Work and Play: Recreation and Reality in a Southern Female Textile World

Beth Anne English

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WORK AND PLAY: RECREATION AND REALITY IN A SOUTHERN FEMALE TEXTILE WORLD

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Beth Anne English
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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts

Brena Anne England
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Approved, December 1996

Delsa Meyer
James Whittenburg
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ABSTRACT

The working-class culture experienced by female employees of the Matoaca, Virginia textile mill between 1888 and 1895 grew out of the restrictions and regularities of factory life. This working-class culture represents one aspect of the wider culture of southern, white, working women at the end of the nineteenth century. This study not only contributes to broader studies concerning the working class of the late nineteenth century but also to a greater understanding of the industrial history of the New South and the lives of industrial workers in late nineteenth century America.

The body of the thesis is divided into four main chapters, encompassing two levels of analysis, quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative analysis demonstrates that female textile workers in Matoaca, Virginia were representative of white, working-class, southern textile workers in general. The qualitative analysis encompasses three themes of working-class culture that are described in the correspondences between mill operative Anthelia Holt and her friend Lottie Clark: the regularities of mill work, heterosocial activities within the mill community, and female social networks. These three aspects of working-class life are interdependent as they all supported and helped shape the culture of the Matoaca mill community. The project is important as a means to shed light upon both the female culture of the Matoaca, VA mill community and the larger southern working-class culture of which Matoaca female workers were a part.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“There is talk of the mill stopping . . . if it do stop I will come up and stay with you for a week or so . . . I would be very glad to see you all but if the mill doesn’t stop I cannot come this year.”

Anthelia Bolt to Lottie Clark
15 September 1889

The working-class culture created by female employees of the Matoaca, Virginia textile mill between 1888 and 1895 grew out of the restrictions and regularities of factory life. The 1888–1895 correspondence of two young women illuminates the realities of the working-class culture of a southern mill community; a southern mill community that stands as representative of the dominant culture of southern mill communities and of the late nineteenth century southern working-class experience. By engaging with the topic primarily through gender considerations, this analysis contributes not only to a greater knowledge of the nature of labor history but also to a greater knowledge of the southern, white female experience within a growing industrial nation. Using the mill community of Matoaca, Virginia as a case study, this thesis is significant as a means to shed light upon both the working-class culture of the Matoaca community and the larger southern working-class culture of which Matoaca was a part.

Four broad historiographic questions frame this thesis. These four questions comprise the framework within which I address where and in what capacity the industrial working class participated in the New South experience, as well as shaped a southern women’s working-class
culture at the end of the nineteenth century. First, how did textile mills shape and fit into the process of late nineteenth century New South industrialization? Second, how did southern women become an integrated part of the labor force of these mills? The third looks to the historiography addressing women's labor history in the context of working-class socialization and norms. Fourth, how did late nineteenth century southern gender norms affect the working-class perception of self and the construction of acceptable working-class behaviors?

In the last ten years, women's labor historians have begun using the multiple analytic lenses of gender, race, ethnicity, and class to more fully explore women's labor history. In her 1984 essay, "A New Agenda for American Labor History: A Gendered Analysis and the Question of Class," Alice Kessler-Harris expounded upon the need to deepen the analysis of women's labor history to include not only traditional economic and Marxist analyses but also gender and ethnic considerations. In other works, Alice Kessler-Harris and Julie Matthaei incorporate nineteenth century prescriptive gender norms in their explorations of how middle-class and upper-class reformers attempted to bring working-class women into the cult of domesticity. Although well intentioned, they argue that middle-class and upper-class reformers who sought to impose the cult of domesticity upon working women in a very real sense perpetrated a sexual division of labor and wages. The white middle-class norms these reformers prescribed relegated the majority of female workers to jobs that mimicked domestic work. Sex-typed jobs, in turn, separated male and female labor while placing a higher monetary value on "men's" labor and a lower monetary value on "women's" labor. Working-class women clashed with these prescriptions as the working-class lived reality demanded that women receive equal wages for their labor, regardless of whether management
considered this labor "men's" or "women's" work.

Other historians argue that working-class cultures often redefined gender and labor norms, while reinforcing community and workplace networks. Vicki Ruiz, Kathy Peiss, Cathy McHugh, Suzanne Lebsock, Jacqueline Hall, and Victoria Byerly have all employed case studies as a means of analyzing women's labor history, especially the working-class "lived" experience. Whether in turn-of-the-century New York City or the southern mill town of Alamance, NC, these historians contend that the experiences, cultures, and attitudes of working women evolved largely from a form of community created in the workplace. I argue that the working women of the Matoaca, Virginia mill created a culture that mirrors this model. Indeed, southern gender norms affected the working-class perception of self and the construction of acceptable working-class behaviors.

Beginning in the 1950's and continuing to the present, historians have addressed the industrialization of the post-Reconstruction era to gain further insight into the general history of the New South. First published in 1951, C. Vann Woodward's Origins of the New South: 1877-1913 stands as the most important critical text analyzing the emergence of a new South during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In terms of industrialization, Woodward notes, "Changes of a profound and subtle character in the Southern ethos—in outlook, institutions, and particularly leadership—did take place in this period."

Subsequent historians have followed Woodward's lead, though revising and reworking Woodward's largely political and economic study. Dewey Grantham, for example, explores the post-Reconstruction South as a distinctive region, focusing on its inhabitants' efforts to reinvigorate the region for increased participation within a larger

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America. Likewise, Edward L. Ayers places the conflicts and compromises experienced by those people who lived in the old states of the Confederacy within the context of the wider national, economic, and political trends occurring between 1877 and 1906. Ultimately, the history of the industrial New South and New South industrial workers was one of conflict, compromise, and struggle. It is the history of a group of people reeling from the destruction and dislocation caused by the Civil War; a people attempting to survive while reestablishing the South as a viable region in an industrial nation.

The Civil War left the South in ruins. Countless families found their fathers killed in battle, their farms left to waste, and their way of life forever changed. Of significant importance for upper-class and middle-class white women, the end of slavery temporarily forced these women from their pedestals of superiority. Many of these white women found that their economic condition now placed them at the bottom of southern society and that their survival depended not upon their prescribed assets of beauty, docility, submissiveness, and humility but upon their ability to contribute much needed income to the family economy. The image of the "southern lady" for former middling and upper-class, white women matched the status and the lived reality of their lower-class, white sisters. These lower-class women, who eventually turned their thoughts and efforts to newly established textile mills, had never been eligible for identification as "southern ladies." As Anne Firor Scott aptly noted, "Such women were not much affected by role expectations . . . no one lectured them on feminine delicacy or told them it was unladylike to work so long and hard."  

The economic state of the South during the late nineteenth

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century made conditions right for a much needed transformation from an agriculturally-based economy to an industrially-based economy. The aftermath of the Civil War left farms in disrepair, transportation networks destroyed, and credit a scarce commodity. Southern farmers turned to local merchants and the production of cash crops to stabilize their agricultural economy. By producing cotton and tobacco, farmers hoped to gain credit from local merchants, promising portions of their crops in exchange for much needed farming implements and supplies. As Jacquelyn Hall notes, however, "A few good years proved only a prelude to agricultural depression." 3 By the 1870s, the oversupply of these cash crops ultimately led to low crop prices. Indeed, small-scale southern farmers and agriculturally dependent families found themselves trapped in a seemingly unending cycle of low crop prices, high debts to local merchants, and inescapable poverty.

At the same time these farmers found themselves trapped by sharecropping and crop liens as leaders of the small yet strong middle and upper classes looked to transform the struggling agricultural economy of the post-Reconstruction South. “The burden of history weighed heavily upon the South’s economic transformation,” argues historian Eric Foner, “which took place in a war-torn, capital-scarce region that lacked the institutional base for sustained economic growth, faced a slowing world demand for its major export, and was excluded from a significant share of national political power.” 4 Therefore, aspiring southern industrialists looked to the North for much needed investors and capital.

Investments first came through the extension of the railroad into

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the South, particularly to areas where natural resources were abundant but not yet exploited. Although northern industrialists paid lip service to the idea that their prime motivation was to uplift the conditions of poor white southerners by offering viable employment options to farming, they actually needed raw materials to fuel the factories in urban centers such as Chicago, Boston, and New York City. Likewise, northern investors looked South for an escape from state legislation which supported unionization, a family living wage, restricted child labor, and shortened work days; legislation that restricted profit margins.

