

**Interview with Miss Nora and Miss Mary Frederick**

**Interviewed by Bill Harvey  
Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project**

**Interviewed on July 10, 1979  
At the Frederick home  
Baltimore, Maryland**

**Transcribed by Hannah Freeman and Cindy Chance  
Anthropology 440/640 – University of Maryland, October 2005**

Nora Frederick – NF  
Mary Frederick – MF  
Bill Harvey – BH

**BH:** This interview for the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project with Miss Nora and Miss Mary Frederick was conducted by Bill Harvey on July 10, 1979 at Miss Frederick's home on Clipper Road in Hampden-Woodberry. Miss Nora and Miss Mary, you told me that your parents came to Hampden and then moved to Minnesota before you were born. Can you describe to me why they went to Minnesota?

**NF:** My mother's sister married a man who had homesteaded out there. She went because her sister and her two brothers had gone out there. The brothers were kind of wild and Grandmother went to straighten them out and so she was out there too. Then my father went out there and we were all born out there.

**BH:** So you were born out there and then you came back to Hampden-Woodberry.

**MF:** Right.

**BH:** You distinguish between Hampden and Woodberry?

**NF:** Yes, I never lived in Hampden.

[Laughter]

**BH:** Once before though, Miss Mary, you told me that you make that distinction, just joking around.

**MF:** Well it carries on as a joke. But, deep rooted down, it really isn't a joke.

**BH:** But then you came back to Woodberry in 1924 or 1925. You went to school for a couple of years and then you went to work. Did you both go to work at the Best Cone Company?

**MF:** Yes, but not at the same time. I followed her footsteps

**NF:** I went in 1926 and you went in 1927 or '28.

**MF:** Yes, in 1928.

**BH:** How'd you get that job over there?

**MF:** I went down and applied for it. I lied about my age. [Laughter] Everybody in Woodberry and Hampden worked at the ice cream cone plant. Every girl in Hampden and Woodberry was sixteen years old, from the age of fourteen until they were sixteen. You had to be 16 before you went to work.

**BH:** They never checked you out on that, did they?

**NF:** No, but I just worked there until before Christmas, until [unclear]. I guess I went down there in 1925. Of course I went to Hooper's in September of 1926.

**BH:** What kind of work did you do at the Best Cone Company?

**MF:** I packed ice cream cones. I was floor lady when I was fourteen because I was the only one that could keep time. The rest of them didn't know how to keep time.

**BH:** How do you mean "keep time"?

**NF:** Well, they didn't know how to say it was nine forty-five instead of quarter of ten. They didn't know how to mark the time down that way. I used to do mine and then my girlfriend worked daytime and I used to do hers. She'd have it written down "quarter to ten" and I had to go over her sheets and mark her time down the way you are supposed to mark time.

**BH:** That was down in the basement department.

**NF:** Yes. They had the whole building. They packed. They would use the top for a warehouse. And they had the bottom for the front part where they packed ice cream cones and the bakery was in the back.

**BH:** Remember how much money you made?

**NF:** Nine dollars a week, for six nights a week, from three to eleven.

**BH:** You make the same?

**MF:** No. By the time I went I was raised to eleven dollars a week for the same time; about eleven dollars a week.

**BH:** You worked three to eleven too?

**MF:** Right.

**BH:** Why'd you leave that job?

**NF:** My aunt told me that my father was getting older. He was fifty years old--

**MF:** No, he wasn't fifty.

**NF:** He was forty-five or forty-six years old. He was getting old and more money needed to be brought in so I had to get a job to get more money. I went to work at Hooper's for fifty-five dollars a week for thirteen dollars and five cents. Of course that was a starting wage. What you did was mark a load that would [unclear] sweeping and then I went onto the machines. When I was sixteen I went on the machines.

**BH:** Did you go to work at Hooper's at the same time?

**MF:** That she did? No. I worked at [unclear]. We're really not twins. We might look like twins. Then it became seasonal work. It ran from October until the ice cream season was over then they would close down. They had enough stock. If you wanted the ice cream cones they had them there. But they only ran the machines during the summer months and then October. I went there when I was fifteen. But I was sixteen when I went to Hooper's in October of the same year, in 1928. And I went because the Best Cone Company had closed down for the season. Then, I went to Hooper's. I worked there until 1961.

**BH:** Both of you worked there until 1961?

**NF:** Yes, until they closed down the preparatory department. And then you were off one week and I was off three weeks and we went to work down at Mt. Vernon.

**MF:** We were on temporary layoff from Hooper. But when they called us down Mt. Vernon and I said "well, suppose I don't want the job", he said, "Well, I'll have to call the unemployment folks and tell them you refused to take the job". I said, "I'm on temporary leave". He said "I'll still have to call unemployment and say I offered you a job". I said, "Well I guess I'll come to work for you". So I never did go back to Hooper's because I had a better job down to Mt. Vernon than I had at Hooper's. After they closed the preparatory department, I started in the sewing room and I was petrified of those sewing machines. Every time I put my foot down to start that thing up: it was a *power* machine. I would stand straight up. So, when they called me down to Mt. Vernon for the same kind of work, I went down there and she followed.

