

KNOXVILLE MILLS

[Jack Neely's article on Knoxville Mills](#)

In the 1830's In 1830, there were two spinning factories, ten wool carding machines. William Morse operated a spinning factory. The other spinning factory was operated by Nathaniel Bosworth, a little higher up the creek, and here there were employed from fifteen to twenty hands. It remained in operation until 1838. William Oldham in 1833 built a cotton spinning factory, which was located on First creek between Church and Cumberland streets, the machinery for which Mr. Oldham hauled across the Cumberland mountains from Lexington, Ky. This mill was operated exclusively by water power. In 1838 the mill dams were destroyed by a freshet, and Mr. Oldham removed his machinery to Blount county.¹

It may be well to state that during the first twenty-five or thirty years of the history of Knox county, cotton was therein a staple crop. But it began to decline about 1820 and had entirely ceased by 1830. The first cotton gin about which anything is still remembered was erected by Calvin Morgan on Gay street near where the Insurance building now stands, and the second was built and operated on Second creek by Mr. McCulloch. The earliest wool carding machine in this vicinity was located on First creek about two miles above its mouth, set up by James Scott, and operated by him until the coming on of the Civil war. Another was run for a time near the site of Bosworth's factory, mentioned above.

In this connection it may be well to explain the decline of the water power, which up to 1838 was unusually abundant. Previous to that time the town was confined almost exclusively to the territory between First and Second creeks and the Flag pond and Holston river, and was almost entirely surrounded by water. Flag pond occupied the depression now occupied by the tracks of the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia railroad, now the Southern railway, and in 1838 the cutting down of the dams drained the ponds, and thus destroyed to a considerable extent the water power. Flag pond was looked upon for a number of years as a menace to the health of the town, and was frequently under the consideration of the board of health. On First creek, prior to the cutting down of the dams, there were three mill ponds within the space of half a mile, the upper one, known as White's pond, extending north and northeast for more than a mile. On Second creek there were two large ponds of this kind, and while the dams were afterward to some extent restored, yet there has not since 1838 been anywhere near as much water power. Since steam has been generally introduced water power is not so popular.²

In 1855 a large steam flouring mill was erected on the site of the Knoxville rolling mill by M. N. Williams, but it was soon afterward burned down. It was succeeded by the Knoxville City Mills, located on Broad street, and abandoned in 1880. In 1858 F. A. R. Scott and J. C. Deaderick erected on First creek what was for many years throughout this part of the South known as the "Trio Mill," which has been since then in continuous operation, and has for many years been as widely and well known for the many excellent brands of flour produced. The mill was remodeled in 1884, and fully equipped with the then latest roller process machinery. The

