

*Like a Family*  
Hall, Leloudis, Korstad, Murphy, Jones, Daley

*Like a Family* evolved out of an extensive University of North Carolina ~~extensive~~ oral history project in the late 1970s ~~by the University of North Carolina~~. The authors found that despite the hardships of mill work, many workers had fond memories of the mills ~~as a~~ resulting from their ~~of the~~ sense of community ~~experienced~~ while working there. *Like a Family* sets the standard for integrating oral history into historical analysis. Chapter ~~two~~ Two ~~is entitled~~ "Public Work," describes working in the mills and is titled for the term mill workers gave to factory jobs, ~~and describes working in the mills~~. This summary focuses on elements from ~~that e~~ Chapter Two that most closely align with the Yocona Cotton Mill in Water Valley, Mississippi.

**Comment [LEM1]:** Can you tell more on **how** it sets the standard? Maybe something like "Like a Family sets the standard for integrating oral history into historical analysis by..." or "...sets the standard for...through its..." It just seems like a statement with no support (at least at this point in the doc). A smart aleck would ask, "It sets the standard? Who says? Prove it."

As the South ~~proceeded into~~ developed industry following the Civil War, it did not have a class of skilled managers or workers. "Few Southerners had ever seen a factory, much less worked in one." (51) As a consequence, mill owners recruited managers from the North. ~~They a~~ Mills ~~also focused on producing simple products — yarn and simple~~ weaves of cloth — which did not require as much skilled labor.

**Comment [LEM2]:** Is "they" the mill owners, or the Southerners before the war?

*Like a Family* describes the ~~overall~~ process of turning raw cotton into ~~the~~ finished ~~products of~~ yarn or cloth. The process started in the opening room, where workers opened bales of cotton by cutting away the bindings. Because ~~of the~~ profuse lint and dirt was highly flammable, this room was sometimes located in a separate building to avoid

**Comment [LEM3]:** Use a specific word to explain that it was a lot and a problem—profuse, abundant, excessive, etc.

prevent fires spreading to other buildings. The **openers** also ~~worked~~ran machines that tore the compacted cotton apart and fluffed it up. The cotton ~~then was then sent~~went through a vacuum system to the picker room, ~~where~~Here, **pickers**, also called **“lappers,”** manually combed through the cotton and cleaned out dirt, twigs, and other debris and shaped the cotton into sheets. ~~In the n~~Next step, carding machines with "sharp metal teeth" (49) removed the remaining dirt. **Card hands** operated the machines and ~~then~~shaped the cotton into ~~very~~long, loose coils of cotton ~~At this point the cotton was cleaned and~~ready for ~~turning~~spinning into thread or yarn.

The first step in spinning occurred in the d**Drawing frames**, which contained ed a series of rollers that ~~that~~ straightened the strands of cotton and then combined them into a single strand. Next, **rovers** twisted the strands together to make them stronger. Finally, **spinners** moved up and down in front of spinning frames, twisting broken threads back through the machines to wind the fibers even tighter and stronger. Thread coming out of the spinning frames was wrapped around large spools called **“bobbins.”** As the bobbins filled, **doffers** replaced full bobbins with empty ~~bobbins~~ones to keep the spinning frames going.

Full bobbins were ~~then~~loaded onto ~~a separate set of~~spooling machines ~~called~~spooling machines. These machines, operated by **spoolers**, combined thread from ~~ten~~10 to ~~fifteen~~15 bobbins to make ~~the~~yarn. If thread broke during this process, spoolers ~~it~~ had ~~to be tied~~tie it in small knots to ~~repair it and~~keep the process going.

**Winders** ~~took the~~rolled the yarn ~~and rolled it up~~into balls of yarn. ~~This was the ending of~~ the process for this mills, ~~which that~~ marketed only twine and yarns. Other mills took the process further, usinged the yarn to make cloth as their final product.

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**Comment [LEM4]:** Are “spinners” people or a machine part? If you mean that people called “spinners” walked up and down, “walked” might be more specific and descriptive here.

**Comment [LEM5]:** Why is this boldfaced? It looks like so far that boldfaced terms are the people roles/titles in the mill.

Using data from seven North Carolina mills in 1904, *Like a Family* gives the average wage per week for some of these mill jobs.

Job	Weekly Pay per week
opener	\$4.50
picker ( <u>lapper</u> )	\$5.10
card hand	\$4.50
<u>drawing frame worker</u>	\$4.50
spinner	\$3.00
doffer	\$2.40
spooler	\$4.00
twister	\$4.80
sweeper	\$3.60

Although ~~working in~~ cotton mills work was repetitive and mechanical ~~work~~, it was not all drudgery. *Like a Family* explores ~~some of the~~ ways workers coped and children played during their work. For example, workers ~~would~~ frequently ~~take~~ took a full hour for lunch. Because they lived ~~close by~~ nearby, an hour gave them time to go home, be with their family, eat, and rest for a few minutes. At the mill, because ~~During~~ ~~the day,~~ they worked at machines ~~right~~ next to each other, ~~and therefore~~ workers could talk while working. Additionally, they took breaks while others watched their

**Comment [LEM6]:** I made suggested format changes to your table.

**Comment [LEM7]:** Could you sort the items in this table in some way—either by order they were mentioned in your narrative on the previous pages, or high-low- by pay amount?

