporation. Others thought that perhaps the federal government could find an industry. Senator Brewster and Representative Margaret Chase Smith were notified of the Waverly's availability and they in turn notified the Office of Production management.

[174]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, October 11936.

[175]Personal interview, Mr. Robert Smith; April 2, 1969.

[176]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 1, 1941.

Little was done by the federal government. Periodic reports were offered concerning potential activities for the mill, out nothing ever turned up.

One night in August a group of men remained after a Kiwanis meeting to discuss the Waverly Mill and what could be done with it. J. R. Cianchette, one of the leading contractors of the state, suggested that this group of men, Earle Friend, W. W. Lehr, Sr., H. L. Goodrich and Sanger M. Cook, all prominent local men, purchase the mill from Cummings if the price were right and attempt to locate a tenant.[177] The mill was sold to this group for $10,000 and they in turn sold the water rights to the town for $10,000.[178] Cianchette now set about to fix the roof, repair the floors and get the mill in shape to sell. In September of 1943 a contract was signed by Pinchos Medwed of Bangor to purchase the mill for a shoe plant. Medwed did not move to the location until 1945, however, and then he started a training program for the workers. By 1948 he employed some three hundred people in this shop.[179]

Tragedy struck the town in February of 1945. E. Earle Hodgkins had set up a small mill in one of the old American Woolen buildings which produced rayon and other synthetics, apparently a workman was smoking near one of the bins and the

[177]Cook, op. cit., p. 132.

[178]Personal Interview, Mr. Sanger Cook, April 1, 1969.

[179]cook, op. cit., p. 132.

rayon ignited. Three women were burned to death in the raging inferno that followed. Loss to the plant was estimated at from $60,000 to $100,000.[180]

After the fire Hodgkins set up a new mill on Central Street. He took into partnership Perley Wright who had started his own mill on Park Street. The name of , the new company was the Pittsfield Hand Knitting Company. The partnership lasted until 1947 when Mr. Wright bought out Hodgkins's interest. The mill, still in operation today [closed September 2003], is known as the Pittsfield Woolen Yarns Co., Inc. It is run by Wright's three sons: Clifford, President and Treasurer; Neil, Vice-President; and Carl, Clerk.[181] It is the last remaining woolen mill in Pittsfield.

The unions became powerful in the Pioneer Mill in the wartime period. A new wage contract was negotiated which gave 4¢ differential payments to the second shift and 7¢ for the third shift. The workers were to get a two-week paid vacation, 60¢ per hour minimum, group insurance and wage brackets for specific jobs.[182] The mill continued to boom on full time and a call for more workers, 60 men and women, went out to take care of the post-war orders.[183]

In 1948 more benefits were given the workers. They received

[180]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, February 8, 1945; an employee was later held on manslaughter charges but they were dismissed for lack of evidence.

[181]Cook, op. cit., p. 133.

[182]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, July 19, 1945.

[183]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, September 27, 1945.

a fifteen cent per hour increase, six paid holidays, a union shop and a five hundred dollar insurance policy.[184] Post-war inflation created this rapidly changing situation.

In 1950 the Riverside Mill was sold for the last time. A corporation known as Pittsfield Industries was formed consisting of J. R. Cianchette, Roy U. Sinclair, and Joseph S. Buker. Buker was manager of the Riverside Mill and one day Lancey Milliken decided he wanted to sell the mill, some say due to union problems.[185] The mill was sold to Pittsfield Industries for $25,000 and each partner put up $1,400 for working capital.[186] Buker continued as manager of the new company and head of the mill. After a few years Lewis Rosenthal of Waterville who owned several mills around the state bought out both J. R. Cianchette and Roy Sinclair's interest in the mill. Buker continued as manager and part owner of the mill until his retirement in 1963.[187] The mill continues to operate today as a shoddy and knitting mill [destroyed by fire].

In 1952 in a speech given before a wool convention the President of American Woolen said that the outlook for the company was very grim. Competition from the synthetic

[184]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, January 29, 1948.

[185]Privileged Information.

[186]personal interview, Mrs. Joseph Buker, March 21, 1969.

