

# End Of An Era

## A Brief History of Oakland's Cascade Woolen Mill

From its incorporation in 1883  
To its destruction, 24 January 2010

Illustrated with photographs  
from the collection of the Oakland Area Historical Society,  
from the Central Maine Morning Sentinel and Kennebec Journal,  
and from several residents on the scene



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2010, For the Oakland Area Historical Society



In 1932, George T Benson wrote, –Daniel B Lord built a dam near what is now the School street bridge, for his hoe and axe factory. Hoes were made without shanks, but had a round eye welded on the back of the plate, to put the handle in. My father did that part of the work in the Hale and Stevens shop at Sluegundy, where the Cascade Woolen Mill is now. It was so-called because the land was clay, and you had to go through this clay land, and in the spring and fall it was almost impossible to get up or down the hill, it was so sticky and slippery.”<sup>1</sup>

At the present site of Cascade Dam, a Mr Learned and Eusebius Hale began the manufacture of scythes in 1836, the first such enterprise in town. They were succeeded by Samuel and Eusebius Hale in 1839. Eusebius Hale sold his interests to Joseph E Stevens in 1845 and Hale and Stevens operated until 1853, when Hale sold to Reuben B Dunn, and Stevens sold to William Jordan who in turn sold to Dunn in 1857.

This dam saw no further new industry from 1858 to 1883, when the Cascade Woolen Mill was constructed.

The following information is contained in two booklets, kindly loaned to me by Gerald Tipper, President and CEO of the Cascade Woolen Mill.<sup>2</sup> In 1882, R B Dunn, Josiah B Mayo, Seth M Milliken, John Ayer and D A Campbell leased land and water power from the Dunn Edge Tool Company, and constructed the Cascade Woolen Mill. Milliken was one of the founders of the Deering-Milliken textile corporation, one of the largest in the US; Dunn was president of the Dunn Edge Tool Company, and one of the most prominent businessmen and industrialists in Oakland, In 1882, the partners leased water power from DET, and connected their new mill through belts and pulleys to the Dunn factory. This mill employed 110 people and manufactured \$250,000 of woolen goods in 1902<sup>3</sup>. Since 1883, it had been a primary employer and manufacturing enterprise, operating continuously in Oakland for over a hundred years. In 1962, Cascade Woolen Mill Kenneth C Tipper, President, had 200 employees, making woolen goods.

Working conditions during the early days of the mill were probably typical of factories of the time. The work week was six days, fifty-four hours, without today's shift work or overtime pay. Women were paid considerably

less than men, and oftentimes, workers had their children tend the machinery while they had lunch. Lighting was by kerosene lamp.

Sometimes things went wrong – either the weather, the economy, accidents or strikes – and were reported in the Lewiston newspapers of the day.

–Fred Pollock was badly injured at Oakland, Saturday morning (19 March 1887), by jumping on the elevator at the Cascade woolen mill, while in motion.” (Lewiston Saturday Journal, 19 Mar 1887, p2)

–The Cascade Woolen mill at Oakland has been obliged to shut down a part of this week, on account of the extreme lowness of the water in Messalonskee Stream.” (Lewiston Evening Journal, Thursday 29 Sep 1893, p2)

–While the men at the Cascade Woolen Mill, Oakland, were hoisting a large loom from the ground to the top floor, the rope parted and the machine fell to the ground. The machine was ruined, but luckily no one was injured. The damage was about \$300.” (Lewiston Saturday Journal, Monday 23 Jul 1894, p1)

–The Cascade Woolen Mill owing to lack of orders, is running only five days in the week. The mill had been running to its full capacity until now, and will probably resume the old time soon.” (Lewiston Evening Journal, Thursday 6 Feb 1896, p1)

–Negotiations are being made between the Oakland Electric Light Co. and the Dunn Edge Tool Co. for the latter to erect a suitable building equipped as a power house, to be situated in the dam occupied by the Cascade woolen mill. Some change is necessitated by the lack of water at the present station and when located on the mill dam abundance of water can be had at all seasons of the year.” (Lewiston Evening Journal, Friday 2 Dec 1898, p3)

A strike in 1903 apparently was quickly settled, and workers returned to the mill. The times were not yet right for unionization, so striking seldom worked to achieve workers’ goals.