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**Comment [LEM8]:** I didn't see this listed in your narrative, but I did see "rovers" described in the drawing frame paragraph. Do you want to add it here, or put it in parentheses after "drawing frame worker" if that would be accurate? I realize that maybe *Like a Family* didn't give a pay amount for "rover."

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machines. Men frequently went out to smoke; women congregated ~~just~~ to talk. They all went outside as often as ~~they could~~ possible to escape the mill's heat ~~of the mill~~. Children ~~also would~~ played during their own slack work times ~~of their work~~. Taking advantage of the ~~system of~~ belts and pulleys system, children ~~would~~ sometimes ~~hold~~ held onto the belts and ~~ride~~ rode up toward the high ceilings... and then dropped themselves at the last minute. They played ball games with balls of yarn, and ~~B~~boys ~~would~~ spit tobacco juice out of the windows, sometimes aiming for people's heads ~~of people~~ below.

Mill workers looked out for each other, in part because the mills did not. The only insurance was ~~the that which~~ insurance that protected the mill owners from fires and ~~other such~~ major damage — and nothing to protect workers from injuries or sickness. Accidents were common, and workers suffered from other health issues as well. Cotton dust was a major source of respiratory problems. Some workers suffered from byssinosis, or brown lung disease, without knowing it. ~~It~~ These respiratory problems would gradually grow ~~gradually~~ worse until an affected workers finally had to quit work.

However, the need for mill ~~It was this process of~~ workers to helping each other further encouraged ~~out that created~~ the sense of community, giving ~~that caused~~ workers even more reason to think of the mill “like a family.”

Sources:

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher B. Daly. *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*. Chapel Hill, NC, and London, England: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

## Reflection

Many of the elements discussed in *Like a Family* apply to the Yocona Cotton Mill in Water Valley, beginning with the comments about management. Charles E.

Romberger ~~was served as~~the superintendent of the cotton mill in Water Valley for many years. ~~From e~~Census records show that, ~~we know~~ he was born in Pennsylvania, as was his father. He may ~~very well~~ have been recruited from the North to work at the mill because of the absence of qualified managers from the South.

~~Looking at census records for~~ Water Valley census records name, ~~we see~~ many of the jobs described in *Like a Family*, including the following job titles: helper, laborer, fireman, spinning, twister room, spooler, frame hand, drawing, ball winder, picker, doffer, and cards. In previous interviews, members of the Eubanks family mentioned some of these ~~same~~ jobs as well. Norman Eubanks said he was a doffer and that his grandfather Lyman Eubanks worked as a twister. Edna Thrasher said her father, Dorris Eubanks, started as a sweeper in Water Valley. The 1910 Water Valley census shows Lyman Eubanks as a doffer and one of his sisters as a spinner; however, the census did not show Dorris Eubanks as working at that time. The book *Cook Family History* said stated that Nora Matthews Cook ran a spooling machine at the Yocona Cotton Mill. Her husband was foreman of the spooling department and ~~was paid~~earned 75 cents ~~per a~~ day. Assuming he worked six days a week, ~~that would have made~~ his pay would have totaled \$4.50 per week, in the same range as reported in *Like a Family*.

The Yocona Cotton Mill apparently never manufactured cloth. ~~They~~It produced yarns and twine, matching the assertion from *Like a Family* that Ssouthern cotton mills sometimes produced simpler products because they did not have the background or

**Comment [LEM9]:** I made this change to get rid of first person voice. However, if you are supposed to use first person because it is a "reflection," ignore these changes. (I noticed that you switched back to first person at the end of this Reflection section, so I think now that you are supposed to use first person voice here.)

**Comment [LEM10]:** If accurate, you could say this more strongly:

"He was likely recruited from the North..."

**Comment [LEM11]:** Why I set off one of these names with commas and not the other:

I didn't use commas with the grandfather's name because the name has to be there (is "essential") to understand which of two grandfathers it might be.

I used commas with the father's name because a person only has one father—so the father's name isn't essential to know which father you're talking about...since there's only one.

That's the rule—use commas to set off non-essential (also called "non-restrictive") phrases and clauses... Don't use commas when the info is needed to specify which one you could be talking about. I used to tell my freshman English students, "If you say, 'My wife Julie is here,' then you've actually said you are a polygamist."

expertise to produce complicated weaves. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1885 said that the Yocona Cotton Mill manufactured "cotton yarn ~~and&~~ bats." An 1897 Water Valley newspaper article said the mill "manufactures yarns, batts ~~and&~~ wrapping twine."

**Comment [LEM12]:** You don't have to use the ampersand even if you are directly quoting, although you can keep it if you are using it for effect.

In 1911, the Yocona Cotton Mill suffered one of ~~its fires~~. A Water Valley newspaper article says the ~~fire started in the picker room; the article specifically ~~and~~ mentions the picker machine~~ (described above). In 1926, the major fire that destroyed the Yocona Cotton Mill started in the boiler room. Both of these articles mentioned that the owners had insurance on the mill and that the losses were partially covered by ~~that~~ insurance.

**Comment [LEM13]:** Can you say how many fires it suffered? Or say that it was relatively few or many fires?  
Examples:

"suffered one of its 14 fires."

"suffered one if its few fires."

**Comment [LEM14]:** The way you worded it was literally saying that the fire itself mentioned the picker machine.

~~I ~~have~~~~ read most of *Like a Family*. I think it is a book that I will return to as I learn more about the cotton mill in Water Valley.

**Comment [LEM15]:** I got rid of this contraction because you hadn't been using them anywhere else in this doc.