[187]Ibid.

industries was strong and many of the mills had not yet converted to produce these new goods.[188]

In 1953 due to this competition the American Woolen Company petitioned the Massachusetts State Labor Board for a 20% pay cut for their employees. This petition was denied and wage negotiations were to open the first part of 1954. The employment of the Pioneer Mill had already been cut from 335 to 225 employees.[189]

American Woolen did not take that long to decide what to do. The Pioneer Mill was closed down September 19, 1953 with a notice that the property would be for sale to anyone who wanted it.[190]

The reasons for the closure were many. The unions, top-heavy management, lack of progress within the industry, high taxes within the town, lack of orders, outdated equipment, one could go on forever. The one thing however that was a fact was a chief industry had closed with nothing to replace it. The Kiwanis Club of Pittsfield took it upon itself to search for a new industry. The Legal Affairs committee was asked to form a corporation with the authority to seek funds for the purpose of finding and financing a new industry if necessary.[191]

[188]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser,. January 24,

News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, May 21, 1953.

[190]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, August 27,

[191]Cook, op. cit., p. 137; The Legal Affairs Committee of Lloyd Stitham, John Furbush, and Harry Coolidge.

On February 1st 1954 Clair L. Cianchette who had joined the legal staff of J. R. Cianchette and Sons, prepared the necessary papers for such a corporation and the Pittsfield Development Association was born. The directors were J .R. Cianchette, Chairman, H.R. Coolidge, George A. Moore, L. A. Dysart, John McMann, Robert Hubbard, and Clair L. Cianchette. An Industrial Committee was appointed with S. M. Cook and W. W. Lehr, Jr., Co-Chairmen; and R. U. Sinclair, Donald Fendler, and Harry H. Friend.

The first act of the new corporation was to sell stock to the amount of $50,000. A committee was chosen to head up the drive consisting of Roy U. Sinclair, Chairman, Roosevelt T. Susi, Ford Grant, Harry Anderson, and Harry Friend. In January of 1954 Chairman Sinclair announced that $53,570 had been subscribed by 477 persons.[192]

The local business and professional men knew clearly the impact of the textile business in their town.

The officers of American Woolen who were aware of the activities of the town now began to work out the details of a new streamlined plant to be put in the Pioneer Mill as a pilot project. The mill was to have 60 new looms. This news was confirmed by Ex-Governor Joseph B. Ely of Massachusetts, General Counsel for American Woolen.[193]

Five months passed, but no more activity took place concerning the new mill. W. Bartlett Cram of the Maine Development Commission continued to meet with the Development Committee of Kiwanis and assured them that the outlook was still bright, but that an internal problem was beginning to develop within American Woolen.[194]

[192]Cook, op. cit., pgs. 137-138.

[193]Ibid.

[194]Ibid.

The problem was that Textron, a rival firm, wanted to get hold of the $26 million dollar American Woolen Company. The directors of Textron kept giving assurances that they would give great consideration to the New England mills but as rumor had it they were interested in moving the mills south to a cheaper labor market.[195]

The end of the fight came the day before Christmas when J. R. Cianchette (who was involved in a legal suit in Aroostook over an airbase) was contacted by Governor Ely to meet him in Boston as soon as possible. Ely had learned that Textron would probably win its proxy fight and wanted to make sure that the agreement to build a new plant would be signed before Textron gained control. Cianchette flew to Pittsfield aboard his private plane, picked up Lawyer Harry Coolidge and flew on to Boston to sign the agreement.[196]

The final contracts were signed on December 30, 1954 calling for a complete modern one-story building to be constructed on the side of the Pioneer Mill and to employ 200 persons after it is in operation. The new mill was to cost $300,000, be 45,000 square feet, and with no windows and fully air conditioned.[197]

195Personal Interview, S.M. Cook, February 28, 1969. I96Ibid.

197News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, December 30, 1954.

Textron won the proxy fight in a very bitter battle that ended up in representatives of both sides scouring the countryside to find shareholders willing to give proxies.[198] The equipment from the mills was moved south and the mills closed for good.

The contract they had signed with J. R. Cianchette was binding but Textron refused to open any new mill in Pittsfield. Instead they agreed to help build a plant for future industry. All properties of the mill and its water rights were sold for $16,000 and it was agreed to lend the Pittsfield Development Association enough money to build a 48,000 square foot building for manufacturing purposes, and assist in finding a tenant.[199]

The Industrial Committee now contacted Mr. Cram who uncovered a lead that the Edwards Company, a door bell firm of Norwalk, Connecticut, was looking for a new location. J. R. Cianchette again used his private plane to pick up the directors of the company in order to show them the town. To further impress these people the Industrial Committee informed the Edwards People that they ought to submit their plans for a new plant and that Pittsfield would build it. The company took up the offer and the Edwards Company now

[198]personal Interview,.N. Young, April 5, 1969.