–As a result of the strike of the spinners at the Cascade Woolen Mill the first of this week, the whole plant is shut down for an indefinite time. The spinners demanded a 20 per cent. advance, and because this was not granted, they walked out. This action of course necessitated the closing of the mill. An official of the company stated yesterday that as things now looked there would be a long shut down. Several of the weavers and others have left for other places.” (Lewiston Evening Journal, Saturday 27 June 1903, p5)

–OAKLAND STRIKE SETTLED – Spinners of Cascade Woolen Mill Go to Work, Monday, on Old Wage Schedule. OAKLAND, ME., July 15 (Special). – The trouble in the spinning room at the Cascade Woolen Mill has been settled, so that work began again Monday with two spinners at work and more coming back within a day or two. When the spinners went out, they demanded 20 per cent. increase, but they will come back at the old scale of wages. One who was a prime mover in the strike has since been at work in three different mills and now comes back to Supt. G. H. Winegar, and says he did not realize what a good job he had here, and is more than willing to come back at the old price. Supt. Winegar said that he looked over the pay-roll for the last three months and found that this man had averaged nearly \$2.25 every day for that time.” (Lewiston Evening Journal, Wednesday 15 July 1903, p2)

Machinery and the economy also were problematic. At times the mill shut down due to mechanical problems.

–The Cascade Woolen Mill is shut down for a couple of days on account of a break in the wheel. There are some repairs to be made on the dam and during the time the wheel is out of commission, the mill is to be run by electricity. The motor is already in place, but the belt for it has not yet arrived.” (Lewiston Saturday Journal, Thursday 1 Oct 1903, p6)

–The Cascade woolen mill at Oakland has just closed for an indefinite period. The mill has been running since Aug. 29 and the closing now is due to the lack of orders caused by the uncertainty in the woolen business occasioned by the agitation of the tariff. The shutdown has thrown about 100 operatives out of work.” (Lewiston Evening Journal, Tuesday 25 Oct 1910, p3)

In 1924, the mill was electrified, and wiring, motors, and lighting were installed. In the mid 1930's, more shifts were added, efficiency was improved, and production increased when the full benefits of electrification were realized. Under the Roosevelt recovery plan, the forty-hour week, and a union were adopted at Cascade.

In 1935, the Cascade mill was purchased by the Deering-Milliken national sales manager, Frederic W Tipper. Under Tipper, his son Kenneth who joined the firm in 1936, and Frank Bastow Sr, the mill continued production during the Depression and the slow recovery which followed. There was a fair amount of mill-owned housing, including the building now the Johann Sebastian B restaurant on Fairfield Street, where Bastow resided.



Equipment was modernized, and with that change, production again increased. Additionally, quality was improved. In the first years of production, the mill manufactured woolen fabric for women's clothing, and "casimere," a twilled men's suit fabric. F W Tipper organized the F W Tipper Co in New York as Cascade's sales division, a relationship which continued into the 1980s. In the period of time from about 1930 to 1950, Cascade manufactured a small number of styles and blends mostly for the clothing market. Blended fabrics of wool, wool waste, and rayon were commonly produced. Government contracts during World War II called for wool/cotton blends for lining military jackets, and workers producing this cloth were exempted from military service due to the essential nature of the product to the war effort.

The 1950's and 1960's saw new fabrics -- polyesters in particular -- taking over much of the wool market. Cascade was characterized by good employee/employer relations, long-term jobs spanning generations, and, according to Kenneth Tipper, "just plain stubbornness" to survive the challenge. A major change in the mission of the mill took place under Tipper's leadership -- the move to specialty quality cloth in many styles instead of producing for the general market. This trend also continued until the end.

Major cooperation with the town in the late 1960's resulted in the opening of the sewage treatment plant in 1972, an arrangement which continued until recently, although new regulations were causing potential problems in waste treatment.



