



THE MORE THINGS CHANGE... - Natona Mills built the homes shown above on Burndale Ave. in Dallas in the late 1940s. Below, most of them look much the same today, but the trees certainly have grown. The pictures are taken from the foot of Burndale, near the Kenneth A. Young recreational park.



Native

(continued from page 1)

In 1972, she transferred into the knitting department, which was staffed mostly by men. It was a challenge to learn the different knitting machines, Manzoni said. "Those men were the best to me. I enjoyed every minute, without a single complaint," she said.

In her spare time on weekends, Manzoni baked cookies and cakes to bring to work the following week.

"When I retired in 1986, the men gave me a list of their birthdays so that I could keep on bringing them homemade goodies," she laughed.

A thick file of yellowed newspaper clippings and black-and-white photos of long-forgotten people and events, carefully stored in the plant's office, fill in other fragments of the company's history.

Among them is an application for electrical service, dated 1947, signed by company president Leon Birnbaum.

A photo from the late 1940's shows part of Burndale Road, near the Kenneth A. Young Memorial Park, where the company built several homes for its workers to rent when it came to the area.

Dallas Borough tax collector Tom Reese recalled that Sordoni built them, with Ellis Swingle as the site boss. When he was younger, Reese often delivered coal there in the winter.

Except for taller trees, different styles of porch columns and a back deck or two, the two-story, brick-fronted double blocks have changed little over the years.

News clippings from 1947 and 1950 document the company's request to withdraw from Dallas Township and become part of Dallas Borough, due to a disagreement about taxes.

In 1947, the mill's original \$57,770 assessment had tripled to \$157,770, and company officials had asked the township to reduce it to the original figure for two or three years, until the company could get on its feet.

According to the articles, the supervisors had offered the company three years' free taxes if it stayed in the township - an offer Natona Mills refused because it didn't want to set a precedent for other industries.

The Luzerne County court denied the mill permission to become a part of Dallas Borough because the company's attorneys had incorrectly described the 16-acre property, but the matter was ultimately decided in favor of Dallas Borough.

Under an agreement worked out between the municipalities, Natona Mills paid its municipal taxes to Dallas Borough and its school taxes to Dallas Township, which was part of a different school district.

When Dallas Borough schools joined Dallas School District in



BUSY FINGERS - Some of the women working on lace identified on the back of this photo are Martha Williams, S. Williams, Leda Weaver, Anna Werkheiser, Gertrude Turner, Edith Deutsch, Florence Davenport, Elsie Romanchick, Ida Hunt, Margaret Polk, Edna McCarty King, Hazel Gobart Sacacious, Leona Bellas, Edna Ray and Dorothy Shorts.

1957, the mill began paying all of its taxes to Dallas Borough.

Last year Native Textiles paid \$2,898 in municipal taxes and \$22,895 to the school district, according to borough tax records.

According to other news clippings, work at Natona Mills was steady. During slow periods the company made fabrics and lace to replenish its stock, so that it could avoid layoffs.

In 1960, 18 students from Texas Women's University majoring in education visited the plant and ate lunch in the cafeteria while on a month-long bus tour of the eastern and central United States, according to a clipping from The Dallas Post of August 18, 1960.

That same year also saw Natona Mills in the pages of *Women's Wear Daily*, displaying a photo of monkey astronaut "Miss Sam," the first American primate in space, fashionably attired in her protective mesh suit made by Natona Mills in a top secret government project.

The mill, known as the foremost supplier of domestic lace, was acquired by Indian Head in 1962.

An old company newspaper features stories about employees and interviews with the women's softball teams, who promise to "murder" one another. A 1951 Chevy is offered for sale for \$100, as is, while \$25 could buy a used J.C. Higgins .22 rifle.

In 1963, Rotary exchange stu-

dent Linda Davies, bound for Australia for a year, took 50 years of pink and white Natona material with her for gifts to her host country.

In 1974, Natona Mills became Native Textiles, owned by Carriage Brook Industries, headquartered in New York.

The company's announcement March 25 that it plans to relocate the Dallas operation to Glens Falls has employees wondering who will go to New York, who will retire and

who will stay to try and find new jobs locally.

Various local, state and federal agencies and organizations are already trying to find another business to relocate to the Route 415 plant, while the American Clothing and Textile Workers' Union is investigating worker retraining programs.

"We always looked out for each other, just like a family," Annie Manzoni said. "I've enjoyed every minute of my work there."

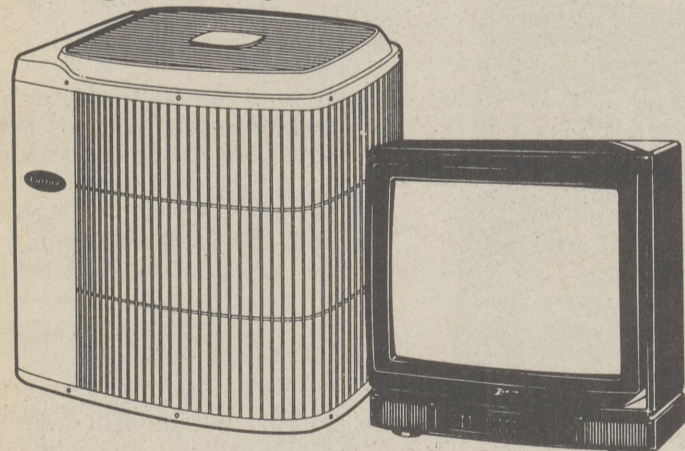
Native Textiles through the years

From a small shop on an alley in Dallas to a company employing between 500 and 600 workers in its heyday, Native Textiles has gone through nearly 50 years of change.

- August, 1946: Ground was broken for the plant on Route 415, originally in Dallas Township.
- October, 1946: Eight women began working in the thread drawing department, set up in the former Ritter paint shop, owned by Charles Gregory, on an alley behind the bank on Main Street.
- 1947: The Route 415 plant known as Natona Mills was completed and all operations moved there.
- 1950-51: After a series of court proceedings, the Natona Mills property withdrew from Dallas Township and was annexed to Dallas Borough, at the company's request.
- Under an agreement which lasted until the Dallas school district jointure in 1957, Natona Mills paid its municipal taxes to Dallas Borough and its school taxes to Dallas Township.
- 1958: The Levers lace department and its 15 machines moved to Hightstown, N.J., affecting 50 workers.
- February, 1960: Natona Mills was credited in *Women's Wear Daily* with making the special mesh suit worn by "Miss Sam," the nation's first monkey in space.
- 1974: The company's name was changed to Native Textiles.
- March 25, 1994: Carriage Brook Industries, the company's owner, announced that the plant would be relocated to Glens Falls, NY, in a consolidation move.

Compiled by Grace R. Dove

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