The motives of northern capitalists and their southern supporters are all too apparent in an 1895 exchange in the Lynchburg News. As early as 1890, the Virginia legislature approved a bill that restricted the hours of work in cotton mills and factories. The owner of the Lynchburg News in an editorial responded to this approval, expressing fears that this bill would drive out all northern financiers and capital and rob the South of the only means by which the working-class could earn a comfortable living. “Among the reasons assigned for the coming South of these great mills is the fact that the laws in this section are not restrictive, the State not deeming it prudent or necessary to restrain the liberty of the working classes.”5 In short, restrictive legislation threatened not only northern industrial investment but the comfort, stability, and success of the New South’s economy. As a member of the upper-class, Carter Glass did not empathize with the drudgery and difficulty of mill work and existing at an extremely low standard of living. White middle-class and upper-class southerners even looked upon northern investors as public benefactors who offered a vocational and hands-on education to poor

5 “Virginia Passed By,” by Carter Glass, Owner and Editor Lynchburg News, 18 January 1895.
white children. However exploited the southern working class and southern resources may have been, many upper-class and middle-class southerners saw continued northern investment as the only option for the region’s survival and opposed any measures which could threatened it.

This is not to say that all upper-class and middle-class southerners ignored the plight of the working-class. A number of white middle-class and upper-class southern women, however, turned their efforts toward uplifting of the growing number of the industrial working-class white women. Adhering to the notion that “women existed for the benefit of her family,” female labor reformers attempted to affect policies that would aid those women whose economic situation forced them and members of their families into the mills. When faced with the decision of working long hours for meager pay or not feeding one’s family, working-class women chose the former. Likewise, the abundance of poor whites throughout the South in the post-Civil War period only increased the willingness of working-class white women to accept poor pay and working conditions. Because of this, reform efforts often failed despite the “good intentions” efforts of those of the middle and upper classes and allowed a perpetuation of low wage rates and difficult working conditions.

Middle-class and upper-class reformers from the North and South also focused their attention on the exploitation of the children (in this study persons between the ages of eight and fourteen) who constituted a significant portion of the southern textile labor force. In contrast, Northern investors prided themselves on the abilities of their young workers and used them as positive examples of vocational training for poor whites in the South. Mary Abbott, starting in the

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Danville, Virginia mill at age seven recalled, "wa’n’t near big enough to reach up to the frame, and they had a box for me to stand on to make it and I pushed the box along as I worked. I took on right quick and before long I could spin right up with some of the big ones. The boss told Pa I was pert, and when folks come visitin’ at the mill he’d bring them to see the youngun that could spin good."  

The employment of children acted as a quid pro quo relationship between white southern working-class families and mill owners. The families supplied a cheap yet vital source of labor, while mill owners paid these children wages that often meant the difference between survival and destitution for their families. Jacquelyn Hall found that in the years 1880-1910, one quarter of the textile mill hands in America were under that age of sixteen with a significant additional number of unreported child workers. Matoaca, Virginia was in step with this national trend in 1880 with 18.89 percent of the entire mill work force under the age of fourteen. In fact nearly one-fifth of the Matoaca mill operatives were children. Mill owners paid adult male operatives between 40 and 50 cents per day in 1890 while children’s wages were only 10 to 12 cents for the same work day. By 1900, a movement for child labor reform swept the nation. It appears, however, to have had only limited success in the southern cotton mills as the Matoaca mill labor force in 1900 still had 13.18 percent of all workers

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9 Tenth and Twelfth Federal Census of the population of Chesterfield County, VA, 1880 and 1900. (microfilm). A further breakdown shows that 18.38 percent of the female mill workers were ages eight to fourteen while 19.75 percent of the male mill workers were in the same age group.

represented by children; 12.00 percent of the female employees and 20.00 percent of the male operatives.\textsuperscript{11}

During 1870-1900 era, the South developed a colonial economy of sorts, with southern workers extracting minerals, timber, and other raw materials for transport to the North where the production of finished consumer goods commenced. Although industrialization in the South proceeded throughout the late nineteenth century, the southern working-class population remained mired in poverty. Northern industrialists and the few southern industrialists who reaped the profits from the sale of finished goods ranging from furniture to dresses claimed the greatest capital gains.\textsuperscript{12}

Despite the exploitative nature of the New South economy, small-scale farmers embraced the economic possibilities of factory employment. Likewise, Northern and Southern capitalists alike touted industrialization, particularly the emerging cotton mills, as the salvation of the South. Although mills constructed during the 1880’s were generally small and sparsely scattered throughout the Piedmont region, the number of cotton mills in the South increased 48.4 percent between 1880 and 1890 while the national average increased only 19.7 percent during the same time period.\textsuperscript{13}

As C. Vann Woodward argued, southern industrialization was a two sided coin: one side economic, one side philanthropic. Particularly after 1880, contemporary southern orators urged poverty stricken families to support the supposed philanthropic motives of northern

\textsuperscript{11} Tenth and Twelfth Federal Survey of the Population of Chesterfield County, VA, 1880. (microfilm). C. Vann Woodward, in Origins of the New South: 1877-1913, recorded approximately 25 percent, one-fourth, of North Carolina mill workers by the end of the century were between the ages of ten and fifteen.


\textsuperscript{13} All industrial growth in the South mirrored national averages as seen in C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South: 1877-1913, 223.
capitalists in order to both calm ill feelings between North and South and raise themselves out of economic destitution. As Woodward remarks while quoting Broadus Mitchell, "This might be called the 'voluntaristic' explanation of southern recovery and industrialization—a revolution worked by southern will power. . . . In fact, the whole movement 'was emphatically in response to a moral stimulus.'" Thus, the growth of southern cotton mills became a symbol for the New South, of the South's desire to heal sectional differences remaining from the Civil War, and of the population's desire to hasten a return to the economic and cultural greatness of the antebellum South.

The southern cotton mill crusade was ultimately immensely successful. The labor force of cotton mill hands grew steadily as well. In 1870 the textile labor force numbered approximately 10,000 but by 1900 had increased to over 98,000 operatives. Likewise, in 1870 only 8 percent of the nation's textile employees worked in the South. But by 1900, this fraction jumped to 32 percent. This growth occurred largely because of the desperate situation in which southern farmers and farm families found themselves. According to Edward Ayers, "The pervasive decline of southern rural life created a sense of dissatisfaction and desperation among white farming families that made it even easier for mill operators to find a work force." Even as late as 1907, 75.8 percent of women and children mill operatives grew up on family farms, with the remaining 20.2 percent coming of age in mill villages. Although, for various reasons, some members of the agricultural community were less inclined to leave the land for the mill, factory owners found an abundant labor force among the desperate

16 ibid, 61.
and agriculturally dependent population. Because of this, during the 1880s and into the 1890s, mill communities developed throughout Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama.

Cotton mills and the slowly developing mill towns were attractive to poor whites, particularly women, for several reasons. As members of the family economy on the farm, women's labor often earned money from the sale or exchange of goods such as soap, butter, and eggs, while bearing and raising children who would become members of the family labor force. By the 1870s, as farming proved less and less lucrative, however, wives and children of poor white families began to work in the local textile mill.

The economic reality of the post-Civil War South aided in the social acceptance of white women who worked outside the home. "Nowhere else in the world do so many well-bred women, bankrupt and bereft of male providers, labor at manual callings as in the South," Clare DeGaffrenreid noted in 1893.\(^\text{18}\) Although most white women who labored in industrial positions did so out of financial need, they also exercised a modicum of autonomy in choosing to leave the traditional women's sphere of the home and in actively working for personal and family well-being. This autonomy also played a crucial role in their creation of and participation in a southern, white, working-class culture.

By combining farm and factory, many families hoped to ensure a steady flow of cash into the family economy. The goal was to combine farm and mill work in a way to guarantee a modicum of physical and economic comfort while not depending entirely upon one or the other.\(^\text{19}\) Likewise, widows and single women supporting themselves and entire

\(^{18}\) Scott, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930, 121-122.

\(^{19}\) Hall, et al, Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World, 40.
families looked to the mills for a steady form of financial support difficult to find in the world of agriculture. Women's role in the textile labor force became crucial and a sought after commodity, as noted by a North Carolina mill recruiter. "'Whenever I see a strong, robust country girl, I am almost on my knees in my effort to try to get her to go to the mill to learn to weave.'"20 Indeed, a distinct culture, particularly a white working-class women's culture, developed around these mill communities.

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Quantitative analysis of information provided in the 1880 and 1900 federal censuses of Matoaca, Virginia establishes that female textile workers in this community were representative of white, working-class, southern textile workers in general. Examining the experiences of Anthelia Holt (as described in correspondence with her friend Lottie Clark) enables a glimpse of how one woman helped to create and daily engaged with the working-class culture of her community. By analyzing the variables of household size, age of workers, marital status, and race, I create a portrait of the "average" mill worker.

The typical household size in Matoaca reflected the representativeness of this working-class community. In 1880, 593 individuals residing in 118 household units lived in the Matoaca Precinct. Thus, the average 1880 household size in the Matoaca precinct was 5.03 individuals. For the purpose of this study, a household is defined as the number of individuals living under one roof yet included family members, servants, and/or boarders. By 1900, the

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21 The 1890 United States Census reports are not included here, as a Washington, D.C. fire in the 1920s destroyed the records for Chesterfield County.