In 1973 the Tipper family merged the Oakland business with Charles W House and Sons, a similar mill in Unionville, CT, an arrangement which lasted until June 1984 when Gerald Tipper, the grandson of Frederic W Tipper, bought out the Cascade mill. In addition, an arrangement with Homestead Fabrics of New York which saw Cascade manufacturing the product and Homestead selling it, was cancelled in 1984, and now Cascade not only made its product itself, but sales and orders are strictly an Oakland proposition.

By the 1980s, Cascade produced upholstery, mens' and womens' sportswear, outerwear for hunting clothes. The mill employed 250 people, many of them third-generation employees. It produced cloth by dyeing, blending, carding, spinning, preparing yarn, weaving, mending, and finishing, on the same site chosen by Dunn, Mayo, and associates in 1882. Gerald Tipper, his father Kenneth, and his grandfather, Frederic W, formed the longest continuous mill ownership and management in Oakland at the time, and possibly in all of Oakland's history.

On 15 June 1991, Kenneth Tipper died. At the time of his death, he continued in his position as chairman of the mill.<sup>4</sup>

That all changed, however in 1997. A firm in Austria which specializes in production of high-quality woolsens such as Cascade manufactures purchased the company. About \$12 million was to have been invested in the plant, upgrading facilities and equipment. Unfortunately, Cascade's work force was laid off, some for as long as six months.

Also, partly in response to increasing foreign competition, some workers at the mill asked the Department of Labor to investigate the situation in a petition submitted on 2 June 1997. The Department chose not to investigate, as there was a second labor investigation happening at the same time.<sup>5</sup>

This second investigation, filed by Cascade workers on 21 May 1997, done by the Employment and Training Administration of the Department of Labor, determined that workers were "eligible to apply for adjustment assistance" under the Trade Act of 1974, as their industry was negatively impacted by foreign imports.<sup>6</sup>

In October, 1998, the now-abandoned mill was purchased by Daniel R. Lajoie, who paid \$60,000 for nine buildings, 6.5 acres of land, and over 101,000 square feet of floor space. Lajoie was the owner of salvage and surplus stores elsewhere in Maine. Once again, the future of the mill was in question.<sup>7</sup>

Environmental pollution became an issue by 2007. The minutes of the Kennebec Valley Economic Development District for 5 June 2007 report that "Cascade Woolen mill building -- Phase I has been completed, and a report has been issued. Phase II will be completed by the end of this month, in time for the Town to apply for remediation funds from the EPA.

The issue of hazardous substances again made news in 2008, when the town of Oakland applied for, and received, a federal grant of \$200,000 to clean up 4.9 acres at the mill site. The area was a "brownfield site", said to contain "metals, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds, and inorganic compounds" which made economic development impossible. Additionally, the building itself "remains an architecturally significant symbol of Oakland's former industrial prominence in the region". Cleanup was also important because a tenant in the mill hoped to expand his business in the mill and add more jobs, but the contamination was preventing that.<sup>8</sup>

The cleanup proceeded, and was nearly complete by October 2009. The Central Maine Morning Sentinel reported on 14 October 2009, that:

#### **Cascade Woolen Mill site cleanup nears**

OAKLAND -- A potential buyer waiting in the wings, town officials are preparing to implement a \$200,000 federal grant to partially remediate hazardous materials at the former Cascade Woolen Mill.

Town Manager Peter Nielsen said Tuesday he will address the matter to the Town Council tonight. The meeting at the town office begins at 6:30.

Weston & Sampson Engineers Inc., of Portsmouth, O.K., which helped write the grant application to the Environmental Protection Agency, will conduct the cleanup effort.

"We'd like to get it started by the time cold weather gets here," Nielsen said.

Nielsen said that Michael Dye, who runs a wooden shelving-manufacturing operation in the old mill, is the principal tenant there. Dye has an agreement to use the facility until he can offer to purchase it, Nielsen said.

The town has a \$76,000 balance on a \$200,000 mortgage on the property, Nielsen said.

The EPA has determined that soil under and around the old mill is contaminated with metals, volatile organic compounds and inorganic compounds.

"There are a number of materials that will be remediated," Nielsen said.