[199]cook, op. cit., p. 140; News item in the Waterville Sentinel, October 25, 1955.

occupies much of the property where part of the Pioneer Mill once stood.[200]

During the summer of 1956 much of the Pioneer Mill was torn down. The beams taken from the mill were over thirty feet long, hand hewn and pegged. Bulldozers were called in to smash the walls in and rip the floors apart. However they could not do it. It was as if the mill refused to die. Finally a huge crew of men had to be employed to take the place down by hand.[201]

Today much of the three main mills still remain [except that the Riverside Mill has burned down] part of the landscape of Pittsfield as a remainder of an era gone by. The houses of the owners, once stately and dominant, serve as boarding houses or offices. A few are owned by people who have preserved their charm. The days of wool are over in Pittsfield. What was once a one-industry town has kept pace with the future and diversified. The personal feelings of owner-worker relationships have given way to the impersonalness of the sixties. Pittsfield was made a town by wool and nearly destroyed by its benefactor.

[200]Personal Interview, S. M. Cook, February 28, 1969.

[201]Personal Interview, N. Young, April 5, 1969.

Summary

Reading through the Census of Manufacturers from 1905 to 1954 I find a steady decline in the Production of wool and worsted goods in the United States and in the state of Maine. By 1931 the Census of Manufacturers devotes only a few pages to wool and worsted manufacturing because much of it was replaced by synthetic fabrics.

From 1880 to 1905 there was a steady decrease in the number of woolen mills in the United States, while the number of worsted mills was on the increase.

Year	Number of Woolen Mills	Number of Worsted Mills[1]
1880	1,990	76
1890	1,311	143
1900	1,035	186
1905	792	226

Maine ranked as the third largest producer of woolen goods with assets of $14,990,211.[2] The number of woolen mills had decreased by ten from 1900 to 1905 while the number of worsted mills had increased by three.[3]

The worsted industry in Maine also had the greatest increase in overall growth in the state. Employment rose

[1]United States Bureau of the Census, Special Reports of the Census Office, Manufacturers, 1905, Vol. 1, Washington: Government Printing Office, p. 20.

[2]Ibid, Vol.1, p. 462. 3ibid, Vol. I, p. 374.

[3]Ibid, Vol.1, p. 462. 3ibid, Vol. I, p. 374.

89.3 per cent while wages rose 108.9 per cent and the value of the product rose 102.9 per cent.[4]

From 1909 to 1921 there was a further decrease in the number of woolen mills in the United States, from 587 mills in 1909 to 493 mills in 1921. The only increase during this period was a short boom which occured during World War I. The number of worsted mills also dropped from 324 to 321 during this same period.[5] The state of Maine had dropped to sixth place in national production, while the number of woolen mills had decreased to fifty-seven.[6]

By 1931 the number of woolen mills in the United States had dropped to 381. The state of Maine dropped to thirty-six mills in operation, but recaptured her third place position in production.[7]

The depression caused a further drop to 323 mills in 1935, but by 1937 the woolen industry was operating some 332 mills throughout the country.[8]

[4]United States Bureau of the Census, Special Reports of the Census Office, Manufacturers, 1905, Vol.11, Washington: Government Printing Office, p. 374.

[5]United States Bureau of the Census, Biennial Census of Manufacturers, 1921, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924, p. 289.

[6]Ibid, p. 291

[7]United States Bureau of the Census, Biennial Census of Manufacturers, 1931, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1935, p. 362.

[8]United States Bureau of the Census, Biennial Census of Manufacturers, 1937, Part 1, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1939, p. 440.

After World War I the number of woolen and worsted mills in the country stood at only 495, five more than in 1935.[9]

In Maine the combined total of woolen and worsted plants was forty-six but it still was the largest employer in the state.[10]

With the close of the American Woolen mills in Pittsfield in 1954 the number of woolen and worsted mills had descended to thirty-eight,[11] while on the national level the number of mills reached a new low of 343.[12]

Trying to compare the production and capitalization figures over the years would not have been a good indicator as a result of the many depressions and other economic factors involved. Also many of the mills, both worsted and wool, were incorporating new machinery which did not decrease the number of employees, but did raise the value of the plant.