**BH:** You mean the man in Mt. Vernon told you that he was going to call the unemployment office on you?

**NF** and **MF:** He said he would have to

**MF:** He said that he would have to report me because this was a better paying job. The first week I worked down there I made twelve dollars a week more than I was making at Hooper's. It was a better job, a better paying job.

**BH:** Was there--

**MF:** Well, I was a little leery. I didn't like that job up at Hooper's but after thirty-three years I was a little timid to leave it to go down here. But after the first or second week, maybe a month, I was well satisfied that I had changed jobs.

**BH:** Was there any chance that you could get your job back at Hooper's?

**MF:** Yes, definitely. I could have demanded it. It was a temporary layoff but we could have went back there and Mr. Hooper would have seen that we were placed because we had thirty-three and thirty-five years' seniority. And he did look out for seniority but . . . if the boss laid you off . . . And then it was about one week when I went down to Mt. Vernon. Well I didn't care for the job that I had up there then; because it was below my *dignity*. I had come down from eighty dollars a week down to about fifty dollars a week; about thirty dollars a week drop in salary. Even though it was 1961.

**BH:** How did that happen?

**MF:** They had closed down the department we worked in. If they closed down the department you worked in and you had seniority, they would find you a job; but not in the same pay rate. Like I told you, in that job I was making eighty dollars and I went down to fifty dollars a week, thirty dollars drop. Then, the first week I worked in Mt. Vernon I made twelve dollars more. And then I just kept going up until the wages were over one hundred dollars a week.

**NF:** It was about the same with me only I was off three weeks when I went down there. She was supposed to go on day work. We had worked day work, of course, seven until three thirty. But at Mt. Vernon they put you on night work.

**MF:** Yes.

**NF:** And they asked her if she would go on the second shift from three thirty to twelve, and that they had a opening for me too so I was in and --

**MF:** They had something for us at Hooper's but we wouldn't go back. Well, you can't blame us. We were making about twenty dollars a week more.

**NF:** Then when Mt. Vernon closed, we were off a year. We didn't know about Filterite. We were off for a year and then we went to Filterite. They called her and sent for her. A month later, she said to me, "Why don't you go up and get a job?" I said, "Get a job?" I said, "I'm sixty-three years old. They won't hire me." And I went up there and got a job. When we wanted to leave in two years, they didn't want us to go. That's a nice place to work up there at Filterite. [Unclear] It's a good place to work.

[unrecorded conversation]

**MF:** That has what we called in the other mill a hard twist because it had so much twist in it, it made the yarn hard. Not hard, but stronger. The more twist you have the stronger it is.

**NF:** That's what they used to make filters.

**BH:** Isn't that synthetics up there or is it cotton?

**MF:** Yes. Well, Mt. Vernon was synthetics. Very little cotton [unclear] in Mt. Vernon.

**NF:** Hooper's was strictly cotton.

**BH:** Some people say that's why Hooper went out of business.

**NF:** Why?

**BH:** Because they wouldn't ship the synthetics.

**MF:** I don't know. They tried every once in a while.

**NF:** There was a time they ran fiberglass.

**MF:** Yes. They even tried to run Fiberglass one time and it just dropped on through. But they ran everything. At Filterite they brought their fiberglass in but they never milled the fiberglass. But you name it and they ran anything else. And you wouldn't believe the different color whites that would go through. You could tell as you went around the room what was on the machines after your eye would become experienced at it. She was better at it than I was.

**NF:** It was orlon or drylon--

**MF:** --Raylon--

**NF:** --Raylon, orlon, and rayon and the different synthetics. And the machine would give you experience. These people who would work in the mill for two years didn't know

anything about the mill. At Mt. Vernon they ran polypropylene which is plastic and they color dye so when it comes through the machine it's . . .

**BH:** It's like a dye?

**MF:** It's like a dye but it doesn't stay. It's identification color when the work comes out. Down Mt. Vernon they used to have something that ran pink. But, that pink would automatically go out by the time it was processed through the mill. And this polypropylene, they made rugs out of it. That plastic fiber has to be dyed in the first stages. It can't be dyed after it's made; anything polypropylene or plastic. It's woven like this matting and indoor outdoor rugs. That's what they were making those fibers for. The color has to be blended in as they were making the plastic. because it won't take a dye.

**BH:** What was the one difference you said, Miss Nora, you between Filterite and Hooper's? You said --

**NF:** They were more considerate. The bosses would listen to you up at Filterite. Is that what you meant?

**BH:** No. I meant in the mill process. You said they eliminated one machine.

**NF:** Oh, the drawing frame. It was between the cards and the rowing machines. There was a machine where the work came off of these cards and then the drawing frame means that you draw the work down. They would stretch it from one inch to maybe four. And, it puts more [unclear] into the stretching. It would make the work stronger. Instead of the one (inaudible) is, you'd have four coming in from the back, go through the machine and then draw it out and go down into the counter that much stronger cause it would be four into one. Then it would go from there to the rowing frame, which stretches even further.

**MF:** And it would put the first twist in.

**BH:** What were you going to say about the bosses up at Filterite?

**NF:** They were much more considerate than the bosses at Hooper's. They would listen to you. They don't want to hear about it, the bosses from the bygone days . . . They didn't want to hear what you had to say. And it would be something that they should consider but up at Hooper's they wouldn't listen to you.

