

Mary Thompson describes the close-knit community of the mill village.

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Carl and Mary Thompson interviewed by James Leloudis, Charlotte, NC, July 9, 1979. Interview #H-182 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Audio

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Audio Transcript

Jim Leloudis

We talked briefly a little while ago about the mill village, and you indicated it was a pretty close-knit community.

Mary Thompson

It was. Everybody just about knowed everybody else.

Carl Thompson

Just like this one was down here before it closed down. See, it wasn't but just two or three blocks.

Mary Thompson

They are close-knit. Usually, if somebody gets down and out and needs help, there are always people ready to help.

Jim Leloudis

How would you help one another?

Mary Thompson

If they was down sick, they'd cook food and carry it to them, or any way that they ever needed help, they'd all get together and help. The mill people was good to help, too, if they knew somebody needed help.

Carl Thompson

There was a row of houses up here burnt down, and they lost all their furniture and all. And the very next day, they went through the mill with the papers and said, "You know, So-and-so's house got burnt up up here, and they lost everything they had. Do you want to give them a little something?" Well, I don't think a hand turned them down. They'd give them a dollar or two dollars, five dollars. And they must have had a hundred dollars.

Mary Thompson

People misses a whole lots by not having community, too, like that, because I believe it made you more secure or something. But now you're scattered; you work maybe a little one place, then work way over yonder, and you don't get close to nobody, I don't think.

Jim Leloudis

And these people you saw every day. You lived with them, and you worked with them.

Mary Thompson

And went to church with them. So it's kind of a close-knit family. And I think people misses a lots by that. I know, we don't have neighbor... The doors was always open, you know. There wasn't no such thing as burglars then. And

even at night, half the time didn't have the doors shut. Sometimes they'd shut them; sometimes they wouldn't. If they did, they just had a little old thumb latch [Laughter] that you could shake open if you wanted to. And daytime, they didn't even have that on. If neighbors wanted to come in and borrow something, they'd come right on in your house. And here you don't even have no neighbors. If somebody gets sick, you don't even know it.

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