Comparing the Pittsfield mills and the state of Maine mills, and national growth and decline, I find a great similarity as to progress and retardation. During the early years of the Dobson mills, production was up as it was everywhere. American Woolen enjoyed the boom of World Wars but

[9]United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Manufacturers, 1947, Vol I, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949, p. 171.

[10]Ibid., Vol. Ill, pp. 264-266.

[11]United 'States Bureau of the Census, Census of Manufacturers, 1954, Vol III. Washington: Government Tinting Office,1954, p. 118-S.

[12]Ibid., Vol. I, Part 1, p. 22A-3.

suffered greatly in the depression of 1930 through 1937 and also after the war years. While many mills closed during these years it was the foresight and improvement of the mills in Pittsfield that let them last so long.

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Appendix A

Replied to Wood

Gordon Dobson sends open letter to head of American Woolen Co.:

Gordon Dobson of Pittsfield, President of the Maine Woolen Manufacturers' Association, has sent the following open letter to William M. Wood, President of the American Woolen Company, in reply to a statement by Mr. Wood regarding the regulation of the wool tariff in the Payne Bill, published recently.

"I want to call attention to the opinions you have expressed, and ask you some questions in regard to them.

"Why do you want to study the Payne wool and woolen schedule before venturing a conclusive opinion? With the exception of the duty on tops it is practically the same as the Dingley Tariff, under which you have formed the largest wool manufacturing corporation in the world, and which you state was the most evenly balanced bill ever enacted in the history of the woolen goods trade.

"You say that 'unless a greater duty than six cents (in addition to 33 cents) prevails upon the tops, industry will not flourish in this country.'

"Is it not a fact that the Payne Tariff on worsted tops is excessive, that it grants a large amount of concealed protection? For example, the Payne Bill provides that the duty on tops shall be the same as (sic) imposed

upon scoured wool, of which they are made, and six cents per pound in addition. Do you not know that this Payne top schedule is so framed, if not for the deliberate purpose, certainly with the result of giving the worsted top mills excessive protection and a monopoly of the American market?

"To begin with, tops are made not from scoured wool, such as, if imported, would bear a duty of 33 cents a pound. The raw material for tops is imported in the grease, and none of it is subject to a duty equal to 33 cents per scoured pound. The difference between the Payne compensatory rate of 33 cents and the actual duty you pay on the wool goes to swell the Payne protective rate of six cents. You import practically no wool shrinking over 55 per cent. (sic) and yet every point below 66 2/3 per cent. means concealed protection for the top maker.

"The enormity of the Payne duty on tops is seen by reducing it to an ad valorem equivalent. Cross bred 40s tops are selling in Bradford, England, at about 24 cents a pound, the Payne duty is 39 cents a pound, or 162 per cent. of the cost at Bradford, and yet you talk about the top industry not flourishing under that rate on a product that is little more than scoured wool. Why is it that the one criticism that appeals to you is that a rate of 162 per cent. is too low on worsted tops? Is it not because you and your representative, Mr. Whitman, are largely in the worsted business?

"You say it would be a happy thing to arrange the schedule to satisfy the Maine manufacturers if it would not do an injustice to the wool grower who is entitled to protection because he works hard in the lonely occupation in the wild mountains of the northwest. His life is dreary and hard and he feels that he is entitled to protection. Do you think it would be an injustice to the wool grower if the duty on light shrinking wool which you use were raised?

"That is just what the Maine woolen manufacturers advocate. The wool grower is now suffering from an injustice by reason of the specific tariff on light shrinking wool, by which you and the other worsted spinners are able to import about 90,000,000 pounds of wool every year at a comparatively low duty per scoured pound. The carded woolen manufacturers ask for no reduction in the tariff on wool. They ask if wool is to be imported into the United States that they (the carded woolen manufacturers) shall have equal privileges with the worsted spinners in buying it. To bring about that square deal without reducing the protection to the wool grower it will be necessary to deprive you and the other worsted spinners of the special privileges you now possess under the law.

"Now, is not your expressed sympathy for the wool grower a pretense? Do you not oppose an equalization of the duty on wool because it would deprive you of an unfair

advantage and place you on even terms with us, the carded woolen manufacturers? Have not you, the worsted spinners, deluded the wool growers into thinking of an equalization of rates on wool would injure them ,(sic), when in fact it would benefit them?. And are you not keeping up this deception for fear you will be deprived of the special privilege of importing light shrinking, worsted wools at the low 11 cent rate? Now, tell me without evasion, is that not the truth?