**MF:** Well, another thing. A lot of the bosses in the old mills were once workers in the mills. They worked themselves up to boss's job. If they brought somebody in from the *south* they still had started off at the bottom and worked themselves up to their job as boss.

**BH:** You think that makes a difference in the way bosses are at Hooper's?

**MF:** I don't know. These young men up there at Filterite were eager to learn what you had to tell them. Nora had that picture she gave to one of the men down to church and she hasn't received it back yet.

**NF:** That one from the historical society [unclear]. I had his name in my pocket and I'm going to call him up and ask him where my picture is.

**MF:** They were always eager; anything you could show them. Well, you had to take the papers into the office and they would talk to you and ask you to explain things; how the things were back in those days. They were just as eager as the people like you. They were just as eager to learn how these things started. Filterite started in one of the big boss's father's basement. He was the inventor of this filter and he had just started out. He just had this shop in his basement and [unclear]. I don't think he was any older than I am [unclear]. He might have been but he--

**NF:** But he would listen to you. If something was wrong and you tried to tell him what was wrong--. He would listen to you where years ago the bosses wouldn't listen to you.

**BH:** You think because the bosses at Hooper's had worked in the mill they thought they knew more--

**MF:** Right. I think so. Maybe I'm wrong but I [unclear].

**NF:** One time, one of my machines caught on fire. The gearbox was on fire and I stopped it. I went up the office and they were talking. I was going to butt into the conversation. I said, "Excuse me", and I wanted to tell him the machine was on fire. He said, "Young lady, would you wait until we're finished?" I said, "Alright, but the machine's on fire over there." You better believe they came out of the office.

**BH:** Who was that boss?

**NF:** Mr. Willie. That was when I first went up there. It might've not hurt nothing but still it could've hurt something. You know the gearbox was at the end of the machine and I heard the noise and I lifted up. I could see sparks and it was smoking so I stopped it and went after them. They even passed me going by. But they . . . Some of them were considerate. Some of them weren't. One time, the one boss up there, Mr. Phillips, he wanted Mary and I to take a course in—

**MF:** Textiles, correspondence course in textiles.

**NF:** Correspondence in textiles. And my aunt was working up there. This was the same one that told me I had to go to work because my father was getting old, forty-six. He said, "I'd like for the two girls to take a correspondence course in textiles." She said, "Oh no, they can't do that. I could do it but they couldn't." Well, they weren't interested in her taking it. They were interested in her and I taking it. And so it just fell through. But I said--

**MF:** A lot of them at Hooper's took textile correspondence courses. It was a very popular thing for the bosses to take.

**BH:** For the bosses to take.

**MF:** Yes, right.

**NF:** Well, we probably would have made it if she'd not been [unclear] when she said she could take it but we couldn't. We must have been about twenty.

**BH:** Well, what did they do for you if you completed the course?

**NF:** Well, then you were eligible for a boss's job if you worked on that. Hooper went along with you if you took the correspondence course; whatever was benefiting to him. Years ago, when they used to invent something [unclear]. If you could invent something Hooper would say "Do you want so much pay raise or do you want . . ." This one fellow had invented something for a spinning frame. He said, "What do you want, a week's vacation or would you like a raise in pay?" He said, "I took a week's vacation" because, he said, "I didn't know how long that thing was going to work." [Laughter] And it was true that week's vacation [unclear]. You find now when you go to work for a factory or for anything in industry, you have to sign a contract. Anything you invent on company time belongs with the company.

**BH:** Did that happen to other people over at Hooper's?

**MF:** This woman was telling me something about her father. We were at a luncheon up to Friendly Farms, an Eastern Star luncheon. Her father had been a boss down Mt. Vernon. She said he had invented a time scale. I don't know exactly what it was but you could write up time real fast. She said the same thing. If the bosses got up high, they were working the mill all day, they got up high. When they became useless, down the ladder they would go again. What would be called--

**NF:** Grading the work.

**MF:** Grading the work. They called it--

**NF:** Sizing.

**MF:** Sizing the work. Make sure you go on all machines and get a certain amount of work off the machines and you test it and weigh it and then if the machine isn't making the right weight of material then you have to just send the sheet. That's what I did over at Filterite. They call it now Quality Control; used to be inspectors. But they got the ritzy name of the Quality Control. That's what they were. Their job was [unclear] and they were old. Well, you couldn't afford to quit. There was no pension plan. Hooper might've given a little pension but they realized that they had been living, you know. Well, when

they went down the pay went down too. And that's what their job would get. And I know quite a few of them even ended up running an elevator, or, doing sizing, what they called sizing.

**BH:** That was a common pattern for bosses to go up? And then they came back down to these other jobs?

**MF:** Well, that's what you seen. Not all.

**BH:** But you said when they became useless--

**MF:** Well, you went up, somebody went up, and you went down; somebody smaller than you are--

**NF:** Or younger.

**MF:** Or younger, could hold the job down. People were getting older. These men were up in their seventies. But they shouldn't even have been working then. Some of them were more than seventy.