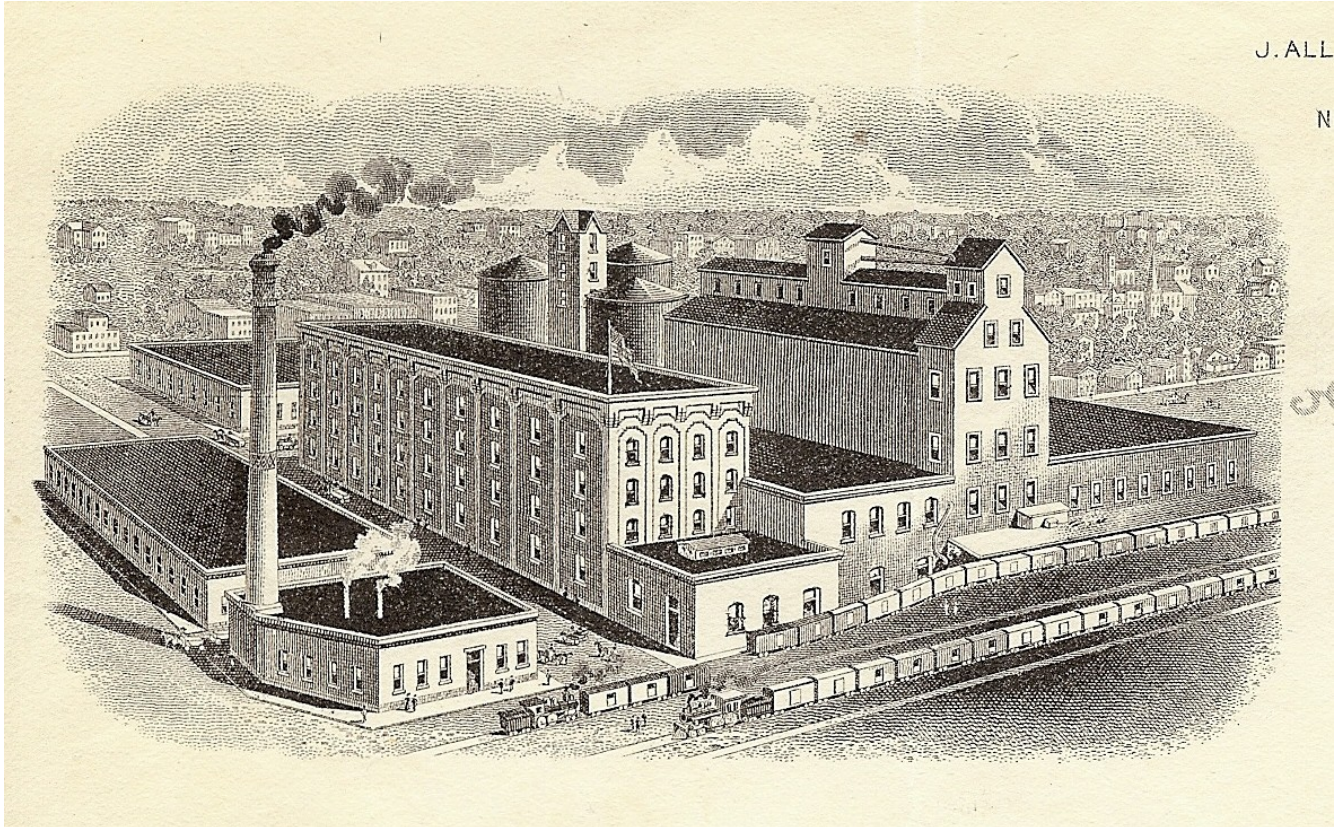
1 William Rule Editor; *Standard History of Knoxville, Tennessee* p. 195

2 William Rule Editor; *Standard History of Knoxville, Tennessee* p. 196

most noted brands of flour manufactured at this mill are the "Magnolia," "Silver Leaf," "Choice," "Famous" and "Little Valley Family." One of the specialties of this mill is water ground corn meal, and other products used as feed, all of which are extensively sold throughout East Tennessee and surrounding states.³

