

# The Last One.

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Where Cocalico's clear waters  
Past the mill, and 'neath the willow,  
Ripple o'er their pebbly bed.

—Mrs. M. N. Robinson.

Archaeologists tell us of a stone age, an iron age, a bronze and other ages, but these have long since passed away and we have fallen upon other times. There are so many things at the front to-day that one hardly knows what to call our own age. One thing is very evident to everybody, and that is, we are living in the period of "store clothes," in the ready-made clothing store. We see the evidences of it on every hand, and when we take up the daily newspaper it confronts us in almost every column.

A very different condition of things prevailed a century ago, yes, half a century ago. Store clothes were unknown. The "fashionable clothier" who now presents himself in the newspaper had no existence then. How, then, were our fathers and grandfathers clothed? It is a simple story and soon told.

In those days nearly every farmer kept a few sheep, say from ten to twenty-five. May was always the sheep-shearing month. The wool was washed and then laid out to dry. Then it was carefully cleaned and picked, after which it went to the carding mill, where it underwent certain processes which it is not necessary to describe here, by which it was formed into rolls. These were then taken back home, where it was spun on the

large and small spinning wheels—the “woll rad.” In many farmers’ homes there were looms where the cloth was woven. If not, then the services of the nearest weaver were called in and the material converted by him into the kind of cloth desired. The home-made woolen cloth was taken to the fulling mill, “walk muhle,” where it was given a treatment of soap and water. Then it was beaten and turned, and when removed from its bath to be given its final washing, it was thicker and narrower than before. Then it was colored as the owner had directed, after which it was dried, trimmed and rolled and ready for use by its owner.

### Home-Made Clothes.

Most of the garments in the country were made by the woman of the house and her daughters. There were no books or magazines with their fashion plate accompaniment, and no sewing machines. The skill of the housewife was all that was necessary. The garments fashioned by her hands would hardly pass muster to-day, but they were strong and warm and well answered their purpose. In those days fashions did not change twice or thrice a year, as now, and a well-made Sunday suit lasted the farmer for many years, and was then fashioned into a garment for one of his boys. All this kept the farmers’ wives and daughters busy, and, no doubt, from indulging in the idle gossip which is now a universal practice. Still later, the tailor was often engaged to spend a week or as long as was necessary to make the men’s and boys’ clothes.

To-day all this is changed. We even know of it only by tradition. A few of us only remember the facts. When

the small or large boys need a suit at the present day, the father or mother takes Johnnie and Sammy to the clothing store, turns him over to the inspection of the salesman and later emerges from the fashionable establishment with the metamorphoses of the two youngsters so complete that their own brothers and sisters hardly know them when they get home.

But the foregoing was not the purpose of the writer when he sat down to write this article, and the reason why these details have been introduced has been to show the important place fulling mills once held in this community and the decadence of that old and most honorable industry, and also to say something about the last one of its kind still in active operation in Lancaster county, and which was visited by the writer one day this week.

### **The First One.**

Before I speak of this mill, a glance at these mills a century ago and more will not be out of place. So far as the writer knows, the first fulling mill in the county was the one built by Stephen Atkinson, on the Conestoga River, near this city. That was in 1714. Atkinson, having built a dam across the Conestoga to secure the proper fall for his milling machinery, neglected to provide a sluice way for the passage of the shad in their spawning migrations up the stream. This deprived the settlers on the upper waters of the river of their annual shad supply, so by a concerted movement they swooped down on Atkinson's dam in 1730, tore it out and got their share of the shad they were entitled to. This action led to the passage of an act by the Provincial Assembly, providing that on all dams erected on the Conestoga thereafter a

passageway for the passage of fish going upstream should be left. I am indebted to an article by Samuel Evans, Esq., for the following historical and biographical data relative to Stephen Atkinson and his fulling mill:

In 1716, Stephen Atkinson, to whom permission had been granted about two years before to settle on a neck of land between Edmund Cartlidge and the Conestoga river, and to build a mill and make a dam, and he having built a good fulling mill, a warrant was made out for the neck of land and ten or twenty acres over the river next his dam.

In the year 1728 he took 138 acres in the bend of the Conestoga. This mill was located in the bend of the river, between Reigart's and Graeff's Landing. The mill and dwelling were on the south side of the river, and fell in Lampeter township, when the county was organized. This was the first mill in the county which obtained its water power direct from the Conestoga river.

Mr. Atkinson died in 1739, and the mill was run by his son, Matthew Atkinson. Thomas Doyle, of Lancaster, married Elizabeth, the daughter of Stephen Atkinson. Hon. John Wilkes Kittera, the first member of Congress from Lancaster under the Constitution, and who served ten years, was married to a great-granddaughter of Stephen Atkinson.

This first fulling mill seems to have had a long and prosperous career. In that old German newspaper, the "Lancaster Zeitung," for October, 1789, I found the advertisement of William Chambers, who notified the public that the fulling mill formerly Atkinson's, about one mile from Lancaster, on the Conestoga river, and opposite Ross' mill, was now repairing, and

would be ready for business in a short time. No doubt, the mill continued in operation into the nineteenth century, and completed its business centennial.