"You say the American Woolen Company has more looms on woolens than all the woolen manufacturers of Maine combined. Compared to the gigantic combination of which you are the head; the Maine industry may look small but as was said of Dartmouth College 'there are those among us who love it.' Moreover it is not only the woolen industry of Maine that is involved, although I speak officially only for that section. The welfare of the carded woolen industry of the entire country is at stake and in 1905 that industry give employment to 75,000 persons and yielded $32,000,000 in wages, as compared to 71,000 employees and a payroll of $20,000,000 in the worsted industry.

"You say, 'certainly, if it (the tariff) would affect their looms (on woolens) it would affect ours.' Are not your carded woolen mills affected? Is not a large part of your carded woolen machinery idle? Is not half the carded woolen machinery of New England idle along with yours?

And are not the profit (sic) you make on your worsted products larger than what you would be likely to gain by having the depression in your carded woolen mills checked by a fair tariff on both woolens and worsted? Is not this the reason why you favor the Payne bill?

"And at this point let me ask you, is it not a fact that under the tariff law of 1883 the worsted industry was burdened by an unfair construction of the schedule and did not the National Association of Wool Manufacturers made strenuous efforts for seven years to correct that inequality? Why is it that this association is so indifferent to inequalities which now oppress the carded woolen manufacturers?

"You talk about wool for woolen mills being a drug on the market and sold in such begging quantities that it could be piled up as high as Bunker Hill monument in height. As for the Atlantic Ocean, how fine are you spinning the yarn to reach across it? Now, Mr. Wood, drop such comparison and let us get down to solid business facts. Tell us what wool has been a drug on the market. I have been buying wool continuously and have not found it going a-begging.

"You say the carded woolen business would have been bad anyway because woolen goods are not fashionable. Now answer this question. How long do you think worsted goods would be fashionable if conditions were reversed and the worsted mills were deprived of raw material by prohibitory duties of 400 per cent., and 600 per cent., while the carded

woolen mills could import their raw material with a duty of 25 per cent, to 40 per cent.?

"You say there are always people looking around for some excuse for non-success in their business. That is so, and the carded woolen manufacturers believe that they have found the reason in the tariff that deprives them of raw material while giving it to you at a low rate.

"And we want some better proof than your argument to convince us to the contrary, especially when, in the same breath you admit there is an inconsistency in the tariff. Why do you not try to remove the inconsistency? Is it not because you are now profiting by it and are willing to have others despoiled providing you can hold on to the advantage the law gives you?

"You say the American Woolen Co., has been regarded as a trust. Isn't it a trust, and isn't a trust supported by special privileges, under the law? Of course, you have all the facts in your possession, but enough is generally known to warrant the belief that you are a trust. Take your worsted 'combs' for example. You have about 325 now in operation, and it is reported that the new Ayer Mill, which will be the largest worsted mill in the world, is to have about 125 more combs. That makes 450, or practically one-third of the total in all the worsted mills of the country.

"Your 'combs' will soon be able to consume about 60,000,000 pounds of wool, scoured weight, a year. That is

one-half of all the wool combing and clothing grown in the United States, and considerably more than all the combing wool grown in the country. Doesn't that look like the beginning of a trust?

"When we consider that your company, using more combing wool than is grown in the entire country, is able to import what more you need at a low rate of duty, while you[r] carded woolen competitors are prohibited by the tariff from importing any wool whatever, doesn't the American Woolen Co. look like a trust nursed by the Government at the expense of the people of the United States?

"You say that 'the American Woolen Co. has had nothing whatever to do with influencing the present tariff; that you have studiously kept away from the House Committee, and that, although you were invited to send a representative, you declined to do so, because you were willing to leave it to the other woolen manufacturers of the country, believing they were competent to take care of the situation and whatever would be to their advantage would certainly be to ours.' Such self-effacement by a company like yours is very touching; but give me direct answers to a few simple questions.

"Have you not recently disregarded former estrangement and worked hand and glove on this tariff revision with William Whitman, President of the Arlington Mills, and of the National Association of Wool Manufacturers? Have you not practically delegated him to act in your behalf at Washington

and elsewhere in connection with tariff revision? How does it happen that the only witnesses who appeared before the Ways and Means Committee from the National Association of Wool Manufacturers were William Whitman and Charles H. Harding, two worsted spinners, neither of whom is interested in carded woolen manufacturing?