22 See Tables in Appendix.

23 The term average in this section refers to the calculated mean of figures obtained from the 1880 and 1900 census surveys. Because the variables of age and household size, as opposed to a variable such as yearly earnings, do not include significant outliers, mean calculations accurately reflect typicality and representativeness.

population of the Matoaca precinct grew to 1569 individuals, with the number of households increasing 37.82 percent to 312 units. The average household size, however, remained constant at 5.03. The average household size in Matoaca, Virginia was equal to or varied only slightly from the average household size of other southern mill communities.\textsuperscript{25}

In 1880 the Holt household, consisting of nine members (A.L. Holt, father, Mary Ann, mother, Anthelia, daughter, William B., son, Joseph A., son, Aldora A., son, Alley D., son, Thomas C., son, and Samuel Dyers, laborer), was significantly larger than the 1880 Matoaca and regional averages. By 1900, however, the Holt household, with five members (Mary Holt, now widowed, Anthelia, Allie, Thomas, and James born in 1881), mirrored the Matoaca and regional averages. Although in transition over a twenty year period, Anthelia Holt ultimately resided in a typically sized southern mill community household. Mary remained at home, while Anthelia, Allie, and Thomas found their employment in the Matoaca mill. The Holt family was dependent upon the cotton mill to survive. Anthelia worked in the mill for the better part of her life and the mill supplied the primary means of support for the Holt family, particularly after the death of A.L. Holt in 1895(?) as was the case for many other female headed households between 1880 and 1900.

As reflected by employment figures, Matoaca was a typical late nineteenth century southern working-class community. In 1880, 267 individuals held jobs, 45.03 percent of the entire Matoaca Precinct population. In 1900, 591 men and women held jobs, 37.67 percent of the

\textsuperscript{25} Tenth Federal Census of the Population of Chesterfield County, VA, 1880. (microfilm).

\textsuperscript{26} Cathy McHugh found that for ninety-five selected households, the average household size in Alamance, NC was 5.74 in her book \textit{Mill Family: The Labor System in the Southern Textile Industry 1880–1915}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 87.
population. Approximately two-fifths of the individuals living in the Matoaca Precinct found employment outside of the home. This is a significant proportion of the population considering that in 1880, 44.35 percent of the men, women, and children included in the survey reported themselves either as keeping house (meaning housewife or mother, different from domestic servants who were included in the number of those who worked outside of the home), at home, or at school. In 1900, the survey omitted the categories of keeping house and at home but 10.58 percent of the population were reportedly school students.27

Employment in southern cotton mills was largely dependent on one’s race. The 1880 and 1900 census surveys limit the assumptions one is able to make concerning the representativeness of textile workers for the analysis of the entire Matoaca working class. When using the Matoaca mill as a case study, it is necessary to confine all arguments and conclusions to the white working class.28 Racially, all the textile workers, male and female, surveyed in 1880 were white. By not recognizing the differences of race among the working class of Matoaca, the researcher and the reader alike easily fall into the trap of lumping all working women into a single group, particularly when focusing on specific aspects of working-class life and culture. Likewise, except for male mill hands who were both black and white, all other workers in the top three forms of employment were white. The census also listed the majority of household servants as black or mulatto, while all the dress makers were white. While racially, the 1900 survey reflects a much more integrated labor force, whites continued to be the only ones to hold positions in the textile mill.

African-Americans in the South found themselves completely

27 Tenth and Twelfth Federal Census of the Population of Chesterfield County, VA, 1880 and 1900. (microfilm).
28 Twelfth Federal Census of the Population of Chesterfield County, VA, 1900. (microfilm).
excluded from what historian Jacquelyn Hall calls textile production jobs. As she notes, "The promotion of the mills as the salvation of poor whites, the taboo against bringing black men into association with white women, the desire to tie blacks to agricultural labor, the substitution of whites for blacks in a range of skilled and semiskilled jobs, the deepening of segregation in every walk of life—all these factors conspired to limit black opportunities in the textile industry." While black men’s labor was restricted to packing trains and wagons or carrying of bales of cotton into the mill, black women were either completely denied work or employed only in custodial capacities, mostly as janitors. As in so many other facets of southern life, the textile mill was a racially segregated enterprise and enforced the accepted racial hierarchy of white over black.

The predominant place of employment in Matoaca between 1880 and 1900 was the textile mill and this was particularly true for single women. Of the 267 individuals working outside of the home, 58 male and 136 female workers, 21.72 percent and 50.94 percent respectively worked in the mill. By 1900, the textile mill remained the predominant place of female employment with 126 (21.32 percent) of the 591 Matoaca Precinct workers holding jobs there. But the most often held male job in 1900, including 139 men (23.52 percent), was general laborer. For women, the only other forms of paid work in 1880 were domestic service (4.12 percent), and dress making (1.50 percent). The 1900 figures, however, show an increased availability of public employment for women. According to Edward L. Ayers, white, southern working women became

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30 The other two top forms of male employment in 1880 were, farm and general labor (11.99 percent) and carpentry (4.87 percent), and in 1900 were farmer (18.27 percent) and textile worker (14.38 percent). The census records of 1880 and 1900 do not specifically define what a general laborer was.
increasingly visible and numerous throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century. For the middle class, however, "it seems, most white women reserved work outside the home for the years before marriage."\textsuperscript{31} White, middle-class women's choices to remain in the home after marriage were often not an option for working-class women whose wages were vital for the survival of their families. The top two jobs for women, other than mill work, were domestic service (2.54 percent) and teaching (.68 percent), but some women also worked as dress makers, nurses, and boarding-house keepers.\textsuperscript{32}

Just as race-typing of jobs in the southern mills reflected and reinforced the cultural hierarchy of white over black, so too did sex-typing of jobs reinforce a gender hierarchy of men over women. Although both white men and women worked in the Matoaca mill, mill work itself was predominately sex segregated. Of the men working in the Matoaca mill, for instance, the majority held positions of managers, clerks, packers, and loom repairers. In contrast, all of the women and only a small number of men labored as spinners, carders, or fabric dyers.\textsuperscript{33} The sexual division of labor in the Matoaca mill both reflected and reinforced the separation of gender spheres while also reinforcing conceptions of the nature of masculinity and femininity.\textsuperscript{34} The prescriptive ideal of the "cult of domesticity" extended into the work force, pushing women into jobs that subordinated them to male managers and, as Alice Kessler-Harris argues, into lower paying jobs.

\textsuperscript{31} Ayers, Southern Crossing: The History of the American South 1877-1906, 44.

\textsuperscript{32} Tenth and Twelfth Federal Census of the population of Chesterfield County, VA, 1880 and 1900. (microfilm).

\textsuperscript{33} Tenth and Twelfth Federal Census of the Population of Chesterfield County, VA, 1880 and 1900. (microfilm).

\textsuperscript{34} My analysis here is influenced by Julie A. Matthaei, An Economic History of Women in America: Women's Work, the Sexual Division of Labor, and the Development of Capitalism (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), 214.
that were assumed to be less valuable because of the lower wages women workers received for doing such work.\textsuperscript{35} Because working-class gender norms could not be defined solely by the cult of domesticity, the working class created its own gender ideals by extending aspects of the cult of domesticity into the workplace while retaining the ideal of the woman as "homemaker" whether she held a job outside of the home or not. Hence, the sexual division of labor found in the Matoaca mill was based on the typical late nineteenth century labor practice of sex-typing jobs found throughout the United States.

Not only did Matoaca hiring and labor policies paralleled those of the nation, but individuals employed in the Matoaca, Virginia mill were by no means out of the ordinary compared to those employed in other southern textile mills. The labor force of southern textile mills, in fact, "was unique among southern industries, both within the Piedmont and within the South as a whole, for the conspicuous presence of women and children and for the conspicuous predominance of whites."\textsuperscript{36} Of the 151 Matoaca women working in 1880, for instance, 136 or 90.07 percent were employees of the Matoaca mill, and in 1900, 126 of the 147 women working outside the home found their employment in the mill. Although this was a slightly lower proportion at 85.71 percent than in 1880, it is obvious that female textile workers were representative of the women working outside the home in the Matoaca Precinct.\textsuperscript{37} Indeed, these figures reflect regional and national data on other textile mill employees. In Hanging by a Thread: Social Change in Southern Textiles, of forty-nine factories in North Carolina in operation in 1880, 92.80


\textsuperscript{37} Tenth and Twelfth Federal Census of the Population of Chesterfield County, VA, 1880 and 1900. (microfilm).
percent of mill workers were women. Although this is a higher percentage than that of the Matoaca mill, it does indicate that during the late nineteenth century, women working in the textile mills of Matoaca shared similar working situations with other southern working-class women. This information suggests that the female workers at the Matoaca mill are suitable examples of average southern working-class women.