**NF:** I remember Mr. Metcalf. His legs were so bad; must've had arthritis. We didn't know what arthritis was. You didn't worry about it in those days. And he used to wear tennis shoes all the time, just shuffling along. At lunch, he used to go back on a stair where they put the work, the empty boxes and things, or the full ones that they didn't need right then, and lay down there. One lunchtime he laid down there. We thought sure he was dead and they went and got the nurse to come from the office and found him to get him up.

**MF:** And he used to have pencils. I used to have a couple around here. I gave one to my niece when she started school. I said, "This is what a man uses up to work." And he had a lot of them like that because I swiped that one for her.

**NF:** What'd she tell you? Take it back?

**MF:** She said, "Aunt Mary, you better take that back because he might need it." And I said, "Honey, he has quite a few just like this." But he was the one that we noticed the most because he--

**NF:** You don't realize it until you were sitting down thinking how degrading that job, you know, to be a boss over people, to have to do it for a long time.

(Telephone rings)

**BH:** You were talking about the bosses not listening to you when things came up. Mr. Hochschild told me that they had an efficiency expert named Santos over at Hooper Mill.

**NF:** Santos or San-toss

**MF:** San-toss

**NF:** He was the first, you know, first--

**MF:** He wouldn't listen to anybody.

**BH:** He wouldn't?

**NF:** No. This one fellow was telling me down there to church [unclear]. His name's Bill Tice. He said he was working on the grading machine and he invented something for the grading machine when he first started up and he was making twenty-one dollars a week. He asked Mr. Santos for a raise. He was going to get married. He wanted twenty-three dollars a week and Santos wouldn't give it to him--

**MF:** [Laughing] Because the wife wanted two dollars.

**NF:** So he quit. It was another boss up there named [telephone rings] Mr. Edmond and he was very upset when [telephone rings] Bill Tice quit because he was a good worker [unclear]. Mr. Santos wouldn't listen to nobody.

[tape stops and starts]

**NF:** We were talking about Mr. Santos. I was telling you about Bill Tice quitting because he was only making twenty-one dollars a week. Santos wouldn't give him a raise.

**BH:** Did you all have contact with Santos?

**NF:** No. He was Spanish. He was a very, very cool person. I don't know if anybody ever got close to him.

**MF:** You might say hello or something like that [unclear].

**NF:** He always walked through the mill with his head down. He was a very tall person.

**MF:** But he didn't miss much.

**MF:** He was there about five years.

**NF:** He realized that people didn't like him because when he got real sick, they took up a collection and sent him flowers from the mill. He said, "I didn't think anybody ever noticed me." So maybe it was just as much our fault as it was his fault for being the kind of person he was.

**BH:** Well how could it have been your fault? Did you feel like he was kind of looking over your shoulder all the time?

**NF:** No. He thought he was better than I was and I thought you been so [unclear] go ahead and think it. But I know you're not. You might be just as good as I am. [unclear]. I'm not saying you're no better than I am no matter who you are. [unclear]

**BH:** You can't get that look on tape, you know.

[Laughter]

**NF:** Can't you feel it?

**BH:** I don't think there are words for it either.

[Laughter]

**NF:** I told him that. I said, "You might think you're as good as I am, better than I am, but you're not. You might be just as good." We used to have trouble with the [unclear] the same way; complaining we were prejudiced. I said, "What is wrong with your head? I'm not prejudiced racially." When I go to work in a place, I don't care if you're purple, green, or what color they are. They're my co-workers. I don't see any color at all. I can see arrogance, and nastiness. But I don't see color, because that has nothing to do with it. But how can you have a racial difference if you [unclear] school with them, played with them when you were little tiny kid--

**MF:** Living next door to them. You didn't see anything.

**BH:** How did that come up? I thought the black people didn't work in the mills too much?

**MF:** In the second--

**NF:** In the Second World War.

**MF:** In the Second World War.

**NF:** [unclear-laugh] They said something about, they'd think about bringing German--

**MF:** prisoners of war

**NF:** --prisoners of war into the mill. Oh my golly, that's all we needed. That's all—The, the president of the union said if you give us a raise we'll [laughs], we'll let you bring the prisoners of war in.

**MF:** [unclear]...And he said that, choice words, that he wasn't going to bring the prisoners, then they weren't going to get the raise.

**NF:** But you know we all had somebody in the service either fighting in the Pacific or over in Europe. And we didn't want any prisoners of war in there, so then, the colored people started coming in. At first they weren't working.

**MF:** Wasn't it some sort of a thing that they, they could send them in? I don't know where they came from or how they got in there [coughs]-- must have been a state employment service that sent them there.

**BH:** I don't know.

**MF:** I don't know either.

**BH:** I don't know about it.

**NF:** But we had a lot from the south. We had a lot from North Carolina and South Carolina came up here.

**BH:** I heard that Hooper's would take buses down there and bring people up by busloads.

**MF:** I don't know whether they would have--

**NF:** That was the first world (war)—

**MF:** No, they would go down and talk to you. They probably would have to go down and open up an employment office. Now, whether they would pay the bus fares or not, I don't know.

**NF:** I had heard something about that, but I never heard any details about it.

**MF:** Well, when Mount Vernon closed, the one girl said you and I could go. She said "would you like to go down and work in a southern mill?" and I said no because it would be too far to commute. And I was not going to live down south.