KNOXVILLE CITY MILL COMPANY and White Lily Flour Company

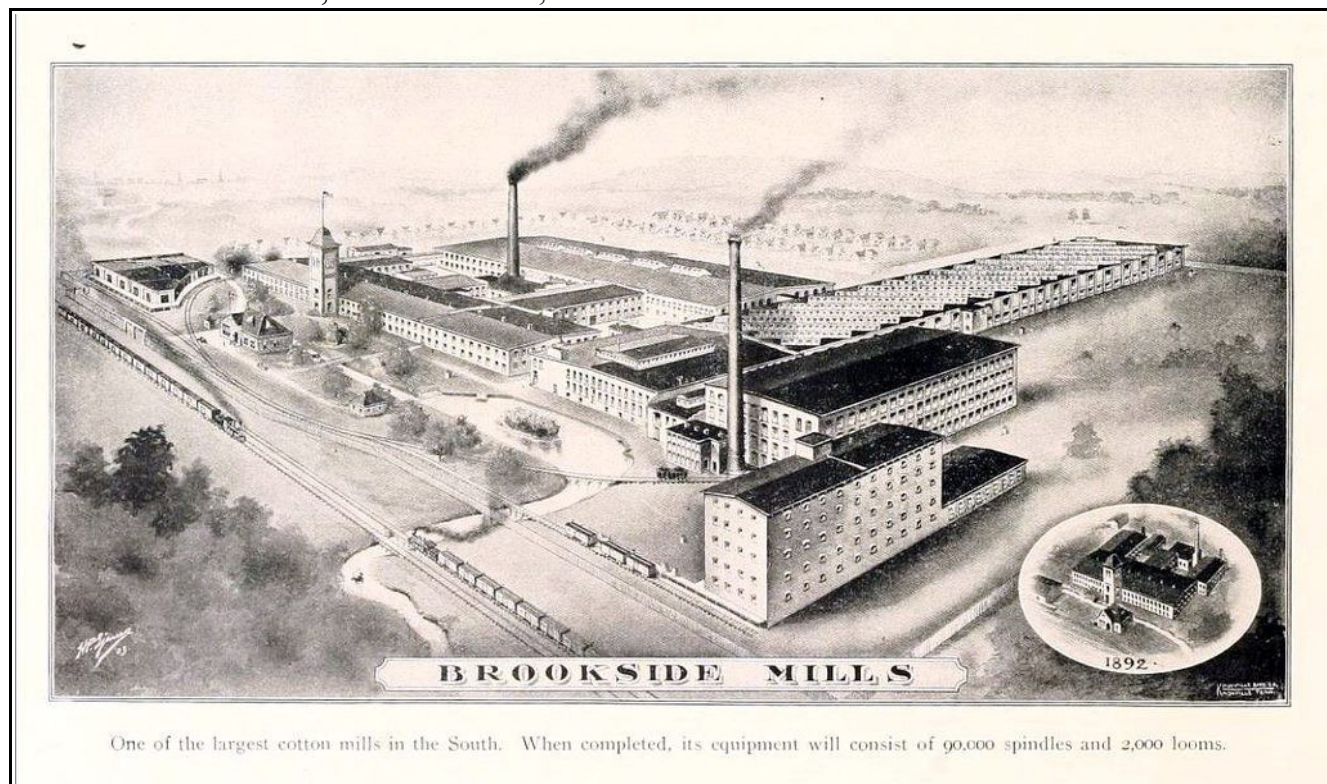
Crozier at corner ETV&G RR, INCORPORATED IN 1883, Jasper Lillie, President



[J Allen Smith & Company](#)

³ William Rule Editor; *Standard History of Knoxville, Tennessee* p. 212

BROOKSIDE MILLS, KNOXVILLE, TENN. 1884-



[Brookside Mills aerial view](#) (1919 From McClung Digital Collection)

Notwithstanding the fact that we are passing through the most trying times known to the cotton manufacturers of the South, yet the Brookside mills of this city are driving ahead on full time, and instead of reducing wages as most of the mills are doing, they have just advanced wages, both in the spinning and weaving departments. These facts prove conclusively that the Brookside mills are under the management of thoroughly practical men; men who are not easily discouraged. They have, within the last few months, built and equipped a large addition to their mill which is now one of the best equipped mills in the entire South. It now contains 22,000 spindles and 604 looms. Mr. W. T. Lang, the wise and efficient agent, is one of those energetic hustlers who thoroughly understands his business, and always observes everything from the smallest detail to the most important matter connected therewith. He is ably assisted by the following namea overseers: card room, J. H. Stephens; spinning room, C. H. Land; weave room, L. A. Ellenburg; cloth and finishing rooms, J. D. Ellenburg, all of whom are well versed in their business and have the respect and confidence of their help. Mr. Lang adheres to the weekly payment of his help, which, to my mind, should be done by all mills, as it is a great advantage to the help, enabling them to pay cash for their supplies, and thus save from 10 to 20 per cent usually charged where the payments are made monthly. When we consider the many advantages of Knoxville over other places, both to manufacturers and as a place of residence for the operatives, we are surprised that instead of one there are not a dozen cotton mills here. We invite capitalists to investigate the cheapness of manufacturing sites, transportation, fuel, etc. We also invite cotton mill operatives who are working in the country mills where the company owns all the tenement houses, to consider the advantage of working in a mill located in a city where they can in a few years, by the exercise of economy and with the assistance of

some one of our numerous building and loan associations, secure for themselves a home of their own, and where we have the very best of schools for the children who are too young to work to attend, and good churches, and a great many other advantages. But enough this time. In the future I will tell you about our woolen mills and hosiery factory. —*Bobbin*.⁴

It was not uncommon to find young children working in the mills. Photographer Lewis Hines documented both the workers and the working conditions. Brookside Mills employed children, but they provided some programs for children. At one point, they had a school for children. This school served as the impetus for the creation of [Wesley House](#). Wesley House was started in 1907 and continues to provide services to the community today.