Nielsen said that Weston & Sampson will remove oil-contaminated soil from the north end of the building on Cascade Mill Road, near Messalonskee Stream. The company also will remove 20 drums of unknown composition, and asbestos from the furnace room.

Cascade Woolen Mill, built in 1882, closed in 1998.

Nielsen said he will present to the town council a letter from the state Department of Environmental Protection, detailing arrangements for the town's contribution to the cleanup. Terms of the grant require the town to contribute 20 percent of the funding, or \$40,000.<sup>9</sup> (Used by permission of the Sentinel)

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Then the unthinkable.

Late Saturday and early Sunday, 23-24 January, the Cascade Woolen Mill became history. Kelly Graham Roderick of Oakland reported to the author early on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>: "Cascade Mill burned down last night. The old wooden structure is gone, call came in at 1230am fully engulfed. Husband said when he got there 1/4 mile up the street from my house the entire wooden tower was in flames."

Newspapers s from Waterville and Augusta, and from Portland television stations began to report ...

WCSH-TV, 7:30 AM, Sunday 24 January 2010

### **Flames engulf old mill building**

OAKLAND, Maine (NEWS CENTER) - Flames erupted at the old Cascade Woolen Mill in downtown Oakland, bringing more than a dozen agencies to the scene to fight the fire.

A resident reported the fire around 12:30 AM. When crews arrived on scene they found the building on Cascade Mill road fully involved. The building used to house the Cascade Woolen Mill. It is currently home to K.D. Display and Design.

Fighting the fire has not been easy. The size of the blaze and the location have made difficulties. The fire is on a narrow road, which makes it difficult for multiple trucks to get to the scene. The cold temperatures have also been freezing the water as it comes out of the hoses. Dirt has been trucked in to combat slipperiness.

Volunteers are bringing coffee and food to firefighters on scene.

There are no reports of any injuries. The fire marshall is investigating the cause of the conflagration.

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Central Maine Morning Sentinel, 12:50 pm, Sunday January 24, 2010

### **Former Oakland mill destroyed by fire**

OAKLAND — A fast moving fire Sunday morning destroyed the 127-year-old Cascade Woolen Mill in the heart of downtown Oakland.

The five-story building collapsed in flames as crews from more than a dozen area communities battled the blaze and frigid temperatures, Oakland Fire Chief David Coughlin said. Flames were said to have shot 50 or 60 feet in the air and could be seen from Winslow, Coughlin said.

"It all came down," he said.

KD Display & Design, a woodworking company was the lone occupant of the wooden structure. Fire officials said Sunday morning that everything appeared to have been destroyed.

The town had recently taken delivery of a \$200,000 federal grant to clean up the land.

An investigator from the state Fire Marshal's Office was on scene Sunday morning, but said officials may never know the origin of the blaze. Another building nearby, housing Woodsmiths, also woodworking firm, was saved.

Built in 1882, the woolen mill closed in 1997. At it's peak in the 1990s the mill employed more than 150 people. (Used with permission of the Central Maine Morning Sentinel)

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Staff photo by Andy Molloy

**OAKLAND MILL FIRE:** A Sidney firefighter surveys the smoldering remains of the 127-year-old Cascade Woolen Mill in the heart of downtown Oakland this morning. The five-story building collapsed in flames as crews from more than a dozen area communities battled the blaze and frigid temperatures, Oakland Fire Chief David Coughlin said. No injuries were reported, according to firefighters. (Used with permission of the Central Maine Morning Sentinel)

Central Maine Morning Sentinel, Monday 25 Jan 2010

## Blaze destroys former Cascade Woolen Mill; no one hurt

BY DOUG HARLOW, Staff Writer Kennebec Journal & Morning Sentinel 01/25/2010

OAKLAND -- A fast-moving fire Sunday morning destroyed the 127-year-old former Cascade Woolen Mill in the heart of downtown Oakland.

The five-story building collapsed in flames as crews from more than a dozen area communities battled the blaze and frigid temperatures, Oakland Fire Chief David Coughlin said. Flames were said to have shot 50 or 60 feet into the air and could be seen from Winslow, Coughlin said.

"It all came down," he said. "It had a good head start on us. The whole mill is collapsed."

