



Todd Detwiler (left) and Fred Mellott work at the cleaning machine in the old Waterside Woolen Mill.

## Water Powers Woolen Mill Revival

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**WATERSIDE (Bedford Co.)**  
Todd Detwiler is attempting to wear his grandfather's big shoes in more ways than one.

In 1971, when Maurice Clouse, Todd's grandfather, died, he left behind an old hydroelectric woolen mill.

Now, thanks to his grandson, the residents of Waterside will once again hear the humming of the cleaners, pickers, looms, and other related machines as the old mill resumes business as usual.

Meanwhile, Todd is running for the office of District Justice, a position once held by his grandfather.

With fleece balls scattered across the floor and the strong smell of lanolin in the air, Todd wears a satisfied smile as he fondly remembers his childhood playing in this old mill.

"I always thought I wanted to leave here," Todd smiles now. "I was majoring in international business at a college in Virginia when my dad called and said the old family mill was for sale."

"From then on, I couldn't get it out of my mind. I thought about it first thing in the morning and last thing at night. Even when I was

eating, it was on my mind. Two weeks later, I called dad and told him I was coming home to reopen the mill."

As Todd speaks he walks to the window where a torrent of water is pouring over the dam outside. "It can produce enough electricity to light up all of Waterside," he smiles. "And, certainly enough to run all of these machines."

It also provides electricity for the mill apartment where Todd resides.

Joining Todd in his venture is a young, enthusiastic, Penn State business agriculture student who has a twinkle in his brown eyes at the very mention of the mill.

Bursting through a door that hadn't been opened in 20 years, he surprised Todd one evening by offering his help.

Together, the two have spent more than a year researching and studying hydroelectric power and the many intricate machines in the mill. Todd is grateful to some of the senior citizens in the community who worked in the mill and came forth to offer advice. "I've had machine and mill experts from as far away as New England fly here to help me," Todd says appreciatively.

"Every part on every machine is

made of either leather, wood, or steel," Todd says. "No matter what it is, we can duplicate it. These are parts we can order, but usually, we must make them ourselves."

Research indicates that the mill dates back to 1860. It is possible the original mill burned and was rebuilt even prior to that date. An ad from a newspaper in 1860 asks for a "weaver," who must be both Democrat and sober.

A ledger reveals that products created at the mill include woolen skirts, stockings, trousers, batting, and blankets.

When production ceased in 1971, the main product was blankets. Almost every Sunday School in the area purchased one for each newlywed. Cost was in the \$15 brackets.

Batting and blankets will be the first two items to come off of the looms as the mill reopens, hopefully early this coming fall. "We already have a full order for our first run," Todd comments.

The blankets will bear the labels from the label makers of the 1960s. "We had to do some research on that one, but we finally located the company," Todd smiles broadly.

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Outside the old mill, water cascades over the dam providing ample electricity for Todd's living quarters and the mill equipment.

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