A woman told me that her Grandmother took in boarders after her Grandfather died and then went to work at the mill to help support her family. She said that often the children working at the mill were hungry. The workers would take their lunch outside when the weather permitted. The children who worked at the mill and other neighborhood children would gather around hoping to get some lunch scraps. My friend's Grandmother would always pack a little extra food to share with these children.

BROOKSIDE MILLS, INC.			
EXPLANATION OF EARNINGS AND DEDUCTIONS			
EARNINGS	DEDUCTIONS		BALANCES
A-REGULAR	E-F.I.C.A.	M-WELFARE FUND	X-EARNINGS TO DATE
B-OVERTIME	F-W'HOLDING TAX	N-PURCHASES	Y-W'HOLD TAX TO DATE
C-OTHER	G-XMAS CLUB	P-	Z-F.I.C.A. TO DATE
D-	H-INSURANCE	R-	W-XMAS CLUB TO DATE
	J-UNION DUES	V-MISC.	
	L-SAVINGS BONDS		
HOURS	EARNINGS	DEDUCTIONS	BALANCES
40.00	AT 45.30	E .68	XX 1,345.81
	45.30	FV 4.00	YY 133.00
		GS 5.00	ZZ 20.17
		J .50	WH 160.00
		I .10	35.02

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4 *Fibre & fabric: a record of American textile industries in the Cotton and Woolen Trade, Volume 24;* Boston, MA; 22 AUG 1896; p.3