The average Matoaca mill worker was not woman, young, and single. In 1880, 72.79 percent, ninety-nine women, in the Matoaca mill were single, 19.85 percent, twenty-seven women, were married, and 7.35 percent, ten women, were widows, while in the 1900 Matoaca Precinct census 76.98 percent, ninety-seven women, were single, 18.25 percent, twenty-three women, were married, 3.97 percent, five women were widows, and .79 percent, one woman, was divorced. The average age of all female Matoaca mill employees in 1880 was 22.72 years and the average ages of single, married, and widowed women employees were 18.82 years, 30.67 years, and 39.90 years respectively. Fourteen single women and one widowed woman were boarders, while the remainder of the mill hands lived with family members, primarily parents if single, husbands if married, and sons or daughters if widowed. The average age in 1880 of all women mill workers was 23.89 years. The average ages of single, married, widowed, and divorced women were 21.35 years, 31.00 years, 41.60 years, and 23.89 years. Sixteen single women and one widowed woman lived as boarders. Thus, data on the composition of the female work force in Matoaca supports Jacquelyn Hall’s contention that "widows, female-headed households, single women, and laborers--those

with least access to the land, labor, and capital necessary for survival in the emerging market-based economy—predominated among the first wave of migrants to Piedmont factories during the 1870s and early 1880s."

This portrait of the age and marital status of female textile workers also holds true for other southern mill communities. Although a significantly smaller mill with an average of 62.09 employees between 1890 and 1900, the work force of the Alamance mill in Alamance, NC studied by Cathy L. McHugh reflects the above conclusions concerning the Matoaca, VA mill. In 1900, 45.37 percent of the entire Alamance mill work force were single women, while 96.08 percent of the female mill population were single women. Indeed, demographic information strongly supports the assertion that Matoaca stands as an ideal community to be used as a case study for further analysis of the working-class culture of white, southern females. Thus, the typical female mill employee was single, in her early twenties, and living with family members. Her wages might have supplemented the family economy. In fact, all single Matoaca mill women workers living in a family unit had at least one parent employed outside of the home and had at least one brother or sister also working outside of the home. Likewise, the significantly high number of single women working in the mills suggests that single (and widowed) women needed their earnings as a replacement for a male wage. This, however, does not mean that women mill workers gave all of their income to the family. In Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World, Jacquelyn Hall suggests that many women, as members of a family wage earning unit, kept a portion of

42 ibid, 80.
their wages for themselves. This was most likely the case for the Matoaca mill workers as well, as even Anthelia Holt makes mention of saving a portion of her earnings in order to purchase, among other items, fabric for dresses, ribbon, and bonnets. Indeed, Anthelia Holt was twenty-six years old, single, and contributing to her family’s economy when she began her correspondences with Lottie Clark in 1888. Although slightly older than the average age of female Matoaca mill employees, her experiences were undoubtedly similar to those of other working-class women in the larger Matoaca community.
CHAPTER 3

RESTRICTIONS AND REALITIES OF MILL WORK

The mill dictated the amount of time employees had available for socialization and helped define forms of working-class recreation. Long hours of work, the sexual division of labor, wages scaled according to a worker's sex, and women's responsibilities for the majority of work done within their home limited the time available for recreation while helping to define behaviors that emerged as a result of temporal and economic restrictions. "I dont think I can go I dont want to loose the time from work" became a tried and true reason to miss a social event. Moreover, the oversupply of labor played a part in mill hands' decisions as did working-class perceptions of gender roles in the gender specific world of textile work.

Life as a textile worker was tedious, tiring, and dangerous, particularly for women. The mill, however, was a priority and only after work could employees focus on a social life. In February 1892, Anthelia Bolt had "not spent one day away from Matoaca since last October." Employees at the Matoaca mill regularly worked ten hour days, seven o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the evening. On several occasions, for instance, Anthelia Bolt reported to Lottie Clark that she labored at the mill until 7 o'clock in the evenings on weekdays and until 4 o'clock in the afternoon on Saturday while running

43 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 31 August 1891, Lottie V. Clark Collection. Earl Gregg Swem Library Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA.
44 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 25 February 1892.
at least five to six looms at a time. Likewise, Holt, on many occasions, commented upon how beautiful the weather was and that she felt deep sadness at having to remain indoors and work for such long periods of time. "We are working long hours now instead of stopping. . . . I am in a penitentiary now for we wont see anything outdoors only on Sunday."\(^{45}\) During periods of speed-ups, particularly the weeks before Christmas, Anthelia Holt worked six days per week, nearly seventy hours. "Last night I was so tired I could not sleep."\(^{46}\)

Not only were such long hours common but so were oppressive working conditions. The jobs filled by white female workers required them to stand, lean, pull, and stretch at their looms and machines all day. Capturing the essence of this oppression, Jacquelyn Hall noted that "noise, heat, and humidity engulfed them. The lint that settled on their hair and skin marked them as mill workers, and the cotton dust that silently entered their lungs could eventually cripple or kill them."\(^{47}\) Accidents could also easily occur when male and female workers alike labored quickly amongst whirling machinery. The overhead belts powering and connecting the machinery often mangled workers' hands and arms. Interviewer Pearl Morrissett in Danville, Virginia found that for mill hand Della Connor, "Working nine frames meant deadly concentration and high speed. Della could work fast and she was accurate. . . . And she was proud of what she could do, but, oh, Lord, sometimes the stifling hot air crushed down on her body. . . . Then she was glad she had held up and had never dropped to the floor yet."\(^{48}\)

Long hours of work and difficult working conditions were typical of the

\(^{45}\) Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 21 September 1889.

\(^{46}\) Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 23 June 1891.


\(^{48}\) Federal Writer's Project. Mrs. Della Connor, interviewed by Pearl Morrissett and edited by Edna Stevens, 5 May 1939. Danville, VA, 12943.
reality faced daily by southern textile workers. Indeed, these conditions strictly limited the kinds and amounts of socialization in which mill workers could and participate.

Because of the oversupply of labor for the mills, southern, white, female mill workers also found themselves forced to go to their jobs everyday despite illness or personal problems. As Jacquelyn Hall notes, "Workers might come and go at will or be spirited away by competing firms, but a general labor surplus meant that there were always others, eager to take their place." Moreover, gender played a significant role in the oversupply of labor. As Alice Kessler-Harris noted, "In the entire period, upward of ninety percent of all wage-earning women worked in job areas where women workers were heavily concentrated." Sex-typed jobs limited women's employment options and their prospects of finding work, as they could only labor at certain tasks within the mill. Because Anthelia Holt feared losing her position, she often continued to run her looms even when she was ill. On July 17, 1889, she confided to her friend, "I can not say that I am well but I am up and at work I have been really porly for several weeks I have fallen away so you would hardly know me." And later in 1891, she noted that "even though very sick, I do not want to stop to rest." By September 12, 1892, Holt reported "I am tired of working here and have a strong notion of leaving for we cant get out to go anywhere or do anything." But, despite sore feet and shoulders, she lamented that she must continue working because her family needed the money. If she took time off, her position in the mill would be filled

51 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 17 July 1889.
52 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 28 November 1891.
53 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 12 September 1892.
immediately by someone else.

During the late nineteenth century the possibility of sickness or injury caused anxiety for many mill families, especially those who depended on every cent members earned in the mill as the southern textile industry, like a majority of other American industries, did not provide sickness, unemployment, or disability benefits for its employees. Expressing her plight to her struggling tenant farmer husband, a Raleigh, North Carolina mill employee remembered, "I could not possibly afford to get sick now. Who would care for my family?"54 And, during the late nineteenth century, the southern textile industry as well as a majority of other American industries did not provide sickness, unemployment, or disability benefits for its employees. Comments such as "I never had a penny to my name"55 and "we don't have a penny for pleasure"56 littered the reminiscences of ex-mill operatives. Not only did the long work hours and working conditions of the mills restrict socialization, but so too did the essential role women's factory work played in the family economy. Their essential role and the oversupply of labor forced many white southern operatives to work even when their bodies suffered from illness and overwork.

Within the Matoaca cotton mill itself, white female workers found that gender played an important role in defining not only the types of jobs they performed but also the pay they received.57 The sexual division of labor within the mills reflected prescriptive ideologies that defined the fundamental nature and natural abilities of men and women. Historian Gay Gullickson found that "men were assigned jobs

54 Federal Writer's Project. Mrs. Lucy Pace interviewed by Robert O. Lang, 8 November 1938. Raleigh, NC, 7760.
56 Pace interview, 7759.
57 See Chapter 2, 17-18.
that required strength (mule spinning and carding), skill (weaving, mule spinning, and carding), authority (supervisory positions), or intimate knowledge of machinery. Women were assigned jobs that required little strength and skill (ring spinning), nimble fingers (weaving and ring spinning), and patience."58 Likewise, mill pay-scales reflected this sexual division of labor, as white, female textile workers universally earned lower wages than their male counterparts. Even in cases where single women worked outside of the home to provide for their own livelihood or widowed women labored to provide for a family, owners of southern textile mills saw women's work and wages as supplementary to men's. Those who decided what wages to pay to men and women often held the opinion that women's wages were supplementary incomes, used to purchase luxury items (jewelry, expensive clothing, etc.) that would ultimately contribute to the moral degeneration of family and society.59 Therefore, because, in theory, women were not the primary economic provider for themselves or families, their labor did not require the same wages as those earned by men.

