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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

### File:

**Duration:** 3:13

### Transcript:

#### *Audio Transcript*

Jim Leloudis

Could you explain to me a little more what this job of setting up patterns was like?

Mary Thompson

It was drawing patterns. They had frames, and they put these warps on the frame and had lots of threads to it and they put it over. Well, I had to draw them threads through the drop wires harness and reed. And then they were taken to the weave room. We went by a pattern, and the way we drew it is the way the cloth come out. Like yours would be a stripe, and his'n would be a check. And I worked on fancy work most of the time. They have got plain work, but most of my work was always on fancy. And that's the reason I was more able to travel around and get jobs, because it took special drawing-in hands for the fancy on account of it's harder to do, and I had worked so much on it. And you made more money on it.

Jim Leloudis

Didn't the mills have drawing-in hands of their own?

Mary Thompson

They usually all of them had some, regular help, and then they'd get laid off sometime, but some of them had husbands and they didn't care. They'd draw their unemployment till they were called back to work. But the only one that I stayed with, I stayed with Slater about ten years. When I first started to work, I was at Poe Mill Manufacturing Company.

Carl Thomspson

That was at Greenville.

Mary Thompson

I was just fourteen years old when I first started there and worked there in the summer, and then went back to school in the winter, and then worked again in the summer, and then got married.

Jim Leloudis

I don't understand exactly why the labor was so sporadic. Why would they all of a sudden need a lot of drawing-in hands?

Mary Thompson

Because they'd change patterns. They'd change the styles, just like everything else, you know; they always have

changed different styles. And when they had to change styles, they had to draw a new pattern for it. They finally got draw-in machines for them. That's the reason there ain't no more of it now. There's still some. I've got a sister—I believe she's working at Poinsett now—but she's more of a plain drawing hand. And she's still working some, but she just works a while and they get caught up and lay her off. It's never been a fulltime job, that I know of, for anyone. I've worked as much as maybe a year or two and then get laid off, but that was very seldom for some people to run that far. But that's what we did, we made patterns, and then they'd run weave room. See, they'd tie them back behind the looms and just keep on running the same patterns till they changed styles, and then they'd have to be drawn again.

Jim Leloudis

They'd all have to be done over again.

Mary Thompson

Yes.

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