"Hasn't there been some arrangement by which the carded woolen manufacturers deprived of raw material were also to be denied a hearing at Washington, although a number of them are members? Why do you think that undue attention has been to the top schedule by the controversy between Mr. Bennet and Mr. Whitman? Is it possible to give too much attention to tariff schedules? Are you in favor of the Dingley top schedule under which the duty on tops was greater than on the finished cloth made from them? and if you are not, why talk about the question having been raised in such an unfortunate way? Don't you know that it would not have been raised at all if it had not been for the controversy on Dec. 2 which you deplored? why not apply the same scrutiny on every line of schedule K? The carded woolen manufacturers are willing, are you?

"The carded woolen manufacturers ask only for justice. They ask for no advantage over you in the purchase of raw material or otherwise. They concede the right of the wool grower to ample protection and they ask for no excessive tariff on their finished products by which they might be in a position to extort an excessive profit from the pockets of

the consumer. Now, are you of the same mind? And are you willing to subject your case to the public? If so, will you place before Congress a statement of the combing tests of the worsted wool used by the American Woolen Co. during the past year so that Congress and the public may know how much you gain by the specific duty on light shrinking wools? Will you advise William Whitman, Charles H. Harding and users of mohair and coarse combing wools who may be members of the N.A.W.M. to submit like statements of the wool they have used?

"I repeat, the carded woolen manufacturers want only a square deal. They ask only that they may be able to obtain their raw materials on even terms with our friends, the worsted manufacturers. The Payne bill is entitled 'a bill to provide revenue, equalize duties and encourage the industries of the United States'. This is a clear statement of what a tariff bill should be. If this principle is carried out the carded wool industry is ready to abide by it.

"They have appealed to the Ways and Means Committee for it in vain. If the House of Representatives denies it to them they will appeal to the President of the United States, who has proclaimed his belief in the theory of cost differences as the true principle of protection, who has announced his devotion to the square deal, who, since his election, has declared the tariff revision must be honest and thorough, and intimated that a veto awaits a dishonest bill.

"If he fails to give us the justice he can if he will, then the carded wool manufacturers will carry their case to the court that makes and unmakes Presidents, Senates and Houses of Representatives, the American people, confident that they sooner or later will strip from the tariff law the special privileges that are now giving the worsted spinners such great advantages at the expense of the wool growers, the carded woolen manufacturers, and the consumers of the country.

(Signed) GORDON DOBSON
President of the Maine
Woolen Manufacturers'
Association.[1]"

[1]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, April 8, 1909.

Appendix B

Dobson Protests

Denies statement that woolen men lost by own fault.

Gordon Dobson, president of the Maine Woolen Manufacturers' Association, protests that, contrary to dispatches from Washington, the carded woolen interests of Maine and other states did not lose their fight in Congress because they had failed to state their needs, and cites the following letter to prove his cause:

Letter to Senator Hale

"Hon. Eugene Hale,
"Washington, D.C.

"Sir: We have your letter of the 13th inst. in which you ask us to strike out from a copy of Schedule K. of the Dingley tariff what we do not wish to appear and write in what we want to appear to make it as we would like to have it read when enacted into law. In complying as far as possible with your request we will at the same time state why we cannot do all that you ask.

"We are manufacturers of wool goods by the carded woolen process. Schedule K covers all products of wool whether in the raw state, partly manufactured or finished and by whatever process. To comply with your request it would be necessary for us to recommend classifications, tariff rates and methods of assessment, not only for the

goods we manufacture, but also for those we do not make and for the raw material we have to buy for our mills.

"Let us begin with the raw material. We have already stated to the Committee on finance our objections to the present specific duties on grease wool, which are levied on grease and dirt as well as on wool, and to the prohibitory duties on by-products. They shut us out from the supply of foreign wool and by-products suited for our industry and give the users of light shrinking combing wools access to the foreign markets at a very low rate of duty. By this arrangement the wool grower is deprived of the protection contemplated under the law, the worsted spinning industry enjoys special favors of great value, the carded wool industry is strangled, while the ultimate consumer is deprived of an adequate supply of wool goods.