Opinions and practices such as these endured throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Men's wages were not always sufficient to even buy the bare necessities for a family's existence and labor reformers pushed for a high enough increase in male and female worker's wages so these wages could support the basic needs of working-class families. This ideology of the family wage, however, only rarely captured the interest or support of industry management.

As late as 1938, Rachael Lester lamented "I can run two men's jobs and don't make but seventeen dollars. Me a frame hand too. Very little in the mill I can't do and me not makin' much more'n a sweeper." Indeed, as argued by Julie Matthaei, sex-typing of jobs meant that women did "women's work" even though it was for an income. The low wages earned by these southern, white female textile workers also helped to define the forms of recreation they enjoyed. Ultimately, low wages and a low standard of living forced these women to participate in practical, economical forms of enjoyment.

The majority of female mill employees not only toiled at their looms full-time for low wages, often bringing their children to the mill with them, but they were also responsible for care of their homes. Women like those working in the Matoaca mill found themselves entering the labor force in an attempt to support themselves and their families while also continuing their full-time jobs (child care, laundry, meal preparation, etc.) within their own homes. Working-class families were unable to conform to the middle-class norm that prescribed the husband as head of the household and sole breadwinner mainly because of the low wages earned by working-class men. Working-class families, however, continued to expect wives to fulfill the roles of homemaker and child rearer. As Julie Matthaei points out, "White native and immigrant families, rich and poor, shared in the domestic ideal of womanhood, the ideal of the homebound homemaker." Southern textile families continued to reinforce the home as a female sphere even when a female family member also worked outside the home for wages. "Women's work" was essential to the survival of the family. Even though, as feminist scholar Julie Matthaei contends, "the concept of 'women's work' does

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60 Federal Writer's Project, Rachael Lester interview, 8668.
61 Matthaei, An Economic History of Women in America: Women's Work, the Sexual Division of Labor, and the Development of Capitalism, 133.
not refer to purely economic activity."\textsuperscript{62}

In other words, Anthelia Holt and other southern, white female textile employees faced the burden of a "double day". Although single, Holt recalled that she "had to get up at four o’clock every morning one morning I had corn and butter beans for breakfast and one I made cabbage we churned at night and ironed all the clothes"\textsuperscript{63} when returning home from a full day’s work at the mill. Testimonies collected by the Federal Writer’s project also reinforced Holt’s description of her situation. White female textile workers rose at four to four-thirty in the morning, cooked breakfast, hung the laundry washed the evening before, made the beds, and swept the floors, all before leaving for a ten, eleven, or twelve hour day at the local mill. Returning home in the evening, these women fixed supper for their families, tended family garden plots, and finished leftover cleaning tasks before collapsing into bed. As if this was not enough, working-class women also gave birth to and raised their children under more than challenging conditions. Anthelia helped raise younger brothers and sisters even though she complained that "the children make so much noise that I hardly know what I am doing."\textsuperscript{64} Holt, likewise, undoubtedly spoke for many other mill hands who lived within a family unit when she stepped into a maternal role when mother was away from home. Because her father planned a short trip and "Ma and Velvie are going with him I will have to keep house while they are gone."\textsuperscript{65} Descriptions such as these make clear the ways in which mill work and domestic responsibilities restricted and helped define women’s creation

\textsuperscript{62} Matthaei, \textit{An Economic History of Women in America: Women’s Work, the Sexual Division of Labor, and the Development of Capitalism}, 214.

\textsuperscript{63} Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 1 November 1891.

\textsuperscript{64} Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 2 January 1889.

\textsuperscript{65} Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 4 October 1891.
and participation in the culture of southern textiles.

For the female textile workers of Matoaca and other southern working-class women, the reality of an extremely low standard of living made the job of homemaker and home keeper even more difficult. Historian Dolores Janiewski contends that "inadequate housing made domestic labor and the care of a family more difficult. Insufficient heat during winter, poor sanitation, inadequate diet, and overwork contributed to malnutrition, tuberculosis, typhoid, pneumonia, diarrhea, and great susceptibility to influenza, measles, and other contagious diseases. . . . As housekeepers, women found that dust and mud from unpaved streets made cleaning and endless chore."66 Women also tightly controlled household expenditures while employing the strategy of combining what could be earned from the family farm or plot of land with the family's earnings from the mill. Mill families without large plots of land kept chickens, a cow, and/or a pig or two for meat and dairy products. When Thomas Holt slaughtered his three hogs in the fall of 1891, for instance, the Holt family "had plenty of meat."67 Sickness ran rampant though, particularly during the winter months when vegetables and fruits were particularly scarce. Lucy Pace reflected on the challenges of providing a healthy diet for a working-class family. "We have but two meals a day. . . . I don't know nothing about balancing a diet. I buy the cheapest groceries I can get."68

Single women, the majority of the southern, white, female labor force of the textile mills fared slightly better than their married or widowed co-workers. Although most single women did contribute their wages to the family economy and helped with domestic chores and the raising of younger family members, they were not burdened with the sole

66 Janiewski, Sisterhood Denied: Race, Class, and Gender in a New South Community, 131.
67 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 28 November 1894.
68 Federal Writer’s Project, Mrs. Lucy Pace interview, 7758.
responsibility of regulating household expenditures and, in most cases, raising their own children. Moreover, mothers and fathers (when the family economy and well-being could spare it) allowed their children to keep a portion of their wages for personal enjoyment. Although marriage could offer single female textile workers the possibility of a husband's support, marriage also tied these women to the home and in many cases the burden of the double day.

Although the above discussion paints a bleak picture of the lives of female mill workers, their daily routines were not completely devoid of enjoyment. During the early years of southern industrialization, saw mill and textile mill owners alike exploited the ample supply of water power available throughout the Piedmont region. While this power source was inexpensive, it was also unreliable, and mill stoppages occurred often. Winter conditions froze rivers solid, floods destroyed machinery, and summer droughts reduced powerful rivers to trickling streams. Under such conditions, mill owners had little choice but to close their mills. In the case of the Matoaca mill, such stoppages halted production at the mill for up to five weeks at a time. As Anthelia Holt remarked on one occasion, "We have just gone to work the high water washed everything all to pieces at the mill and they have just got straight and started up." Moreover, problems with the internal workings of the textile mill caused stoppages as well. Late nineteenth century textile mills functioned on a belt system that connected and powered the factory's operations from start to finish. If one part of the system malfunctioned, the entire mill stopped until the glitch was repaired. Whether for an hour or for weeks at a time, periodic machine malfunctions and mill closings offered employees free time.

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69 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 17 July 1889.
Mill employees embraced this time as a time in which to recreate and socialize. Although the textile operatives lost wages during mill stoppages, the stoppages were vital to the creation of a southern textile culture. Anthelia Holt illuminates an aspect of this culture in Matoaca through her description of social activities spontaneously emerging during a mill stoppage. Although rare and most often short lived, a mill stoppage allowed Anthelia to go to a baseball game and up the river for a fish fry. She also planned visits to Lottie Clark in nearby Nazomine, VA. “There is talk of the mill stopping . . . if it do stop I will come up and stay with you for a week or so . . . I would be very glad to see you all but if the mill doesn’t stop I cannot come this year.”70 Likewise, during the hours that the mill stopped for repairs, female operatives at the Matoaca factory sat outside and engaged in simple conversation while enjoying and cherishing a much needed break from the mill. Even though stoppages and part-time production rarely occurred, the possibility of a mill stoppage or slow-down signaled to the female operatives of the Matoaca mill, as well as the employees of other southern textile mills, an opportunity for recreation and the creation of a textile culture.

Employees of the southern textile labor force found that long hours, back-breaking and dangerous work, low wages, the sexual division of labor, and short lived reprieves in the form of mill stoppages all contributed to the creation of a textile culture. In particular, white women textile operatives ultimately created a distinct female textile culture because of these temporal and economic constraints and conditions, as well as the constraints added by the double day and women’s responsibilities in the home. Because members of the white, female, southern working-class, like those of the Matoaca mill, shared

70 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 15 September 1889.
similar economic, domestic, and temporal constraints, they also shared in the emergence of a recognizable working-class culture.
CHAPTER 4

FEMALE SOCIAL NETWORKS AND FRIENDSHIPS

Female social networks and friendships grew out of the necessity for mill women to share domestic responsibilities due to the long hours put in at the factory. The collective identity resulting from a shared labor experience helped social networks evolve as an integral part of mill culture. The relationships that linked mill employees as friends and co-workers served as a uniting factor even when outside of the workplace. Working women, like those of the southern female textile world, found that factory life added variety to their lives while offering them greater autonomy. Social networks and friendships became a means of assistance and support to help women survive the harsh nature of a working-class experience. Social networks ranging from those to care for the sick to those formed to care for the home contributed to the working-class experience by combining female responsibilities in the community with friendships and socialization. Likewise, these networks reflected the gender perceptions held by the textile workers; perceptions making women responsible for the nurturing and care of family members, co-workers, and community.

