



THE ERWIN CHATTER



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Looms Cost From \$60 To \$110 When First Mill Began Sixty Years Ago

Mr. Erwin Outlined Costs In Letter to B. N. Duke; Promised Him a New Mill To Challenge Competition

On April 8, 1892, W. A. Erwin who was then Secretary-Treasurer of The E. M. Holt Plaid Mills in Burlington, wrote Benjamin N. Duke concerning plans for organizing a cotton mill.

Said Erwin, "... allow 20 to \$25,000.00 as operating capital for the 250 loom mill and 40 or \$50,000.00 as operating capital for the 500 loom mill, provided that new and most improved machinery is put in.

"Looms of various makes used by different mills in the State vary in cost from \$60 to \$110 at the Shops, therefore being strapped and harnessed. There is also quite a variation in the cost of Spinning machinery and all, of course, is supposed to be based upon the quality and quantity of each machine's work.

"I will soon submit to you accommodation and estimates of a plant on which I will challenge competition."

This is the spirit in which our Company was begun and only the prices have changed since 1892. New looms today cost approximately \$1300 each! Erwin Mills is spending thousands of dollars on "new and most improved machinery" in order to "challenge competition" in 1953.

Did You Know—

Mill plant capacity doubled
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Tobacco Money Financed Erwin Cotton Mills Co.

The News in Brief - 1953

The new wide Sanforizer, originally ordered for Durham, has been installed at Cooleemee and is now in operation. It was decided to install the machine there because Cooleemee has more goods to Sanforize than Durham. The Durham cloth for fitted sheets will be sent to Cooleemee to be Sanforized.

The sale of Company-owned houses at Cooleemee will begin on May 4, 1953. Alester G. Furman Co., who will conduct the sale, will set up an office at 16 Marginal Street on that date. The office will be open from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. each weekday except Saturday, and their representatives will be able to furnish all details concerning the purchase of Company houses. The occupant of each house will be given the first opportunity to buy his house. Other employees wishing to purchase a house should make application at the Alester G. Furman office also.

Two promotions have been announced for the Cost Department in our General Office at Durham. William H. Rawlings is now the

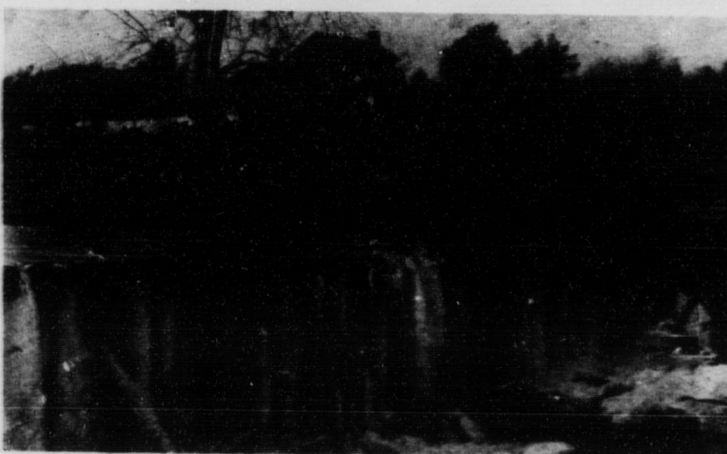
First Product Was Cloth For Smoking Tobacco Bags

Washington Duke and his two sons, Benjamin Newton Duke and James Buchanan Duke, started manufacturing smoking tobacco at the end of the Civil War. Their first product was granulated tobacco put in cotton bags and labeled Pro-Bono-Publico. Another son, Brodie Duke, manufactured smoking tobacco in Durham under the names Semper Idem and Duke of Durham.

W. Duke & Sons Co. was formed in 1878, consisting of Washington Duke, his three sons, and George W. Watts. The Company was reasonably successful but could not compete with Bull Durham Smoking Tobacco made by the Blacknall Co. For that reason the Dukes started manufacturing cigarettes in 1881. James B. Duke joined four rivals and the American Tobacco Company was formed in 1890. Profits from that American Tobacco Company (dissolved in 1911) were used by B. N. Duke to finance the organization of The Erwin Cotton Mills Company in 1892.

One of the our first products was cloth for smoking tobacco bags. The American Tobacco Co. did not gain control of the famous Bull Durham Smoking Tobacco until 1898, at which time Erwin Mills was manufacturing denims. Probably the to-
Erwin fabric was

The Old and The New



This is the old Cooleemee dam across the Yadkin River, probably the winter of 1890. On the right is the old grist mill.



The new dam was built around 1906 when Erwin bought the Cooleemee Cotton Mills. The mill was powered by one single and three double water wheels, most of which are still in use today.

How Erwin Mills Got Its Name

Sixty-one years ago Benjamin N. Duke decided to invest some of his profits from the American Tobacco Company in textile manufacturing. He needed the advice of a capable textile man and the name of W. A. Erwin was suggested to him. An interview followed and Mr. Duke was so impressed with Mr. Erwin he hired him on the spot.

When the incorporation papers were drawn up, the lawyer asked Mr. Duke what name had been decided for the company. The Tobacco manufacturer was taken by surprise and could not think of a name. The lawyer then suggested, "Let us name it for this young man, when if it fails the onus (burden) will be upon him, and if it succeeds, it will be to his glory."

The suggestion was quickly accepted by Duke and The Erwin Cotton Mills Company was born, with W. A. Erwin being the young man upon whose shoulders was placed the responsibility for the success or failure of the new enterprise.



MR. AND MRS. W. A. ERWIN

No more sincere or glowing tribute to Mr. W. A. Erwin could be found than this letter written to B. N. Duke by L. Banks Holt of the Oneida Cotton Mills, Graham, N. C., on April 20, 1892.

"My experience is that in a lifetime we seldom find an 'all round' man, one of extensive business capacity, entirely reliable, 'as true as steel' and with all, a Christian gentleman. Through associations with Mr. Erwin as my clerk and partner in business of 17 years, I cannot part with him without saying to you that I cannot find words that will express too strongly my good opinion of him."

Home Site Chosen For Mill No. 1

Property for the original No. 1 Mill was brought from W. O. Blacknall, first Sheriff of Durham County. Sheriff Blacknall's home was about where the mill smokestacks were built and the property extended to the railroad track spur. The house was torn down when the mill was built.

In April 1892, the Durham Consolidated Land Company donated a strip of land adjoining the Blacknall site to B. N. Duke. Mr. Duke wrote to W. A. Erwin of the donation saying that the land was donated "provided the mill is erected on the Blacknall site and provided he will consent to the extension of Ninth Street to the Railroad."

"This I am very glad to do," writes Duke, "as it gives us a much better front and shapes it up nicely for us. I have consented to let them

have the small corner on the East of this extension which will be cut off from the Blacknall lot. It is in a low place and could not be of any value to us."

W. A. Erwin replied to B. N. Duke: "I beg to congratulate you upon securing the donation of the strip of land mentioned. This will make our site all we could wish it to be."

The decision to build the Erwin mill on the Blacknall site has another sidelight in the building of the City of Durham. At the time the property was chosen, Brodie Duke, B. N. Duke's brother, owned most of North Durham and wanted to develop it. He wanted the Erwin mill on his property but Mr. Erwin and B. N. Duke decided against it. This made Brodie Duke angry and he retaliated by building his own mill — The Pearl Cotton Mills, now Erwin Mill No. 6.