APPROX. 1910

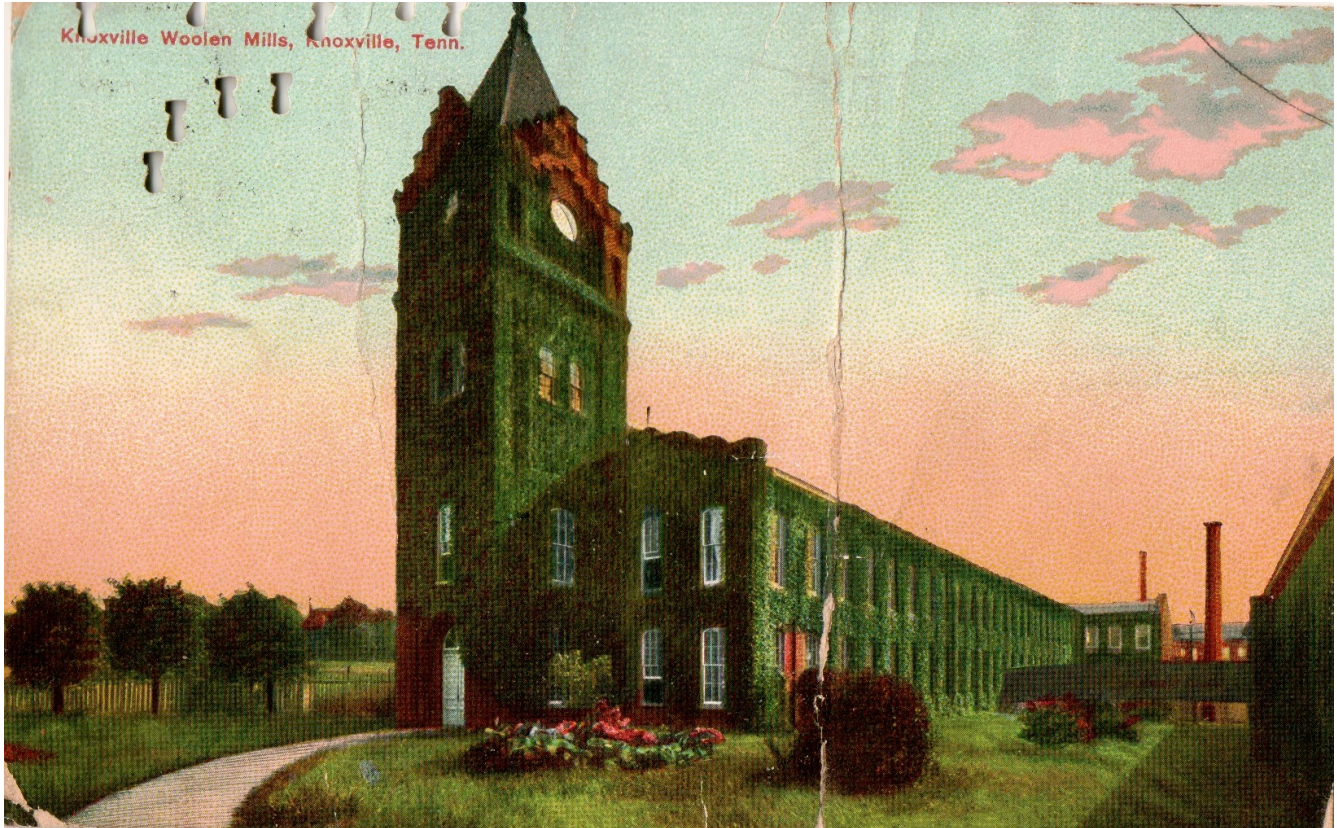
SAM BOZEMAN

HARRISON
BOZEMAN



DRAINAGE DITCH OUTSIDE BROOKSIDE MILLS

Knoxville Woolen Mills (1885-



Located at the corner of Dale Avenue and 17th Street

In 1884, April 14, the Knoxville Woolen Mills was incorporated by R. P. Gettys, E. J. Sanford, James D. Cowan, Charles J. McClung and C. M. McGhee, the purpose of the incorporation, as expressed in their application for a charter, being to manufacture raw material by the aid of machinery into woolen goods and fabrics at their mills, which they located in Knoxville at the intersection of the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia railroad and York street, the first mill of the present mammoth plant being erected in 1885. Additional capital was raised and the building up of the plant began and continued until at the present time the mills have a floor space of about four and a half acres, and in them about 600 hands find employment.⁵

The Knoxville Woolen Mills Tenn have made some improvements their carding room Including new feeds No 1 weave room and the carding spinning dressing and spooling departments are now operated by electricity.⁶

⁵ William Rule Editor; *Standard History of Knoxville, Tennessee* p. 212

⁶ America's Textile Reporter: For thr Combined Textile Industries, vol 21, p. 303.

☞ WANTED AN A 1 DYER & FINISHER
One who understands handling all grades of wool
and cotton mixes chain and piece dyes union dyes etc
Address KNOXVILLE WOOLEN MILLS Knoxville Tenn
or apply In person to our agents Youngman Bartlett & Anderson
817 Broadway New York ☞

1907 Ad

Wool and Manufacturers of :Tennessee: Knoxville Woolen Mills, Clay Faulkner ⁷
TENNESSEE MILLS IDLE.

Knoxville, Tenn., *January 11, 1897*. Committee On Ways And Means:

There are eight woolen mills in east Tennessee, one each at Maryville, Sweetwater, Mossy Creek, Elizabethton, Athens, Cleveland, Chattanooga, and Knoxville.

Woolen mills are always rated by sets, our mill at Knoxville having 21 sets. The seven other mills aggregate sets, in all 40 sets. These mills cost, with capital to run them, about \$30,000 a set, or \$1,200,000 invested in that industry in east Tennessee. These mills employ from 1,500 to 1,600 hands, and for the last four or five years they have been swapping half dollars. At present, as you know, wool is free and the tariff on manufactured goods, I think, averages from 40 to 45 cents. At all events, if the woolen-mill industry is to be maintained in this country it must have a greater protection than it now has, for, as we all know, very many woolen mills all over the country are idle, and if a duty of 8 or 10 per cent is to be put upon wool, the duty upon the manufactured goods should be increased above the rate that is added to wool.

There is one thing that is absolutely necessary, that on the present ratio woolen mills in this country cannot exist, therefore it is necessary that there should be an increase on manufactured goods, even if there is no duty put upon wool. But, of course, there will be a duty upon wool, but such duty will not increase the price of wool to the farmer equal to the duty, as foreign wool would immediately take a lower level just as it advanced when wool was made free of duty, by reason of its increased market here. E. J. Sanford.⁸

KNOXVILLE, Knox Co. (E) Pop. 40,000. RR 622. 626, 398. Tel.