Holt wrote she spent, "nearly all" her time "going to see the sick." Extended family members cared for each other in times of need while also sharing sadness and sympathy. Anthelia Holt, for example, shared her cousin's responsibilities telling Lottie, "My cousin's little girl has got scolded she is burnt very bad . . . I have got to sit up with her tonight." The women, like Holt, who offered what little time and energy they had left after a long day at the mill did so at the expense of other small enjoyments. Anthelia missed April Fool's Day in 1890 because she tended to a cousin suffering with pneumonia. "My cousin was very low he had the pneumonia I thought he would die in spite of all we could do how many April fools did you get last Tuesday I did not get any I did not have time to think about it being the first day of April for Willie was so bad off that I did not leave his bed five minutes at a time." In all the correspondences Anthelia and Lottie had between 1888 and 1895, however, Anthelia never once complained about her duties to her family. She wrote about her sickness network responsibilities as if they were simply an understood and accepted aspect of everyday life in the Matoaca community. Presumably, they were.

Social networks to help with the sick extended from the family to also include members of the mill work force. Friendships forged in the mill helped networks of mutual aid to evolve within the mill community. "A young girl that lived in front of us was taken very ill Sunday evening and I have been over there all the time that I was from work," Anthelia recalled, "she died yesterday. . . we had a lot of fun together and I certainly will miss her." Anthelia, however, also

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73 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 4 October 1892.
74 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 14 March 1890.
75 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 11 April 1890.
76 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 23 June 1892.
cared for co-workers who were not necessarily members of her peer group. In May of 1891 Holt sat up nights with Mrs. Bridgewater even though she later contracted Mrs. Bridgewater’s contagious disease. Members of the mill community became part of Anthelia’s extended family and she nursed them through bouts of pneumonia, typhoid fever, and “congestion on the brain”. The women of the Matoaca mill community reflected Jacquelyn Hall’s assertion that “women’s acts of sharing and mutual aid nourished the bonds that held mill communities together.”

On a regular basis, the working-class women of Matoaca also soothed the emotional wounds of family members and co-workers who faced the deaths of loved ones from disease and accidents. Anthelia comforted a friend whose beau, a cousin of Anthelia’s, had passed away, explaining to Lottie, “I never felt as sorry for anybody in my life as I did for his sweetheart it seemed like her heart would break . . . if I had been in her place I dont think I could have lived . . . for I believe if anybody were to come and tell me my fellow was dead that I should choke to death.” Not only did mill women offer support and sympathy to their friends, family members, and co-workers, but they also felt comfortable turning to others when in need. “My oldest brother got killed Sunday night in a callision on the railroad and they brought him home Monday and buried him Tuesday,” Holt lamented, “he did not live but one hour after he was hurt he was mashed through his body and had one leg nearly cut off. . . I loved him so good and now I can never see him anymore.” Anthelia received caring and support from her co-workers and community when her brother died. Even though letters from Lottie had given her great comfort, Anthelia said that, more than anything, visits from friends and co-workers successfully

78 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 25 December 1892.
79 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 18 July 1890.
lived her spirits. Obviously, the working women of Matoaca networked successfully to ease each other’s emotional wounds and, through this, further strengthened existing community bonds.

The intimate relationship obvious in the letters between Anthelia Holt and Lottie Clark attest to the importance white working-class women placed on their emotional ties to close female friends and co-workers. Even women of the working-class participated in the nineteenth-century phenomena of romantic friendships. Similar to the middle-class and upper-class men and women studied by Karen Lystra, working-class friends shared confidences, photographs, and physical closeness. Anthelia addressed her letters to Lottie with “My Own Dear Lottie” and “My Own Darling” while closing the correspondences with “write soon to someone who loves you,” “take every dot on the envelope for a kiss,” and “a hundred kisses.” Upon receipt of a letter in 1891 Anthelia gushed, “I was very glad to hear from you and more than glad to receive your picture I think it is very good but not as pretty as you are . . . I kiss it and talk to it but you could not speak to me . . . I will keep it as long as I live.” Likewise, the two young women shared the antics of snooping into other people’s mail while watching the Nazomine post office for Lottie’s aunt. Female bonds, however, were more than fun and games. They served the important function of giving support and advice. Anthelia, after a beau cast her aside, confided her deepest feelings to Lottie saying, “my fellow have gone back on me but that don’t grieve me very much.”


81 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 31 August 1891.

82 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 24 September 1891.
although later she said that she never expected to "marry but just have a good time with all the boys the rest of my life."83 Female friendships offered love, support, and advice to the women of the Matoaca working-class community; a community in which Anthelia Holt actively participated.

Social networks also functioned to offer working women the ability to socialize without jeopardizing their jobs, the care of their homes, and support of loved ones. The networks also allowed working women outlets for socialization and communication without placing their jobs, the care of the home, and support of loved ones in jeopardy. Social networks in Matoaca were especially important in the workplace. Anthelia Holt, for instance, happily reported that a friend would be taking over her looms in the mill to allow her a vacation. "I have succeeded in getting someone to run my looms for me . . . so I will take my rest now."84 In turn, Holt helped this friend secure a permanent position in the mill upon her return. Likewise, during the work day, co-workers would watch one another's machines so that they could take periodic breaks from the physically taxing work. Although it may not appear so on the surface, working-class social networks were much more than quid pro quo relationships. Acts such as those described above were most often reciprocated, but white female textile workers did not help each other for the sole purpose of receiving something in return. Social networks functioned for the good of individual workers and also for the good of the community.

Weddings served as another way for white female mill hands to support one another. Female employees, for instance, often stood up for each other during marriage ceremonies. Anthelia "went to two marriages . . . both in one night both brides was in church at one time.

83 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 4 October 1892.
84 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 28 March 1893.
one waited on the other soon as one was married the other stepped right in her place." ²⁵ Co-workers and friends not only assisted in the actual ceremony but were also integral participants in wedding preparations. Anthelia commonly spent the night before a wedding with the bride-to-be so that she could help her friends dress in the morning. On one occasion, "the groom come Sunday morning at six o'clock I thought he would hurry me to death before I could get the bride ready." ²⁶ Anthelia Holt's experiences show how these networks were distinctly female, separate from heterosocial bonds between men and women in the community. As women, the female textile workers of Matoaca formed bonds of friendship in the mill because of their common employment and workplace experiences. When these bonds extended to the outside community, they reflected this distinct culture and its separation from the culture of the male mill workers.

Work sharings, another form of social networking, allowed women to help each other with tedious and time consuming domestic chores. "Work sharings were events, in which, as one Southerner recalled, 'work was turned into play'. . . 'opportunities to express a neighborliness that was not merely a duty but too a great degree of joy.'" ²⁷ Although work sharings were a common event across the South for both men and women, the types of chores women did together reflected their responsibilities as home makers and house keepers. Matoaca women regularly gathered in groups to quilt, can and preserve fruits, and make wine and apple cider. And, even though women gathered for the purpose of doing work to ease the burden of the double day, such events gave them a chance to visit, gossip, and escape the hardships of the

²⁵ Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 11 August 1889.
²⁶ Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 31 September 1889.
mill. Work sharings commonly turned into community parties. In 1891, Anthelia told Lottie "we had a quilting last night had a large crowd plenty of music and singing." And, later in 1893, "Ola Mann had a sugar stew I stewed the sugar Wednesday night and pulled it and last night she had her party and we had a splendid time." Working women and their families benefited greatly from these group work sessions. Because working women who held the work sharing reaped the profit of the day of community work, these women, in turn, eagerly donated their time and effort to work sharings held by others. Individual women or families provided for the post-work parties and, sometimes divided the proceeds of the day's labors. After the Holt family held a wine and cider making event, Anthelia wrote to Lottie, "I have made a nice wine and will give you some and also tell your grand mama that I am going to send her a bottle full by you." Ultimately, work sharings became one of the most important forms of female social networks and socialization for the white mill employees. The group efforts of these working-class women successfully joined work and play, business and pleasure, practical needs and fun.