"The complete remedy for these inequalities under the present law is an ad valorem tariff on wool, which automatically adjusts itself to all conditions by which a tariff should be regulated. We recommend this complete solution to Congress. It would be manifestly improper for us to do more than suggest to you a particular rate of duty on wool. First, because we are not familiar with the business or cost of producing wool in this country or abroad; and second, because we are buyers and users of wool and, therefore, financially interested in obtaining a supply of this material at as low a cost as possible. In revising Schedule K the first thing is to fix the tariff rate on wool, which

is the basis of the entire schedule of duties. This rate should be fair to the wool grower and the consumer of wool goods, and should bear uniformly on all branches of the wool manufacturing industry. The rate on wool must be fixed before it is possible for anyone to frame a system of duties on wool goods. For your guidance on fixing the tariff rate on wool we want to submit the following statement showing the quantity and value of the wool of classes 1 and 2 imported during the five years ending June, 1907, together with the amount of specific duty collected and the ad valorem equivalent of that duty.

"Quantity, 426,036,605 pounds.
Value $93,667,059.
"Duty collected, $47,559,548.

"This statement shows that if the duty collected on the wool imports for these five years had been of ad valorem equivalent it would have been 50.8 per cent. This measures the protection the wool grower has been receiving under the Dingley tariff on ad valorem basis. The importations have been confined to grease wools on which the shrinkage did not exceed 55 per cent., running as low as 15 per cent., the average shrinkage being about 40 per cent. An ad valorem tariff on wool will remove completely the inequalities by which the carded woolen Industry is burdened and the worsted industry favored.

"We also desire to call your attention to the fact that if the complete remedy for the inequalities in the wool

tariff is not applied by the adoption of ad valorem duties, a partial remedy is available by levying a specific duty on the scoured weight. We ask that, whatever duty is levied on wool, it be applied without the arbitrary distinctions that now exist between unwashed, washed, sorted and scoured wools, and that the division into class 1 and 2 be abolished. The cost of washing, sorting and scouring is trifling and the ad valorem or specific rate on the scoured weight can be made to cover such cost.

"Either of the methods above suggested would raise the tariff rate on light shrinking wools to a point at which all wools, including those heavy shrinking grades now excluded by duties rising as high as 800 per cent., would be admitted at the same tariff tax, and thus the wool grower would obtain better protection than at present.

"As a suggestion to you in revising the Dingley tariff on wool, its by-products and wool goods, we respectfully call attention to the following abstract from the political platform of 1908, which stated the principle that should guide you in the tariff revision in which you are now engaged:

"'In all farm legislation the true principle of protection is best maintained by the imposition of such duties as will equal the difference between the cost of production at home and abroad, together with a reasonable profit to American industries.'

"Rates of duty on wool and its by-products that bear equally on all branches of wool manufacturing and are satisfactory to both the wool grower and the American consumer of wool goods will be satisfactory to us. A tariff on the manufacturers of wool based on the principal stated in the above extract will also be satisfactory to us. When the rates of duty on wool and its by-products are determined it will be possible to complete the revision of Schedule K.

"We want, however, to call your attention again to the fact the Schedule K covers a wide range of fabrics other than carded woolen goods, and that the proper way to complete the revision is for you to enlist the co-operation of all branches of the wool manufacturing industry – wool growing, carded woolen, worsted, knitting, carpet and felt – under conditions that will make it impossible for anyone to obtain an unfair advantage, or for the domestic industry to be deprived of adequate protection.

"We do not claim to be less selfish or less anxious to do business under favorable conditions than are those who may be engaged in wool growing or the other branches of wool manufacturing that we have named. What we want to make clear to you is that we, burdened by the inequalities of the present tariff and conscious of the powerful popular sentiment in favor of the transaction of public business with justice to all whether rich or poor, producer or consumer desire to obtain a thorough and honest revision of Schedule K,

under which every interest from the wool grower to the ultimate consumer will have fair p[l]ay (sic) and the policy of adequate protection to American industry will be maintained. If your committee will bring about such conditions for the revision of Schedule K we are confident that, after the rates of duty on wool and by-products have been determined, you can, with the co-operation of all interests affected, complete easily and quickly the revision of Schedule K, as applied to manufacture of wool.

"In conclusion we want to state our belief that any other course by which the existing inequalities in the Dingle tariff are continued, will result in a continuance of the agitation for a thorough revision of the tariff and thus keep the country in a state of uncertainty and suspense. We appeal to you as friends of protection to improve the opportunity you now possess and discharge the duty that rests upon you to revise Schedule K of the Dingley "tariff so that it will be fair to all and an enduring monument to the wisdom of the 61st Congress.

"Yours very truly,
"Gordon Dobson[1]."

[1]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser. July 1,1909.