**NF:** You've never been any further south than Front Royal, Virginia. I don't have any desire to go south. I'd rather go, if I were going to go anywhere, to New England. Not to work, but for a trip.

**BH:** Now did the mill seem to change when people started to come in from the south?

**MF:** Yes.

**BH:** During the time of the Second World War?

**NF:** Yes. There's a comparison they always tell you how much money they made down south. Well what were they doing up there working in Mount Vernon and Hooper's if they were making more down in the southern mills? That's my estimation. They had a system down in the southern mills where if you were rowdy, if you stayed out, if you caused trouble in the department that you worked in or if you were just a bad influence—

**MF:** Or didn't work steady

**NF:** or didn't work, especially if you didn't work steady, then you would get black balled. You had a file and you would go from one mill to the other down there, but your file would follow you and it got to the point where no one in the southern mills would hire you because you weren't a good worker. No matter how good of a machine operator, you weren't any good to them because you weren't going to stay, you weren't going to come to work, you were going to cause trouble when you were at work. And they get a lot of that up here, but we had no records of what they were.

**BH:** Do they have any systems of black ball around here like that?

**MF:** No, no, not that I ever knew of.

**NF:** Only word of mouth.

**MF:** Word of mouth.

**NF:** This one fella, they hired down in Mount Vernon a couple times, and he was a drunk. He'd come in there and he'd get a job on Friday and he was supposed to be in there on Monday and he wouldn't be there on Monday. He was a good worker and her and I both felt sorry for him, but he was an alcoholic. We met him one time, we were going to work, and we parked the car on Chestnut Avenue and he was coming up Chestnut Avenue *dirty*. Had just come off a drunk. Mary said, "I ought to get out of here and give you a good lickin' boy." He said, "If it'd do me any good, I wish you would." But he was just too far-gone, but he was a good worker...when he worked. But you weren't [unclear]. We had [unclear] sweeper up at Hooper's when I first went up there to work. His name was Mr. Hogan and he was just [unclear], oh. On Monday he was rank, he smelled awful and all he did was push a broom. I guess he made about eleven dollars a week, but wherever he lived, he had enough to get along on. And we had one woman worked up there, and she was from Richmond Virginia. Her name was Mrs. Warner and she had been in the mill since she was eight days old. Her mother had carried her in there and put her in a box, and then when she got to be three years old she used to raise havoc because she would run along and break the work out of the machines when nobody one was looking.

**MF:** That was down in ...Richmond.

**NF:** That was down in Richmond, but I don't think--

**MF:** Well, I never worked over there. An ex-priest worked over there when you worked over there.

**NF:** Yes, when I first went to work up there, up to Hooper's, we had a lot of people working in our department then. Then they would want more money so they would take more machines to run. We didn't realize they were hurting themselves. This one aunt of mine, she's, the other one, this one I told you was the actress. She said to her sister, "whoever started running four machines ought to have a swift kick." And my aunt, our aunt Marie said, "I'm the one." And aunt [unclear- Dottie?] said, "well you're the one that ought to have the kick then." Running more machines. That's what they wanted us to do one time down at Mount Vernon. Her and I were working down there and she was running machines on the right-hand side of the room and I was running them over on the left-hand side of the room and one of her machines broke down where she was working. Well I was working on the other side and they wanted her to run over and run one of the machines over where I was at, that was, was idle. And they told her I could watch it. She said, "no way, she's not watching that machine over there. She'll run herself to death," she said. And I'm not--

**MF:** I said, "She's not watching it and I'm not running it."

**NF:** When you let them know that you're, that you're not afraid of them, then you don't have any trouble. I guess when you get some years on you, you get so you [unclear].

**MF:** You get snotty.

**NF:** You just tell them what's up town. That's what all this women's lib's about. Well I had an argument with a minister down at church one time. He wasn't for women doing different things. I said, "I say that if a woman can do the job, she's got a right to have as much money as a man." This was back in the early 40's. He and I had it hot and heavy. He said, "I don't think so." I said, "well I think so. If I can do as much work as a man running a machine I should have the same wages as he can." But he didn't think that way, and I *still* think that way. Because a lot of the time a man will lay down on the job. A woman will push herself until she kills herself doing something. For a male will just do so much and that's it. [unclear-laughs]

**BH:** Did the men generally make more money in the mill?

**NF:** Oh yes, yes.

**BH:** Women seemed to do certain kind of work?

**NF:** No. Even during the war women were in the cards remember? They didn't lay the [unclear-laps], but they took care of the fronts of the cards.

**BH:** What do you mean "took care of the fronts of the cards"?

**NF:** They took the work off the front of the machine but they didn't take care of the back of the machine—

**MF:** They didn't put the work in the back of the machine. It went through the machine, but they just took what came through the machines out of the front.

**NF:** Which really was a man's job, but they couldn't get the men to do it. They didn't have the manpower.

**BH:** But I had the impression that most women did the piece work.

**NF:** Yes.

**MF:** We went straight up Hooper's, which is--

**NF:** Long side of the park.

**MF:** long side of the park, that long red building. And the [unclear- sheet we were on] was from one end to the other end. And there were about fifty-fifty. As many men doing the same work as women, but for years before that there were only men running the machines.

