

Spring 2008

## **Northern Heritage Mills Educational Organization receives major industrial archival collections from family owned mills**

Acworth, N.H.- Comprehensive industrial archival and artifact collections from L.W.Packard Woolen Mills of Ashland, N. H. and E.Murdock Mills of Winchendon, MA. have been donated to Northern Heritage Mills for preservation and research.

The L.W. Packard Woolen Mills was considered the most modern woolen mill in the U.S. and one of the most modern in the world in the late 1990's. John L. Glidden, President of the family-owned L.W. Packard Mills donated the complete archival collection. Mr. Glidden's grandfather's uncle Mr. Luther Packard started the mill in 1916 when he purchased the declining Briggs Woolen Mill on the present site.

In 1840 the Briggs brothers of Leeds, England built the first woolen mill on the Squam River 28 years before the town of Ashland was founded. Records indicate the mill ran sporadically until Mr. Luther Packard purchased the mill. Since then all of the mills on the Squam River Falls have been purchased by the Glidden family. In 2000 the mill complex was comprised of 43 new and old buildings. Considering that space was a premium on the Squam River Falls area when the mill had to expand, a mill building was built over and around the dam. Today the dam and the waterfall are inside the mill building. L.W. Packard complex was 300,000 sq. ft. and could process 500 lbs. of wool per hour. This mill was known throughout the industry for hiring the top technologists in the woolen manufacturing sector and made major technological innovations for environmental and production applications.

The manufacturing wool process included blending, carding, spinning, rewinding, dressing, weaving, burling, carbonizing, pounding, tacking, fulling, dyeing, scotching, knapping, we-brushing, drying, decating, shearing, sponging, and perching.

The L.W. Packard Mills was recognized as one of the world's finest manufacturer of luxury-fibers

Continued on page 27

(Continued from page 19)

**Northern Heritage Mills Educational  
Organization  
receives major industrial archival collections  
from family owned mills**

for top quality coating used in both men and women's clothing industry. Finished fabric products included 100% wool, 100% camelhair, 100% cashmere, and 100% angora. End products were found at upscale retailers Saks Fifth Ave., Neiman Marcus, Bergdorf, Goodman, Nordstrom and catalog merchants L.L. Bean, Lands End, Eddie Bauer.

According to B. Gerald DeMuro president of Northern Heritage Mills, "The L.W. Packard archival collection represents the story of Central New Hampshire's economic and the social history that was connected to manufacturing. The archival information points out how the L.W. Packard woolen mills were connected to Australia, Mongolia, and China. Records include machinery design, steamship transportation, marine warehouse terminals, civil engineering, architectural expansion, hydroelectric engineering and production figures."

---

28 SIA New England Chapters Newsletter

E. Murdock, Inc. was the world's largest wooden pail and tub mill 1900. The largest of E. Murdock mills was in Winchendon, MA. with smaller mills in Keene, Swanzey, and Marlborough, NH. Two machines that were central to this industry was the Barrel Saw and the Pail Lathe. E. Murdock and the business partner Baxter D. Whitney, who owned a foundry and large machine shop in Winchendon are credited with major design improvements on these two machines. E. Murdock and B.D. Whitney also produced the machines for sale to other mills.

E. Murdock was also the president of Cheshire Railroad 1868. This gave a rail access to a network of communities in Southwest NH. for raw materials and finished products. In 1850-1900 there were 30 smaller water-powered and steam driven mills producing wooden pails in Cheshire County. These privately owned mills were connected to Murdock and Whitney mills by railroad or dirt highways for their machine parts and to sell fin-

ished products. In the 1880's this unique small industry in the Monadnock Region of Southwest New Hampshire and Winchendon MA produced approximately 10 million pails per year, one for every 8 Americans.

Mr. DeMuro says," that the archival history from 1859 to 1960 clearly indicates that the Monadnock Region of NH and MA was the wooden pail and tub manufacturing center of the world."

This industry from 1840 to 1940 provided many thousands of jobs in the forest resource and transportation industry in Southwest NH. There were huge stands of clear white pine trees perfect for making pails and tubs. The wooden pail industry distributed enumerable wealth to the thousands of farm households that were able to sell some of their standing trees for added income. This industry helped make the Monadnock Region a leader in forest products and economic stability for years to come.