Appendix C
Discusses Wool Schedule K

Gordon Dobson of Pittsfield, vice-president of the Carded Woolen Manufacturers' Association sends the Daily Trade Record the following letter regarding one of the points raised in the recent address of Joseph R. Grundy before the Wool Growers' Convention at Portland, Oregon.

"Editor Daily Trade Record:

"Sir – The address of Joseph R. Grundy, published over a month after it was delivered at Portland, Oregon, is so transparently fallacious that it will deceive few who read it, but I desire to call attention to one of the statements in it because they (sic) are repetitions of arguments that for forty years have been brought into service whenever Schedule K has been attacked. Mr. Grundy says:

"'It does not require three pounds of all kinds of wool in its natural condition to make one pound of scoured wool, yet wools are abundantly produced in the world, which, in scouring require three pounds to make one pound of scoured product, and protection for these insures the full measure of protection to growers of wools of less shrinkage when levied in this rate.'

"The worsted spinner imports no wool that requires much more than three pounds for one pound of worsted cloth. Large quantities of worsted wool are imported that yield one pound of cloth from two and a half pounds of wool.

"The carded woolen manufacturers, on the other hand finds (sic) that not only four pounds, but frequently five or six pounds of the wool he requires is needed for one pound of cloth. Under such conditions a specific duty of eleven cents a pound on grease wool operates powerfully to favor the worsted spinner and put the carded woolen manufacturers out of business. This is always the inevitable result of a specific duty on wool.

"But for the sake of illustration let us suppose that such discrimination under the wool duty was not alone fatal to the carded wool industry. Then the compensatory duty would be equally effective in putting the carded woolen mill out of business because the law grants a uniform rate of 44 cents a pound. The carded woolen manufacturer requires a compensatory duty as high as 55 or 66 cents if he imports the heavy wools, while the worsted manufacturer requires but 33 cents at the most, and only 24 3/4 cents on a very large part of the wool he imports. In other words, the compensatory duty is too low for the heavy goods required for the carded woolen goods and is too high for the light shrinking wool used for worsted cloth. And yet, under these outrageously unequal conditions, Joseph R. Grundy, a worsted spinner, comes forward and says his industry requires the 44 cent compensatory duty on goods, not because the heavy wools are imported, but because they are produced in the world. It would be unfair to charge Mr. Grundy with having originated this absurdity for the purpose of bringing the wavering

ranks of the wool growers at Portland into line with the worsted spinners. He did not originate it. It is heavy with age, and many years ago was stated in the Senate Chamber by Senator Aldrich of Rhode Island, in order to defend this schedule framed by the worsted spinners and for the worsted spinners.

"Mr. Grundy seeks to convey the wholly unwarranted impression that the carded woolen manufacturers who now seek relief are advocates of free wool. The fact is that the worsted industry was brought into existence in this country by free wool. In 1866 worsted spinners petitioned for free wool, and when they failed to get it they framed the washed wool joker, now 45 years old, by which the washed wool then needed was admitted at 12 cents a pound, while washed wool for carded woolen goods was excluded from the country by a duty of 22 cents a pound. Why did not Mr. Grundy explain these facts to the wool growers at Portland?

"Yours truly,
"Gordon Dobson
Vice-President
Carded Woolen
Mfgrs. Assoc.[1]"

[1]News item in the Pittsfield Advertiser, March 16, 1911.

Peter L. Gulick was born in Chicago, Illinois, on July 29, 1941. He was educated at Blair Academy and received his baccalaureate degree from Hobart College in 1963. Upon graduation he has taught American History at Maine Central Institute in Pittsfield, Maine, for the past six years. In 1966 he was appointed Dean of Students. Mr. Gulick is married to the former Ruth Rickie Phillips of Scarsdale, New York, and they have three children.

THE WOOLEN INDUSTRY OF PITTSFIELD

by Peter Lee Gulick

An Abstract of the Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (in History). August 1969

A history of the woolen industry in Pittsfield was written because it was once the main industry of the town and caused Pittsfield to become the central economic force in its area.

This thesis traces the development of the Industry from its small mill day, its expansion under the Dobson family, and its becoming a part of the giant American Woolen Company.

Also included in the history were the effects of the mill on the town of Pittsfield and the people the mill helped to support.

With all the few available statistics, a study of wages and mill earnings is made; as well as a resume of the complete change from paternalistic industry to impersonal industry under the American Woolen Company. The final few pages contain the death of the American Woolen Company, and the end of an era in Pittsfield.