The social networks that evolved out of the shared experiences of white, female, textile workers in Matoaca also played an important role in defining acceptable and non-acceptable behaviors for the wider Matoaca working-class community. Anthelia Holt offers evidence of this through many comments she made to Lottie Clark in their correspondences. Transgressions of acceptable working-class social mores, for instance, prompted Anthelia's condemnation. Presumably, members of the Matoaca community adhered to certain unspoken rules of behavior, and deviation from these rules occurred at the risk of

88 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 28 November 1891.
89 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 20 January 1893.
90 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 28 July 1891.
individual acceptance within the community. For example, Anthelia wrote in disgust to Lottie, “We are going to have a marriage here next week a Miss Candle and Mr. Bridgewater his wife was buried just five weeks ago I never heard of such a thing befor I hardly know what to think of it.”\footnote{Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 23 June 1891.} Apparently, Mr. Bridgewater did not conform to the normal period of mourning prior to remarriage necessary to show respect for a deceased spouse. Extraordinary circumstances, such as the need to remarry to care for his children and home, may have prompted Mr. Bridgewater’s decision to remarry quickly. He, however, crossed the line of propriety in the eyes of Anthelia and the community at large, opening himself to criticism. An 1893 wedding ceremony illustrates this point further. “They were not married until eleven o’clock and most of the crowd was drunk the bride groom was so drunk that he could hardly stand up at least so I heard.”\footnote{Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 20 March 1893.} Weddings were solemn and serious occasions for the women of the Matoaca working-class and a breach of acceptable behavior (participating in the wedding while drunk) caused scandal and gossip within the community. Anthelia, and many like her, believed that “getting married is serious business and if I marry it will be a quiet affair.”\footnote{Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 11 April 1892.} Indeed, individuals commonly went to great lengths to escape the all-seeing eye of the community. In a case where a young man and woman wanted to marry but did not receive the blessing of the bride’s parents, they chose to leave Matoaca to marry rather than staying, marrying, and receiving criticism from family and community. Holt reported, “Well Lottie we had a runaway down here Sunday before last a young man and his best girl run away and went to N.C. and got married they left at eight o’clock in the morning . . . the girls father objected to her getting married we have
not seen them since."94 The collective work experiences of white female textile workers of Matoaca bonded them together. In turn, these bonds extended into the wider white working-class community, defining and controlling acceptable behaviors.

Female social networks and friendships defined important aspects of white, southern female textile workers. These networks functioned to supply medical care, emotional support, mill relief, household needs, and behavioral control for the white members of the textile communities. Female mill workers relied on the existence of these networks in order to survive from day to day as members of a growing southern industrial work force. The female social networks and friendships that existed in the Matoaca mill community helped buffer the harsh realities of life as a mill operative. These networks and friendships grew out of and in response to the restrictions placed upon the female mill hands, while also helping to define the female culture of white southern textile workers. Such networks were common among working-class women regardless of occupation or region. The social networks that developed in Matoaca, Virginia and other mill and industrial communities throughout the country in the late nineteenth century speak to and are examples of one aspect of the wider female working-class culture that evolved from the restrictions and regularities of factory life.

94 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 26 April 1889.
CHAPTER 5

HETEROSOCIAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE MILL COMMUNITY

Single white male and single white female southern textile workers participated in a variety of forms of heterosocial activities during the time they enjoyed outside of the mill. Such activities offered a means to find a mate and gain greater autonomy, and became a distinct aspect of the working-class culture of Matoaca. Heterosocial activities focused largely on the home and church while also serving to underline the importance of marriage within the mill community. Indeed, similar to the immigrant women studied by Kathy Peiss, young Matoaca mill workers participated in heterosocial activities, often for the express purpose of finding a mate. Heterosocial activities, however, also afforded white employees of the Matoaca mill enjoyable forms of recreation that helped ease the difficulty of life as mill operatives.

Attending church services, revivals, and camp and protracted meetings were three of the most common means of recreation in the Matoaca community. Mill employees, particularly on Sundays, attended church up to four times a day, and during revivals or protracted meetings, would go to church every night for up to three weeks at a time. Church attendance did not interfere with responsibilities at the

"the hall is crowded every night people begin to go about five o’clock and we have to hurry up when we get home to get any seat one night we had to come back home could not get inside the door." 96 Community revivals, camp and protracted (events lasting over a period of days or even weeks) meetings became a source of pride for the members of the Matoaca community through the number of converts gained during the meetings. Historian Ted Ownby identified this pride as common throughout the South at this time. "Churchgoers had a terrific interest in the specific number of mourners, converts, and new church members. All were concerned with rating the meeting’s success and, if possible, savoring the meeting’s glory." 97 Holt reported to Lottie Clark the exact numbers of converts achieved at several revivals and on one occasion reveled in the fact that "we have had a gracious revival have had one hundred converts and the church was revived generally and it was sadly needed I know I needed it for I had grown so cold but I am determined to love and serve my heavenly Father better in the future than I have in the past two of my sisters were converted and have joined the church and a lot of my friends . . . 40 of them were baptized." 98 Members of the Matoaca mill community eagerly anticipated Sunday church services, camp and protracted meetings, and revivals urged others to participate and lamented their close hoping to soon "get another just as good." 99

Church meetings were also one of the few places where white and black mill workers socialized together. Although meetings held by African-American members of the Matoaca community were held separately from those of the white community, such meetings were open to all

96 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 26 March 1895.
98 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 25 May 1890.
99 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 17 October 1888.
members of the community. Anthelia does not make it clear if white meetings were similarly open but in the case of these African-American sponsored gatherings, religious fervor bridged the racial gap and racial segregation inherent in the mill and the physical make-up of Matoaca. Members of the black community in Matoaca were almost exclusively denied employment at the mill and generally lived on the outskirts of town. Despite this fact, white members of the community went to revivals and meetings sponsored by the black community’s church. Anthelia Holt wrote to Lottie Clark that “the nigros have a big meeting about three miles from here a crowd goes nearly every night but we have not been yet I will go tomorrow night.” Although it is unknown from Anthelia Holt’s correspondences if single African-American men and women used revivals and meetings for courting purposes, white men and women did while also temporarily bridging Matoaca’s racial divide.

Church meetings, however, not only encouraged religious devotion, but they also encouraged heterosocial recreation. Church services and meetings were acceptable arenas for young white men to escort young white women to an enjoyable time, as the large crowds gathered there acted as community chaperones. Holt recalled that “five young men wanted to take me to church Sunday night I hardly knew what to do so I let the first one that asked me go and two of the others walked in front and the other two behind we had to go about two miles so you may know we had lots of fun every girl in the crowd had a beau.” If they had a buggy, single men also made a regular practice of giving rides to and from church to the young women they were courting. Ted Ownby found that young men and women often considered a trip to church incomplete unless it involved a date. Moreover, some went to church not so much

100 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 20 September 1894.
101 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 20 April 1889.
for spiritual uplift but, instead, because the church was a place to meet prospective mates. Nonetheless, in the eyes of the community at large, courting was an acceptable part of a church-going community as it formed the basis for a Christian relationship.\(^{102}\) Such community sentiments also justified other kinds of heterosocial activities that were church sponsored.

As part of the working-class culture of the Matoaca community then, social events sponsored by local churches encouraged male and female interaction. The highlight of a July 18, 1888 picnic was a game in which girls made matching aprons and neck ties. The girls wore the aprons and sold the ties to the boys. Later in the day, the boys had to match their ties with the aprons of the girls. Holt's match treated her to ice cream. In a similar event she reported,

We had a box party at the hall for the benefit of the church the girls all carried a box filled with some thing nice to eat and put them up and sold them to the young men at the highest bid and some of the boxes brought over one dollar . . . every girl had her name inside of the box for no young man knew whose box he was buying until he paid for it and then had to eat what was in the box with the girl it belonged to. \(^{103}\)

Such church sponsored activities encouraged heterosocial mixing and also gave young men and women the opportunity to meet and become acquainted with prospective spouses.

Held frequently at church, weddings were events where further mixed sex socialization occurred. The marriage of two mill employees became one of the most important places for single members of the community to gather, dance, and socialize. A Christmas 1892 wedding serves as an example of how marriages served the purpose of socialization for the white members of the Matoaca mill community.


\(^{103}\) Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 28 March 1894.
Holt wrote to Clark, “Well I will tell you something about the marriage we went they were married at the church and the church was crowded and then the crowd went to the house and we did not have room to turn around they danced and played.”

Anthelia Holt often encouraged Lottie Clark to use invitations to and participation in weddings to her benefit. One time she offered her thoughts saying “I hope you have a good time [at the wedding] and make a mash and get married soon yourself.” Weddings, however joyous for the bride and groom, could prove to be a disaster for the guests. This happened to Holt and she angrily reported to Clark, “We had a marriage here last week I went but did not have much of a time because a fellow went with me that I did not like and I was really mad all the time.” Despite such negative experiences, finding a husband was an extremely significant part of single mill women’s lives and was often the impetus to participate in heterosocial activities.

The church was not the only place where single white men and women met and associated with one another. Heterosocial activities also occurred in the home. Visiting proved one of the best places for a man to court a woman while also gaining the approval of other family members. Such visits often included religious activities. In October of 1891, for instance, Anthelia Holt recalled that “a lot of young men called Sunday and staid until bedtime so we proposed having a prayer meeting after supper and they said if I would lead it they would do the praying.” On a similar note, she regularly remarked, “I had a house full of company Sunday all day and until time for preaching a night we had a grand time.” In these instances, Holt did not allow courting

104 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 25 December 1892.
105 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 11 April 1892.
106 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 15 February 1889.
107 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 4 October 1891.
108 Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 28 July 1891.
to interfere with church services. On another Sunday though, she did not mention her church duties saying, "there was two widowers here yesterday one took dinner here and had a fine horse and buggy there was four horses and buggies tied to our fence all one time yesterday I went driving with two of them."\textsuperscript{109} Sundays remained a crucial day for socializing whether it was at the church or in the home.