No one was injured in the fire.

K-D Display & Design, Inc., a woodworking company, was the lone occupant of the wooden structure. Fire officials said Sunday morning that everything appeared to have been destroyed.

The town had recently taken delivery of a \$200,000 federal grant to clean up the land.

Kenneth Macmaster, an investigator from the state Fire Marshal's Office, was on scene Sunday morning, but said officials may never know the origin of the blaze. Another building nearby, housing Woodsmiths, also a woodworking firm, was saved, as was a steel building that K-D used.

Built in 1882, the woolen mill closed in 1997. At its peak in the 1990s, the mill employed more than 150 people.

The first call reporting the fire came into the communications center at 12:28 a.m. Sunday. Soon after, more calls were received of small, additional fires igniting on neighboring streets from embers flying high in air, Coughlin said.

The radiant heat from the blaze was so powerful that it cracked windshields on two fire trucks parked 175 feet from crumbling woolen mill, firefighter Mark Stevens said from the scene. He said his face had what



looked like a sunburn from exposure to the heat of the fire.

Assistant Oakland Fire Chief Chuck Bridges, who was at the scene all night, said it didn't take long for flames to consume the old wooden building. He said the fire started on the north side of the building and moved forward, south, toward Kennedy Memorial Drive.

The mill is located near the fire station, the town office and police station.

"The building is totally burned flat," Bridges said. "There was woodworking equipment on the second and third floors and old machinery in the basement. It was fully involved when we got there, I mean completely involved. There was a tower, the tower fell just as we got there. The whole building was made of wood, except for the foundation."

By mid-morning Sunday, all that remained of Cascade Woolen Mill was a steaming, smoky pile of charred timbers and twisted metal.

Fire crews from Sydney and Oakland continued to soak the smoldering heap throughout the morning to prevent flare-ups. All of downtown Oakland sat Sunday in a low haze of smoke.

Coughlin, the fire chief, said once Oakland firefighters saw the extent of the blaze, they called for mutual aid from surrounding towns. Crews from as far away as Pittston, Clinton and Skowhegan responded, in addition to aerial ladder trucks from Oakland, Waterville and Winslow.

"We had fire showing from just about every window and door in the place," Coughlin said. "There was no collapse yet as we arrived on scene, but once it went through the roof we had flames 50, 60, feet in the air."

He said there were approximately 105 firefighters at the scene.

Coughlin said there is one narrow road leading to the mill on the KMD side, which hampered their efforts. Town road crews were called out to apply sand and salt to keep the tankers moving as that road and another access road on the north side, iced over, he said.

"We had ice everywhere because of the cold temperatures," he said.

Coughlin said the flying embers from the fire also could have been a problem.

"Had this been the middle of August we definitely could have had some spot fires around town -- we had embers flying all around town," the chief said. "We did get a few calls for separate, small fires, but nothing of any significance.

"Nobody was in the building, nobody injured. That's the best-case scenario, I guess."

Oakland Town Manager Peter Nielsen said Sunday that the town of Oakland holds the mortgage on the former woolen mill, but the tenant is responsible for insurance coverage.

Michael Dye, of Hallowell, who owns K-D Display & Design, Inc., which makes hardwood displays and store fixtures, said he was fully insured.

"There was quite a bit of manufacturing equipment in the building," Dye said. "Firefighters managed to save the steel building, and there was some in there, but the bulk of our manufacturing and shipping and packaging was in the wooden structure."

Dye said he was starting his 11th year in the former woolen mill.

"It was a tough year, but things had turned up in the last quarter and, this year, so far, we've been real busy; it was a real shame," Dye said. "It's a real mess.

"From what I heard from people who were there, it burned so quickly that by the time I was there, the bulk of the structure was already gone and that was only about an hour after the first report. They worked incredibly hard on an extremely cold night, under horrible conditions and they did a fantastic job. Each and every one of those 12 towns should be proud of the people that are protecting their property."