**NF:** But you got paid according to what kind of work you'd been doing. You would run certain grades of work. The worst work you got little pay. Of course the men didn't want that kind of work because they didn't get as much money out of it. So they put the women down there. But the finer the work was the less you got, but the better it run and you could make a good bit of money. But, I was running one time when they had a flood down in Mississippi. Hooper would buy anything and he bought these bails after they dried, and brought them up and dried them out. But the best quality high—

**MF:** staple

**NF:** high staple, cotton.

**BH:** About three inches or so?

**NF:** Right, but it was crummy and it'd been in the mud down there. And I would beat it, and it would run all day without any trouble at all, but everywhere the things come through the works there'd be a pile of dirt, dried dirt, real fine grade dirt there. And I was crummy. I'd look like, if I'd have gotten wet I would have looked like a mud ball. But the work ran well. The work ran well and it paid well. I think they don't even use it for mop yarn, but he got it for practically nothing.

**BH:** Do you remember red clay cotton?

**MF:** No I don't remember that.

**BH:** I guess it was Mr. Hoschild told me about that too. He said it was cotton that came in from down there in Mississippi.

**NF:** Well that's it.

**MF:**-- that's it.

**NF:** That's it I was telling you about.

**BH:** Did it make the walls red and all?

**NF:** I don't know what it made out in the picker room. Buts that that the same stuff that made the little piles of dirt, because I ran it.

**BH:** This would be in the late thirties or so?

**NF:** Yes.

**MF:** Yes.

**NF:** Because I remember when he worked there. His wife worked up there too. His wife was [unclear]. He didn't work there too long. [unclear] I don't know how long he worked up there.

**BH:** About five years or so.

**MF:** That's not long, I mean five years may seem like a long time...

**NF:** He worked in the picker room.

**BH:** Well could you all describe that to me-- the whole process, just a general description when the cottons comes in, all the way through the mill to the end, until it goes out.

**NF:** Well, they'd get the bails, and they'd open the bail.

**MF:** They would bring the bails from the warehouse to the opening room.

**NF:** And, then they had a chute. And it's in layers in the bail. And then they'd take it out of the bail and send it up to the opening room. Now from the opening room—

**MF:** It goes in that one machine in the opening room—

**NF:** Yes.

**MF:** It tears it apart.

**NF:** Then it goes into the picker room where they pick it all to pieces. They don't take the remainder of the cotton seed I guess out of it, or what little bits in there or any leaves or anything that's in there. It tears that all up. Then it goes into the carding, where it cards the rest of the—

**MF:** They're called the pickers and the finishers.

**NF:** Yes.

**MF:** The pickers is where it goes after it comes out of the bail.

**NF:** Yes.

**MF:** It goes into a picker. And it goes—

**NF:** up a conveyor belt.

**MF:** Yes well, that's at Hooper's. It goes onto the conveyor belt but it goes through the pickers over into another machine that finishes it called the finishers. It finishes picking what the pickers didn't pick out of it. And that rolls it into a [unclear-lap].

**NF:** Yes and then it goes onto a card and then it gets carded again and gets the rest of the stuff out of it and all the lumps taken out of it. Then it goes to the drawing frame and then that draws it out, into the first cylinder like a rope, and then it goes from there to the [unclear-rolling press]. Then it goes on the first spool, the rope. Then from there it goes to the spinning room. Then from there the spooler.

**MF:** And there were twisters in there somewhere.

**NF:** Twisters must have come in between the spoolers and the spinning thing. Because the twisters [unclear-ducts]. Hooper had all those pictures on his wall there, I don't know if they're still up there, but he had pictures on of the [unclear-whole complete thing]. He should have had movies made out of them.

**BH:** Now was it twisted to a certain ply?

**MF and NF:** Yes.

**BH:** Like maybe...

**MF:** Maybe they'd twist three threads together.

**BH:** Three you said?

**MF:** Yes, maybe it would be only one thread according to the thickness of the material of the [unclear] or whatever they'd been using.

**BH:** And then the three ply that was twisted would go where?

**MF and NF:** On a spool.

**MF:** And then they would either sell it—

**NF:** They'd put it on or put it on the bottom frame.

**MF:** --put it on the bottom frame.

**NF:** Because it would run with the looms. Wasn't it the looms?

**MF:** They'd put the bobbins in the looms.

**BH:** Well the looms would weave it then—

**NF:** Right

**MF:** Yes.

**BH:** Is that the idea?

**MF:** Yes, according to what grade thread you had, would be the grade (duct/k) you were going to make.

**BH:** Okay.

**NF:** Hopper made tents there for the service during the Second World War.

**MF:** And during the first too.

**NF:** Yes, and they made mailbags too. Someone worked there during the First World War making mailbags and tents. I don't think there were a lot of them.

**BH:** What other kinds of things did they make? Tents and mail bags and—

**NF:** Cider press.

**BH:** And what—

**MF and NF:** Cider press.

**NF:** And lamp wick.

**MF:** The lamp wick belonged to the—

**MF and NF:** [unclear- Standard the War people]

**MF:** They were Hooper's. They were Hooper operating, but they belonged the [unclear- Stand the War/ Standard the War].