In courting situations, though, women had a great deal of agency in deciding with whom they would spend their time. Indeed, white working-class women of Matoaca did not always settle with their first male suitor. As Holt said, "I would not give the snap of my finger for all the men I saw yesterday . . . if I cant see the one I want I dont care to see anyone."\textsuperscript{110} She was so bold as to declare, "I never expect to marry but just have a good time with all the boys the rest of my life."\textsuperscript{111} It was, however, different for young women to choose not to accept the advances of a beau than for a young woman to have her beau "go back on her." Indeed, a woman who acted with dignity after a beau left her for another girl was a marvel and source of strength for others. Anthelia Holt offered her praises for one such woman when she confided to Lottie Clark that "I am glad that Miss Cornelia Vaughn can hold her head up . . . I dont believe I could hold up mine very high if my best fellow were to come in with another girl."\textsuperscript{112} Courting proved itself a focal point in single white women's lives in the Matoaca community while also offering these young women a chance to make their own decisions and choose with whom they wanted to spend the rest of their lives.

Although the church and home were two of the most significant

\textsuperscript{109} Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 5 July 1891.
\textsuperscript{110} Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 5 July 1891.
\textsuperscript{111} Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 4 October 1891.
\textsuperscript{112} Anthelia Holt to Lottie Clark, 12 July 1891.
places where young men and women socialized under the watchful eyes of parents and community members, they also found that parents and the community did not disallow unchaperoned heterosocial activities. Trips to the country for picnics, baseball games, and fish frys were common occurrences among young white mill workers. The country offered mill employees much needed escapes from the oppressive conditions of the mill. Anthelia Holt happily recalled one country trip saying, "the partridges were hollering bob white and the whipowills were trying themselves I staid until late Sunday evening." Base

The baseball games quickly became a popular event for the young white mill workers. They also served the purpose of bringing young men from nearby towns with whom the Matoaca girls could meet and "make mashes on." "We all went out to see a game of baseball last Wednesday evening and Friday night five young men from Petersburg came out and staid untill bedtime ... we expect to go up the river and have a fish fry seven girls and seven boys." A young man Holt met at a country outing with friends proved a positive experience for her and she later told Lottie that he "sent me his picture and a beautiful book I wish you could see it, it has eight hundred and sixty eight pages the title's David Copperfield." Country visits offered young white male and female mill workers the freedom to socialize with each other as well as offering welcome reliefs from the watchful eye of the wider community and the harsh conditions of the mill.

Working-class social events were not only the means for recreation but were also catalysts for male/female interaction, interaction largely lacking in the workplace. Moreover, male and female relationships appear to have been one of the most important

113 Anthelia Bolt to Lottie Clark, 7 June 1892.
114 Anthelia Bolt to Lottie Clark, 21 August 1893.
115 Anthelia Bolt to Lottie Clark, 14 December 1888.
aspects of white working-class life. White employees of the Matoaca mill enjoyed themselves at group parties, weddings, and baseball games while also using these opportunities to leave the oppressive conditions of mill work behind (for however brief a period), to gain a modicum of autonomy away from parents and the wider community, and to meet and become acquainted with prospective spouses. But it remains important to remember that participation in heterosocial recreational activities occurred only when the mill was closed during the evening, on Sunday, during a holiday or a shut-down. Despite this fact, young, single members of the white working-class community of Matoaca effectively worked within the restrictions and regularities of mill employment to create enjoyable means of socialization. Heterosocial activities became another important facet of white, female, working-class culture of the South.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

The agriculturally based yet depressed New South economy set the stage for the evolution of a white southern female textile culture. The war-torn and capital scarce-region looked to the North for investors and economic salvation. And, through the funding of textile mills, these investors offered poor whites viable employment options. Southern industrialists and entrepreneurs also actively campaigned for investments from the North. In a matter of three decades (1870-1900), the number of textile mill employees in the South grew nine fold with over one-third of all mill operatives in the United States located in the southern factories. Although many historians describe post-Reconstruction South as one based on a colonial economy in which the South produced rough, unfinished goods for completion and consumption in the North, few deny that the textile mills were a salvation for thousands of desperate and destitute southern whites.

The newly established southern textile mills recruited and attracted large numbers of white women and children. Women and children, as traditional participants in the family economy on the family farm, found that their labor was worth more in the growing southern industrial economy. As farming proved less and less viable as an option for many families, they combined farm and factory work in a manner that offered a modicum of monetary stability and some physical
mills a financial outlet as they chose to no longer depend on the farm but, instead, on the regular wages offered in the mills.

Matoaca, Virginia was one of the southern towns in the 1880s that found its economy and white work force dominated by the textile industry. Matoaca was a typical mill town in terms of its work force. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the average mill operative in Matoaca was a white, single woman, in her early twenties, who lived within a larger household containing approximately five members. Other mills incorporated in the South during this same time, including those in North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, produced very similar portraits of an average textile mill employee. Therefore, the experiences and female culture found in Matoaca between 1888 and 1895, as illuminated in Anthelia Holt’s letters, helps us to understand important aspects of the dynamics of white, female, working-class cultural formation throughout the South.

Similar to other textile mills throughout the South and the larger United States, the Matoaca mill employed only white men and women in production jobs. African-American men and women found employment only as janitors or packers. Moreover, the white labor force of the Matoaca mill was further segregated by gender. The mill constructed sex-typed jobs pushing women into the jobs of spinners, carders, and fabric dyers while men held the positions of management and loom repairers. Because economic realities forced many women into the workplace and out of the home (long considered the woman’s sphere), the sexual division of labor and pay scaled predominated as a reflection of the social differentiation of spheres, the sexes, and reinforced attitudes about what was masculine and feminine. Ultimately, race differentiation in employment and the creation of sex-typed jobs both reflected and reinforced cultural hierarchies of white
over black and men over women. Out of this white female textile mill world grew a distinctive working-class culture.

It is evident from the words of Anthelia Holt as an average mill employee, that the conclusions reached above reflect the experiences of other white mill women in Matoaca, Virginia between 1888 and 1895. Moreover, the similarities between the Matoaca mill, the Alamance, North Carolina mill, and regional and national mill employment trends point toward the additional conclusion that the experiences of the Matoaca white working-class women reflect those of other white women mill workers in the post-Civil War South.

The regularities and restrictions of mill life, female social networks, and heterosocial forms of recreation were three aspects of the working-class culture of Matoaca, Virginia and the wider southern textile mill world. These three aspects of working-class life were interdependent and offer insight into the intricacies of working-class culture and working-class relationships.

Mill work dictated the hours and amount of money that mill employees could and did spend on recreation. Female workers participated in social events and networks that did not interfere with the temporal and economic constraints of the mill. Instead, white women employees of the Matoaca mill created systems that were not entirely separate from their paid jobs but did help to make their difficult lives easier and more enjoyable. Without the support of other female textile mill workers through social networks, many cotton mill employees would not have been able to create and nurture a somewhat comfortable physical and social existence.

In her oral history compilation, *Hard Times Cotton Mill Girls: Personal Histories of Womanhood and Poverty in the Rural South*, Victoria Byerly found that "poverty, region, mill work, feminine
culture somehow subordinate individuality to commonality." Even though the experiences of women working in the textile mills of the New South were each distinct in their own ways, they found unity in their working-class identity and culture.

As historians continue to investigate working-class culture in the New South, an even more detailed picture of the type of working-class life and culture described by Anthelia Holt will be successfully completed. Future studies will be important as a means to shed light upon the culture of working-class members of the southern textile mill world, working-class employees of other nineteenth century industries in the South, and working-class members of the United States as a whole. The working-class culture described and illuminated in this study through the correspondences of Anthelia Holt and Lottie Clark is a brief example of one type of study concerning the working class of the late nineteenth century and concerning the history of the New South. As such, these studies are essential for an increased historical understanding of the experiences of the myriad of workers who participated in the growing economy of nineteenth century America.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Matoaca Precinct Household Units 1880-1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Average Household Size</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1569</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>5.03</td>
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Table 2. Employed Residents (Male and Female): Matoaca Precinct 1880-1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number Employed</th>
<th>Percent of Total Population</th>
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<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>45.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>37.67%</td>
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Table 3. Top Forms of Male and Female Employment: Matoaca Precinct 1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employed Men</th>
<th>% of Male Workers</th>
<th>Employed Women</th>
<th>% of Female Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>21.72%</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11.99%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpentry</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic Service</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress Making</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Top Forms of Male and Female Employment: Matoaca Precinct 1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employed Men</th>
<th>% of Male Workers</th>
<th>Employed Women</th>
<th>% of Female Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>14.38%</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>23.52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>18.27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic Service</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
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Table 5. White Female Matoaca Mill Workers: 1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Mill Workers</th>
<th>Percent of Female Population</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>90.07%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>72.79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.35%</td>
</tr>
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Table 6. White Female Matoaca Mill Workers: 1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Mill Workers</th>
<th>Percent of Female Population</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>76.90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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VITA

Beth Anne English