Dye said he will decide over the next few days if the company will relocate, and where. (Used with permission of the Central Maine Morning Sentinel)

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WGME-TV, 13:32, Sunday 24 January, 2010

### **Old Maine woolen mill destroyed by fire**

OAKLAND, Maine (AP) -- The state fire marshal is investigating a fire that destroyed an old woolen mill in the central Maine town of Oakland.

Fire Chief David Coughlin said the blaze was reported at about 12:30 a.m. Sunday at the former Cascade Woolen Mill. He said the fire was contained to the old mill's main 5 1/2-story wooden building, with the complex's other four buildings being spared.

Coughlin said more than 100 firefighters from 13 area fire departments helped put out the fire. Nobody was injured.

The Cascade Woolen Mill was built in the 1880s, but shut its doors in the 1990s. The building was currently home to K-D Display & Design, which makes wooden display and store fixtures.

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Central Maine Morning Sentinel, Sunday January 24, 2010

### **Tenant of Oakland mill fire was insured**

Submitted by Doug Harlow on Sun, 01/24/2010 - 16:05

OAKLAND - Michael Dye, of Hallowell, who owns K-D Display & Design, Inc., the lone tenant of the former Cascade Woolen Mill, which burned overnight, said he was fully insured. The company makes hardwood displays and store fixtures.

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Central Maine Morning Sentinel, Tuesday 26 January 26 2010

### **Cascade mill once employed 250; cheap imports sealed its demise**

Jan. 26--OAKLAND -- The history of manufacturing in New England is the history of Cascade Woolen Mill. Industrial boom. Jobs. Prosperity. Foreign imports. Offshore competition. Decline. Debt. Vacancy.

Built in 1882, the old mill, in the heart of downtown Oakland, was consumed by fire Sunday morning after 127 years on Messalonskee Stream.

Gerald Tipper, 72 of Smithfield, who owned and operated Cascade Woolen Mill until he closed its doors in 1997, said the mill employed 250 people at the peak of production in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

They were families, he said. They were friends and neighbors.

"It makes me feel sad that that piece of history is gone from Oakland," Tipper said Monday. "I'm just happy that I had a chance to be part of that history and sad that it's gone."

Tipper said his grandfather, Frederick Tipper, who was born in England, bought the mill in 1933, during the Great Depression.

"He was living in New York and was selling for Milliken, and they owned the mill. They were a large national textile company," Tipper said.

Seth Milliken, of Portland, was one of the five founders of the Cascade Woolen Mill, in what was then called West Waterville. The men built the mill below the Cascades of Messalonskee Stream in 1882, a year before West Waterville became the town of Oakland.

"My dad came up and ran it, and I came in 1967, after I came out of graduate school and worked for Corning, to take over the running of the mill," he said. "Then in 1973 we merged with a company in Connecticut -- Charles House. Then in 1984 I bought the company back. I owned it myself from 1984 until we closed it in 1997."

Tipper said Cascade manufactured woolen sportswear fabrics for high-end women's skirts and blazers.

"Originally they were made in the United States; then, increasingly, it became more in places like Honduras and Asia, the Far East," Tipper said. "We also made fabric for the office furniture market, to use as upholstery."

The wooden main building was five stories high, with a tower staircase on the building's exterior. The company also built additional steel buildings over the years, Tipper said.

"We were the largest employer in Oakland," he said. "What makes it sad is we had families who had three generations who worked for the mill; for them, I'm sure there is a sense of history that is gone."

With the company peaking in sales and employment in 1992, Tipper said, it also turned out to be the beginning of the end for Cascade.

"The imports started coming in, and it became just very difficult to compete with cheap imports," he said, "and our customers started manufacturing their garments all offshore. They were no longer manufacturing in the United States.

"Once they started cutting all their garments, in say, Honduras, South America or Central America, then it became more and more (important) for them to buy their fabric from Mexico, Asia, China."

In the early 1990s, annual sales at Cascade Woolen Mill peaked at \$15 million, Tipper said.

"We did fine up until 1992. Then the last five years, we just lost money every year," he said. "It got so bad we could not pay all of our taxes to the town."

A deal for a manufacturing merger and investment package with an Austrian company for high-end fabrics fell through soon afterward, he said. That was when Tipper said he could not make it alone.