**NF:** And they were the ones that would make the wicks for [unclear].

**MF:** One time they made uh, felt. They made--

**NF:** Cotton.

**MF:** Cotton felt. Padding.

**NF:** They made sash cord. They made rope. They have a machine that made the rope that wove the rope. That looked like somebody doing the Virginia reel the way the things went in.

**MF:** Like square dancing.

**NF:** Just like square dancing, that thing. It was fascinating to watch those machines run. They—[unclear] the water broke them...overflowed Mount Vernon.

**NF:** The paper [unclear] they had bought them, but they had gotten them from up in Canada [unclear]...brought them back from Canada. That's the only thing that Mount Vernon was interested that they bought from Hooper's was the paper [unclear]. But I never understood anything about that. But this building on this side of Druid Park drive was where the [unclear] was.

**MF:** They would make you a cover for a boat if you sent--

**NF:** your measurements.

**MF:** your measurements, because I got a boat cover for... well I don't know exactly a boat cover, but the covers over the open cover of the boat that snaps on. I had it made up there. I can't remember now, how much it costs, but they put the holes and everything in there. I don't—

**NF:** Eyelets.

**MF:** Eyelets. And the man said it leaked so [unclear]...

**BH:** What was shoddy?

**MF&NF:** [laughter]

**NF:** That was the worst—

**MF:** I never ran shoddy. I never ran it when I was there.

**NF:** We had a woman worked up there. She must have been six foot tall her name...[unclear]. She was a big woman, and she used to run that shotty and, I'm telling you, she looked like a shoddy, her hair and all. Even when she'd go to eat lunch, she wouldn't take the air hose and blow that off of her. She'd have all that lint on her. What was her name? But she'd run it all the time [unclear]. Well I was just a dumb kid, I just thought because she ran the shotty that's the way she looked—with all that lint all over her.

**MF:** I never [unclear-knew] she worked up there.

**NF:** No? She had gray hair and she wore it puffed up like that. Like back in the Victorian days with a big know up on top. That shoddy would be all over her. She worked way down at the end where you were and [unclear]. She must have made good money cause she didn't follow anyone. All she did was run those two machines.

**BH:** Well what is a shoddy?

**NF:** you know when you buy an old mop? That's just about what it is. A cheap mop, because they fall apart if you have it so long.

**MF:** And when you pull out the stuffing from a cheap mattress and it'd have gray stuff in it. Like the wool, padding inside the mattress would be gray color. That was old shoddy.

**NF:** That was the [unclear- leave in] was shotty.

**MF:** When you have a roller, you have a piece of felt on the board, like this, so that it goes right up against the roller to keep any little things like lint or anything off of the steel roller. They called it a cleary, clears the roll off.

**NF:** They called them a Claire.

**MF:** They called them a Claire, but it clears the roll off. You would have it down over the top roller, like this, which is a lid, but the bottom roller had two pieces of--

**NF:** rawhide.

**MF:** rawhide up each side of it, and had two weights on it and you just pull it down. You weren't supposed to do this by yourself.

**NF:** [unclear-we did it]

**MF:** And clean this clearer off and then you pull it back up so it would ride back up against the roller. And all that—we'd save it

**NF:** We used to throw it on the floor.

**MF:** And they said “don't throw it on the floor,” they could sell it. The Heller mattress was going to buy it. I don't even think they're even in existence anymore. I said, “Well I'm not buying any Heller mattresses if this kind of junks in it.” And that's how I broke my hand, pulling down on these clearers like this. And I had this weight in my hand like this. When the rawhide broke off my hand went down. Of course my hand went down and the moving machine like that. It just cracked the bone right here. I said, “ Doctor, I can't understand. I did that more than ten thousand times in my lifetime.” He said, “well you did it one time too many.” It was breaking it over time. It just hit the machine, didn't go in the machine.

**NF:** They even use to sell the sweepings off the floor. “Don't throw the paper on the floor. Don't throw this on the floor. Don't throw that on the floor,” because they sell that.

**BH:** Is that what they had told you not to do?

**NF:** She knew she shouldn't—

**MF:** I knew I shouldn't do it, while the machine was in operation you shouldn't do this, because somebody's skirt might travel up in there, but you knew just exactly how to do it. They knew you were doing it. You weren't supposed to do it. But it wasn't anything that you could get hurt from. But I did get hurt because the rawhide got old and it broke as I pulled down on it. We were just easing it tightly against that steel roll.

**BH:** Did you lose time from work when you got hurt?

**MF:** About five week.

**BH:** Did they pay you?

**MF:** No compensation paid me.

**BH:** Have you ever heard of others in that [unclear- time]?

**MF:** I got caught in the machine. Of course I got out. See the machine evolve like this. You've got all these double roller machines, which set at an angle like this. And these wobble as you walk by. I don't know how I got caught the first time. Up underneath.

**NF:** caught on your tail.

**MF:** Up underneath into the gears.

**NF:** Whew. She broke down my machine.

**MF:** I pulled at the shaft cause I was scared.

**BH:** It caught your dress?

**MF:** Yes.

**NF:** Dress, slip.

**MF:** But back in those days you couldn't wear slacks. A lot of the girls from the south, even during the Second World War, wouldn't wear slacks. Then when they put the girls on the card they gave them slacks. But one girl wanted to wear a pair of dungarees. The boss said if you come in dungarees just pack your gear and—

**NF:** Well the boss that they had down in Mount Vernon, down in (Mediville), remember that boss? He wouldn't let them wear slacks.