Cumberland Knitting Mills. Inc. 1901. Cap. 10,000. J. Wylie Brownlee, Pres.; D. W. Boyd, Sec. and Treas.; T. J. Whittaker, "Supt. Ladies' Summer Ribbed Underwear. 10 Knitting, 10 Sewing Machines. Dye, Bleach and Finish. Buy 22 and 24 Yarns. Sell Direct and Agts. Knoxville Knitting Mills Co. Inc. 1893. Cap. »30,000. G. S. Andes, Pres.; Jas. C. Rogers, Sec. and Treas. Fine Men's, Ladies' and Children's Seamless Cotton Hosiery. 100 Knitting Machines. Employ 125. Buy 5 to 60 Cotton Yarn. Sell Direct.

⁷ Congress Senate, Bullentin: Committee on finance: Volumes 42-53; Government Printing Office, Washington; p. 124
8TARIFF HEARINGS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS. SECOND SESSION, FIFTY-FOURTH CONGRESS. 1896-97. WASHINGTON: GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE. 1897. P. 1709

Knoxville Woolen Mills. Cap. \$.550,000. E. J. Sanford, Pres.; J. A. McKeldin, Sec. and Treas.; R. P. Gettys, Vice-Pres. and Mgr. Kentucky Jeans, Cassimeres and Cotton Warps. 22 Sets Cards. 88 Broad, 300 "Narrow Looms. 10,000 Ring Sp. Dye. 7 Boilers. Employ 700. Sell Direct. Parham, W. T. & Sons. Riverside Woolen Mills. Jeans and Cassimeres. 3 Sets Cards. 24 Broad, 50 Narrow Looms. Dye. 2 Boilers. Buy C Yarn. Sell Direct. (*Also Mary ville.*)

Standard Knitting Mills. Inc. 1900. E. E. McMillan, Pres.; J. T. Brownlee, Sec. and Mgr.; H. B. Branner (Knoxville mayor 1880), Treas. Men's Cotton Ribbed Underwear 20 Knitting, 38 Sewing Machines. Dye and Finish. 1 Boiler. Employ 65. Buy C Yarn. Sell Direct.⁹

Knoxville Woolen Mill Workers' Appeal to Organized Labor.

Secretaries are requested to read this appeal at union meetings, and labor and reform press please copy.

Knoxville, Tenn., Feb. 2, 1901.

Fellow-Workers: We take this method to appeal to you for moral and financial assistance to sustain the members of Federal Labor Union, No. 7295, of this city, who have been discharged for being members of a labor union. As the officials of the Knoxville Woolen Mills refuse to employ them while they remain in the union, and they are determined to continue as members of organized labor, therefore in this struggle for our principles, we appeal to you to do your utmost to help them maintain their independence, and their right to belong to their labor organization if they consider it proper.

We are carrying on a systematic boycott on over three hundred known patrons of the Knoxville Woolen Mills in 83 cities, 24 States, and our list is increasing as new ones are discovered. Their goods are sold, directly or by agents, in every State of the Union and British provinces. The boycott is effective, and victory for organized labor in the slave-like mills of the South will be obtained in good time.

Central bodies and local unions will please write to the undersigned for lists of the firms in their vicinity who are customers of the Knoxville Woolen Mills Co., and we ask you to have a committee call on them and request them to discontinue the use of their goods until this trouble is adjusted, and their employes are allowed to belong to any organization that they wish.¹⁰

MILL NOTES 1903

The Riverside Woolen Mills and the Knoxville Woolen Mills of Knoxville, Tenn., have announced a reduction of hours for their employes from 11 to 10 hours per day, without cutting wages. The mills employ about 150 and 750 people respectively. This Initiative was taken by C. L. Parham, of the Riverside mills, who is Issuing an appeal to all textile industries in the South to take similar action.¹¹

9 Official Blue Book Textile Directory 14th Edition, Davison Publishing Co. New York, New York, 1901, p. 339.

10 Samuel Gompers, John McBride, William Green, AFL-CIO, American Federationist; Washington, DC 1 JAN 1901; p.90.

11 Wool and Cotton Reporter, Boston, New York and Philadelphia; 1 JAN 1903 P. 46

Appalachian Mills (formerly Knoxville Woolen Mills)



Photo of a remaining section of Appalachian Mills, now on the property of Roman Hass Appalachian Mills, established in 1910, was acquired by J T Brownlee in 1922.¹²

17th Street and Dale Avenue In 1924 JT Brownlee was president.

