

# Silver Jackets Meeting

September 13, 2016

Georgia Tech Student Center, Room 343

## Minutes

### Members Attending:

[Not Available]

**President Len Parsons** opened the meeting and announced that the meeting would begin with the program as the speaker had a noon class.

### Program

**Vice President for Programs Ron Bohlander** introduced **Doug Flamming**, Professor, School of History and Sociology. **Professor Flamming** spoke to the group on the topic “**How Dalton Became the Carpet Capital of the World**”:

Why would carpet making as we know it today been invented around Dalton? After Civil War upcountry farmers could grow cotton (due to availability of fertilizer), but then a market crash led to a lot of farm failures. Wealthy merchants developed area from cheap land and cheap labor. Invested in cotton mills. Crown Cotton Mill was one of largest. The A. French Textile Building was a mill originally on campus.

Mills were laid out along Southern RR from VA to AL. New England plants were waning. Many southern mills went bust in Great Depression, but recovered in WWII. Ran 24/7 through war to supply allied armies around world. Imports of cotton textiles from SE Asia in 1962 overtook exports. A lot of mills closed in 60s. Dalton and similar towns suffered.

Tufted bedspread industry developed along Dixie Highway (US 41). "Peacock Alley" went through Dalton. Cotton sheeting with pattern marked. Use a needle to put heavy yarn through sheet and snip it off. Boil it and then the sheet shrinks on tufts which fluff up. A “putting out” industry emerged in which mills made sheets, then supplied kits to ladies in outback who made tufted bedspreads.

Candlewick bedspreads began to be noticed in New York and other metro areas. Eventually one of these was on Scarlett O'Hara's bed. Was a women's business until there was big money. Then men came in.

The “spread house” brings tufted to town where tufted can come together in a factory to be made instead of in putting out operations. Sewing machines were adapted to help. A GT student made first Singer Sewing Machine adaptation to tufting. Then in WWII punch machines invented and moved automation forward.

Big R&D efforts were made by Cabin Crafts and others in 1950s. People were now thinking about machinery down here in the south - focused on textile engineering and tufting. Oakwood

Cafe in Dalton was a gathering point for thinkers. Lew Price "Mose" Painter was a genius inventor, but never patented anything. His autobiography was entitled *I've Had a Millionaire's Fun*.

Tufting was one essential engineering feat. The other was dyeing. David Hamilton was a bridging leader connecting old mills and new industry. Stain Master was a breakthrough for kitchen applications

Takeaways from the history of the Dalton textile industry include the importance of

- \* Local knowledge
- \* City government and local entrepreneurs
- \* Exchange of ideas
- \* Industrial engineering and chemical engineering
- \* Marketing - creating a market where none had existed
- \* Resiliency after crises

The next meeting of the Silver Jackets will be Tuesday October 11, 2016 at 11:00 AM in Student Center 343. The speaker will be **Jennifer Leavey**, Integrated Science Curriculum Coordinator for the College of Sciences and Senior Academic Professional in the School of Biological Sciences speaking about "**Urban Honeybee Project @ Georgia Tech**". There will also be the election of SJ Officers for 2017.

### **Business Meeting**

**President Parsons** mentioned that the sign up for the December 1<sup>st</sup> Holiday Luncheon would be coming soon.

There was discussion from the floor on Campus Recreation Center (CRC) guidance on exercise for seniors, and whether there was any interested in a group instructional section for Silver Jackets.

Respectfully submitted,

Ron Bohlander