**MF:** Even during the Second World War he wouldn't let them.

**NF:** He wouldn't. Well this one boss, my aunt had, he used to make them wear their necks buttoned. They had to button their dresses up. This was back in the eighteen hundreds. And she had one button unbuttoned on her blouse and the boss told my father to "tell your sister to button that blouse."

**BH:** I wonder why they were so tight about that kind of thing?

**MF:** I don't know. I had to wear a white dress and those machines ran at twenty seven hundred revolutions per minute. And that thing was really going. And I went by and I didn't like the way the uniform was cut. I wore my dress underneath and I had to wear this white uniform over top of it and I used to leave it unbuttoned from the waste down. I reached over to stop Nora's machine as I got caught in that thing. Man, that wrapped me up in that machine. I was yelling, "stop it, stop it, stop it." And she was stopping it and I was stopping it, but it just slows down to a stop. The boss looked at me like "how am I going get you out of that thing." "Get a knife and cut me out of this damn machine." [laughter] He had to cut the dress up to get me out of it. I wasn't hurt or anything.

**NF:** It was even burst out in the seems. The shoulder—

**MF:** It just ripped the—

**NF:** It had her wrapped in there.

**MF:** The supervisor didn't say anything and I didn't say anything. I had to go up and down these isles all the time and you better believe ever after that I buttoned that dress all

the way to the bottom. The big boss was standing there and she said, “how about Mary getting caught in the machine.” And he said, “What’s this? What’s this? What’s this about Mary getting’ caught in the machine.” I told Nora, I said, “Ooh I’m going to kill you.” And the supervisor, he asked me if I was hurt and I said, “No, I’m scared.” And this other woman, she didn’t know what to do.

**NF:** She was there running around with four buttons.

**MF:** Hooks, hook blade [unclear] knife and he just cut and sliced the dress off. Not off, it was just the overdress. But the first time I got caught, I said, “oh I’ve got my slip [laughs] caught.” And the boss said, “You not only got your slip caught in there. You almost got your pants caught in there.” The first time I got caught in there.

**NF:** It was my machine and I couldn’t run it because she bent the shaft on it.

**BH:** That was at the Hooper’s the first time. The second time was at [unclear].

**NF:** And she broke her hand at Mount Vernon.

**BH:** Did you ever get caught or get hurt Miss Nora?

**NF:** No, I fell down one time. I tripped over the stand where the [unclear- motor] was and cracked the back of my head. I was hollering’ for her and she thought I said somebody else was hurt. They took me down to Mercy hospital and they had a [unclear- new foreign] doctor down there. So he x-rayed my head. I had to lay on a table first one way and then the other. Then I said, “Aren’t you going cut that hair off of that spot? I don’t want that hair growing in that hole where I split it open.” So he said, “Yes, I cut it.” And I said “Aren’t you going to put a bandage on it.” He said, “I put bandage on it.” Gee, I might as well have fixed it myself. But I was gone about three hours with that whole thing. If I’d have known I wouldn’t have even let them take me to the hospital.

**BH:** That was the only time you were ever hurt then?

**MF:** Oh you get your hands—

**NF:** See how my hands are? The light places on it? That’s where I’ve gotten them dug up, scarred up. But otherwise I never got hurt and I [unclear- worked there] everyday.

**MF:** I didn’t get hurt either time I got caught in the machine.

**BH:** Okay.

**MF:** But people have gotten hurt badly. Gotten their hands cut off—

**NF:** About nine times out of ten it was your own fault.

**MF:** That was my own fault.

**NF:** This one woman got three fingers cut off in a machine, but it was her own fault. She was cleaning that machine with waste, what they call hard waste, which is a whole lot of string. It pulled her fingers in and cut them off.

**MF:** But she was cleaning the machines—

**MF and NF:** cleaning the [unclear].

**NF:** But any dummy ought to have better sense than that.

**BH:** Well now what did Hooper do about that?

**NF:** What? About her getting her fingers cut off? She got a couple hundred dollars and that's all.

**BH:** Did she still work there after that?

**NF:** I guess she did, that was before my time, before I went up there to work.

**BH:** Oh you just heard about that?

**NF:** Well from my aunt. You know how it is—family. One time we had seventeen of our family working up at Hooper's. I was ashamed of all those people working' up there, the same, all related. Then it ended up it was only you and I.

**BH:** You were ashamed?

**NF:** Ashamed? All those people that said, "oh I met some of your relations that worked here."--

**MF:** You couldn't do anything without some relation knowing' it [laughs].

**NF:** Because it was everybody in a different department. Oh my golly, that was the worst it ever was when seventeen of them were working' up there.

**MF:** Then they said they couldn't hire any more. Too of them in one family, because if somebody died [laughs- unclear].

**BH:** Is that what said at the church one day, that they wouldn't put people from the same family in the same department?

**NF:** Well we couldn't get our vacation at the same time, because we did the same kind of work. Mr. Hooper would have seen it that we got it together.