In the end, Tipper owed the town of Oakland \$400,000 in back taxes. In 1998, Tipper turned the building over to the town in exchange for taxes. (Used with permission of the Central Maine Morning Sentinel).

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Central Maine Morning Sentinel, Monday 8 March 2010

Officials to discuss Cascade Site Cleanup

OAKLAND -- Town, state and federal officials are scheduled to meet today to discuss whether federal grant money can be redirected toward cleaning up the site of the fire-ravaged former Cascade Woolen Mill.

SADDENED: Betsy Tipper looks at the still smoking remains of the five- story section of the Cascade Woolen Mill in Oakland on Monday that was destroyed by fire early Sunday. Tipper, and husband Gerald previously owned the mill, said she was saddened about the loss of the historic building and happy their

were no injuries.



Staff photo by David Leaming

The town government has meanwhile taken a step to buttress the chance that the remaining \$120,000 of the \$200,000 grant will cover the expense of removing the charred remains. A Jan. 24 fire destroyed the 127-year-old structure in the heart of downtown Oakland.

The town had last year been awarded the "brownfields" grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to clean up the site.

Town Manager Peter Nielsen said the Town Council recently approved a motion to leave \$76,763 that's owed to the town in an escrow account. The building's owner and lone tenant is Michael Dye, of Hallowell, who owns K-D Display & Design, Inc. and the town government holds the mortgage.

At its peak in the 1980s and early 1990s, the Cascade Woolen Mill employed 250 workers. The company closed in 1997.

After consulting with the town's attorney, town councilors have unanimously decided not to tap into the mortgage money in escrow and instead wait for work to finish on redirecting the grant money, Nielsen said.

"The town could have said 'no, pay us back; we'll take the money and we're done'," Nielsen said, referring to the money in escrow. "But the town applied for that grant on the basis of holding a mortgage. If the town had said to Mike Dye, pay us off, the grant would have gone away."

The EPA had originally determined that soil under and around the old mill was contaminated with metals, volatile organic compounds and inorganic compounds.

Nielsen said he will be meeting today with officials from the EPA and state Department of Environmental Protection to discuss whether the environmental concerns on the site -- as originally identified under the grant -- have changed in the aftermath of the fire.

"That could impact how grant monies are utilized," Nielsen said.

Investigators with the State Fire Marshal's Office were not able to determine a cause of the blaze because of the extensive damage, but classified the case as accidental.

## **EPILOGUE**

With the loss of Cascade Woolen Mill, the final factory on Messalonskee Stream fades into memory, and an important era in Oakland's history ends.

From the early 1800s, the stream, from Messalonskee Lake to the Cascade, was lined with busy, productive factories, making axes, scythes, other edge tools, and grinding grain, weaving wool, machining, and producing electricity.

The factories of Oakland gave employment to generations of town residents, often two, three or more generations in the same factory. The income of the workers, owners, and managers filled the tills of stores, restaurants, and recreation venues, as well as providing the town with a stable tax base.

Now all the factories are gone. There are still a few establishments which produce goods, but not like what was being produced in the 1920s.

The mill whistles are silent. Workers have gone elsewhere. Indeed, the work, itself, has gone elsewhere as factory whistles in China, Taiwan, Bangladesh and Mexico will attest.

But as long as we have photographs, or as long as one person remains in Oakland who worked in the factories, they will not be forgotten.