Appalachian Mills Dale at 17th purchased by former UT football player [Breezy Wynn](#) Southern Athletic Company started in the Emporium Building on Gay St and then became Bike Athletic.

Photo

SUITS AGAINST TEXTILE MILLS.

Damage suits have "been filed in the circuit court at Knoxville, Tenn., growing out of alleged faulty conditions of sewers in the cotton and woolen mills of that city. Four damage suits, each for \$5,000 and two against the Knoxville Woolen Mills and two against the Knoxville cotton Mills, have been filed by A. Y. Burrows. E. L. Brewer sues the Knoxville woolen mills for \$5,000 and the Knoxville cotton mills for \$5,000.

Clevell sues both corporations for similar amounts. It is claimed that the property of each plaintiff has been damaged by the sewerage of these corporations. It is also claimed that sickness has resulted from defective sewerage arrangements.¹³

¹² Change In Knitting Mill: JT Brownlee Heads Syndicate Taking Over Appalachian; New York Times; 18 JUN 1922.

¹³ Wool and Cotton Reporter, Boston, New York and Philadelphia; 7 JAN 1904, P.427

Cherokee Mills

[Cherokee Mills Interior](#) Photo in The University of Tennessee Special Collections on line library¹⁴



Cherokee Mills on Sutherland Avenue



The railroad behind Cherokee Mills. All of the mills were located near railroads.

¹⁴ Thompsons Incorporated, "Cherokee Textile Mills," in Special Collections Online, Item #3969, <http://kiva.lib.utk.edu/spc/items/show/3969> (accessed January 27, 2012).

Goodall's Mill and the Palm Beach Store

[Photos](#)



Riverside and Jefferson Mills

Located across the river from the University Of Tennessee.



[Riverside Mills](#)

Standard Knitting Mills

[Standard Knitting Mills photos](#)

Aerial photo of [Standard Knitting Mills](#) from the McClung Digital Collection

[More photos from Walls of the city](#)



Standard Knitting Mills was one of the best known mills in Knoxville. They were known for producing underwear. Standard Knitting Mills did it all. Cotton came in by rail in bales. It was opened, carded, spun into yarn, conditioned, knit into fabric, dyed any color, cut and sewn into the various garments. It seemed to be unique in the fact that it all done under one roof. One person recalled a family member who started working in the mill at nine years of age. She was so small that she had to stand on a box to be able to work. It was not unusual for young children to work in the mills. Although the working conditions were harsh and safety rules were often lax, worker could earn a pretty good living. One woman reported that she could make ten dollars an hour on production in 1989. This was a pretty good wage in 1989. Another woman told me that she worked as a tester at Standard Knitting Mills. When they were going to make a new product, she made up the samples. She said that they weren't rich, but her kids always had underwear. Some of the best stories about Standard Knitting Mills relate to the Billy Meyer Stadium that was next to the mills. Sometimes fly balls from the ballpark would break the windows in the mills and there are many stories about workers finding baseballs under their machines.

Stories:

Standard Knitting Mills did it all. Cotton came in by rail in bales. It was opened, carded, spun

into yarn, conditioned, knit into fabric, dyed any color, cut and sewn into the various garments. It seemed to be unique in the fact that it all done under one roof.

I have lots of memories of playing outside and hearing the Standard whistle at 11:30 (lunch) 12 noon (return to work) and 3:30 (time to leave) and many many women walked by our house in their green uniforms going home.

The Standard Knitting Mill also use to have a 10 AM prayer whistle. The whistle blew and all machines stopped for one minute of prayer. If they did this now I wonder what would happen!! You could hear that whistle for miles around.

Billy Myers Stadium, with the homerun holes in the Standard Knitting Mill plant's windows just past the LF wall...what great memories.

The only reason I remember is cause I used to work next to one of those broken windows.

Did you ever get hit??

No luckily, but did find a ball or 2 under my machine.

[Photo of workers including children](#) by Lewis Hines

The paper hats that some of the women are wearing were to keep lint out of their hair.

I worked at the Standard Knitting Mill for 37 years, until the day it closed. We had no AC and only big fans way up in the ceiling. I was on the top floor in the finishing dept. The ones on that floor had to climb 86 steps to get to their dept. The flights circled around. When younger I would go out to eat at the restaurant next door. Had 30 minutes to go down those steps, eat and go back up to my machine.