### Many Others Come Along.

That early fulling mill was the forerunner of many more to come. The needs of the rapidly increasing population of the county made them necessary. From the records of the township assessors, still in existence in our Court House, the following table has been made of the fulling mills in operation in this county at various periods:

Year.	No. of Mills.
1756 .....	4
1770 .....	4
1776 .....	9
1790 .....	9
1805 .....	25
1817 .....	25

In the last-mentioned year these fulling mills were distributed through the county as follows:

Rapho township .....	4
Warwick township .....	4
Cocalico township .....	4
Strasburg township .....	2
Donegal township. ....	2
Earl township .....	2
Drumore township .....	2
Little Britain township .....	2
Lampeter township .....	1
Elizabeth township .....	1
Sadsbury township .....	1

The other eleven townships, namely, Conestoga, Manor, Manheim, Hempfield, Mount Joy, Leacock, Caernarvon, Salisbury, Colerain and Martic, had none. In 1817 there were, besides the above-mentioned, five carding mills, two in Strasburg township and three in Elizabeth.

## The Last One.

I return now to the only remaining fulling mill in operation in Lancaster county. It is located on the Cocalico creek, about half a mile north of Brownstown, and four or five miles south of Ephrata, in West Earl township. The first mill built on this site was erected in 1831, just seventy-five years ago, by Mr. Jacob Zook, the father of the present owner and operator, John K. Zook. The present mill is not the one built in 1831, but was erected in 1868, and has been operated continuously by Mr. Zook since that time. It is a large three-story frame structure, with attic, and has always done a large local trade. Only purely woolen fabrics are made. There is no cotton about the place, nor any shoddy, save a few samples left by selling agents, but which are never purchased. The fact that every product turned out at this fulling mill is strictly all wool is what has made it its reputation for the excellence of its productions. A number of well-known Lancastrians have for years been getting material for their clothing at this mill. The cassimeres turned out are, perhaps, nowhere excelled for their wearing qualities.

### The Various Products.

Many kinds of products are manufactured, such as cassimeres of various weights and colors; shirting flannels, blankets of various weights and colors, horse blankets, carded wool for comforters, and even woolen dress goods for women, heavy woolen stockings, for which there is a large trade; carpet chain, stocking yarns and many other articles.

The mill is run the whole year 'round, there being always work enough to keep the four hands employed busy. Mr. Zook purchased last

spring 4,311 pounds of wool from farmers who brought it to his mill, and 3,495 pounds additional in the Boston and Philadelphia markets. This wool is carefully assorted into grades and then washed, after which it is taken to the large attic floor, where it is dried. The other three floors are devoted to the various departments of the work to be done. The second floor is given to the weaving department. It is full of machinery of various kinds. The first is devoted to the carding operations. The machines required to carry out the various processes, from the raw material to the finished products, are many and various. There is a picker, running 900 revolutions per minute; a breaker, a finisher, a truster, a spinner, carding machines, a fulling stock, or shrinking machine, a napper, for putting nap on finished goods, or shearing machine, and nine spinning machines and 234 spindles.

Of course, the machinery in this mill is not equal to that of the great woolen mills of New England, nor adapted to the making of so many kinds of goods, but, if somewhat antiquated, the product is equal to any of the same grade made anywhere. It has won its reputation for good work through the use of honest material, and persons come to the mill from far and near to buy the cloth for wearing apparel and the other products of the mill. Above all, does it deserve special mention from the fact that it is the last survivor of what was once a most thriving local industry. In this locality its like will probably never be seen again.

### **How Fulling Is Done.**

Only woolen goods require fulling. The following more elaborate account is taken from a source placed in my hands:

In a stout, securely placed trough made by hollowing, one large piece or a few smaller pieces of cloth was exposed to the cleansing power of water and soap. The bottom of the trough was concave, and so disposed in relation to the two hammers which were alternately raised and allowed to drop into the trough that the cloth was pushed with great force to the bottom of the trough and made to turn upon itself. This was the cleansing and thickening process. Frequently as many as seventy-five and eighty yards lay in the lathering trough at the same time. At the completion of this kneading clean water was added till all the soap was washed out.

From this trough all cloth requiring to be dyed went direct to a vat for the purpose. Otherwise all was taken immediately to the stretcher in the meadow. This consisted of two long rails, one stationery upon strong posts, and the other movable. Both rails were provided with appropriate hooks, three inches apart. To the hooks of the top rail the cloth was fastened as evenly as possible by one edge. To the free edge the movable rail was then attached in like manner. This done, the lower rail was weighted down by means of great stones and retained in place by means of pins in the upright posts.

From the stretcher the cloth went to a great screw press. Here turn upon turn, with sheets of cardboard interposing, it was placed with great care into the press. No wrinkles or creases were allowed to appear when the cloth came from the press.

Next came the primitive carding, which was done by hand, the cloth being thrown across a firm iron rod. The carder worked with both hands, rais-



ing a nap on the side to be finished as the face.

From the carding rod the cloth was taken to the dressing machine. This first brushed the nap stiffly in one direction, thus giving the goods an up and down. Then followed a machine somewhat like a modern lawnmower or barber's short clipper, which made the face side smooth, even and glossy. Cloth from the loom is soft and limp and shows every thread in its make-up. One side was like the other. In short, it had no desirable qualities. The mesh was open. Cloth from the fulling was heavier and narrower and more durable.

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