***Photographs taken at the scene by various individuals:  
By firefighter, Mike (last name unknown)***











*By Howard Hardy*



*By Andy Molloy*



*By Steve Haynes*









*By JoAnn and Travis Wood*















*By Barry Sturk*



Photo by Barry Sturk - FIRE: Marshall King of the Waterville Fire Department sprays water into the flames at the old Cascade Woolen Mill in Oakland early Sunday. Crews from more than a dozen communities battled the blaze.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Some Early Recollections By George T Benson (1841 - 1944), in 1932 on the website of the Oakland Area Historical Society at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mecoaakla/documents/History/History-2009-06.pdf>.
- <sup>2</sup> Cascade Woolen Mill. n.p, n.d., and Cascade Woolen Mill, Oakland, Maine, 100 Years, 1882-1982. ?Oakland: n.p., ?1982.
- <sup>3</sup> Centennial History of Waterville, p 345. In 1883 the Cascade Woolen Mill was incorporated with a capital stock of \$125,000. A ten set woolen mill was built on the Dunn Edge Tool Company's lower dam, and has been in successful operation ever since. Thomas P. Curtis of Boston, is treasurer and manager, and Geo. H. Winnegar is superintendent. One hundred and ten hands are employed and the annual product amounts to about \$250,000.
- <sup>4</sup> New York Times, Wednesday 19 June, 1991, online as <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/19/obituaries/kenneth-c-tipper-textile-executive-80.html?pagewanted=1> -- Kenneth C. Tipper; Textile Executive, 80. Kenneth C. Tipper, the former president and chairman of Cascade Woolen Mill of Oakland, Me., died Saturday at his home in Pinehurst, N.C. He was 80 years old. He died of cancer, said a spokeswoman for the family. Mr. Tipper joined the textile mill, which was founded by his father, after graduating from Williams College in 1933. He was with the company for his entire career, retiring as president in 1975 but continuing as chairman until his death. He was a former chairman of the Northern Textile Association and the Associated Industries of Maine. He had also served as chairman of the Maine Republican Finance Committee. He is survived by his wife, Carolyn; a daughter, Joan Allison of Wellesley, Mass.; a son, Gerald of Smithfield, Me.; a brother, William of Jamesburg, N.J.; five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.
- <sup>5</sup> <http://govpulse.us/entries/1997/06/27/97-16922/Cascade-woolen-mill-inc-oakland-me-notice-of-termination-of-investigation>
- <sup>6</sup> <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-1997-06-24/html/97-16497.htm>, and Federal Register Volume 62, Number 121, Tuesday, June 24, 1997
- <sup>7</sup> Bangor Daily News, Thursday 22 Oct 1998
- <sup>8</sup> [http://cfpub.epa.gov/bf\\_factsheets/gfs/index.cfm?xpg\\_id=475&display\\_type=HTML](http://cfpub.epa.gov/bf_factsheets/gfs/index.cfm?xpg_id=475&display_type=HTML) -- Brownfields 2008 Cleanup Grant Fact Sheet Oakland, ME -- EPA Brownfields Program: EPA's Brownfields Program empowers states, communities, and other stakeholders to work together to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield site is real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. ... EPA has selected the Town of Oakland for a brownfields cleanup grant. Hazardous substances grant funds will be used to clean up the 4.9-acre Cascade Woolen Mill site located at 60 Cascade Mill Road. The former textile mill was constructed in 1882 and manufactured woolen fabrics for clothing and upholstery until it was abandoned in 1998. Site soil is contaminated with metals, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds, and inorganic compounds. Grant funds also will be used to support community involvement activities. // Community Description: The Town of Oakland was selected to receive a brownfields cleanup grant. Located 22 miles north of Augusta near the Belgrade Lakes, Oakland (population 5,959) was incorporated in 1873. It grew as industries arrived to take advantage of the town's water power provided by the nearby Messalonskee Stream. As a result, Oakland became an important economic influence in the region. The Cascade Woolen Mill was the last manufacturing facility in the town to close, and remains an architecturally significant symbol of Oakland's former industrial prominence in the region. The mill site is located in the town's Village District, a low-income, mixed-use area. The current tenant is interested in expanding his business, but can use only a portion of the facility because of contamination detected during a Phase II assessment. Cleanup of the site is expected to allow the redevelopment of the underused portion of the mill, providing employment opportunities for area residents. Cleanup also is expected to reduce threats to the Messalonskee Stream. Also reference Central Maine Morning Sentinel, 9 April 2008, at <http://morningsentinel.mainetoday.com/news/local/4949523.html>
- <sup>9</sup> <http://morningsentinel.mainetoday.com/news/local/6974129.html>

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Cascade Woolen Mill. n.p, n.d.  
Cascade Woolen Mill, Oakland, Maine, 100 Years, 1882-1982. ?Oakland: n.p., ?1982.