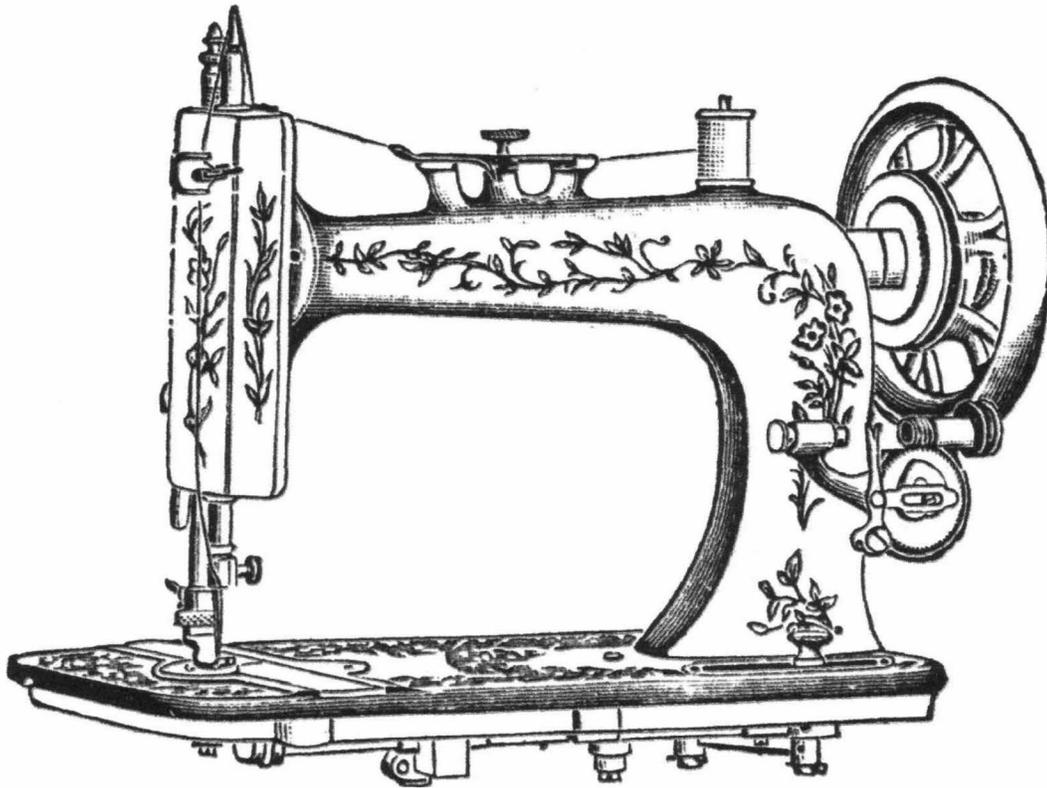


MT. AIRY PANTS FACTORY
(aka Sewing Factory)
100 YEARS AGO
OPENED OCTOBER 1921
PROSPECT ROAD, MT. AIRY, MD



These newspaper articles were typed out the way they were printed. There are a few misspellings, unique spellings, and some unique wording used. These articles reveal some of the history of the Mt. Airy Pants Factory. As far as the newspaper articles reveal, the pants factory originally opened in Mt. Airy, October 1921 on Prospect Road. We know the factory burned to the ground in 1947, had a temporary location at Wildwood Park for a few years, and then the final destination was Center Street, Mt. Airy. This research is ongoing, therefore, if you have newspaper articles, artifacts, or stories to share, please bring them to the Mt. Airy Museum located at the Train Station or contact Doris Tabler Bujanowski at Jedolidama@gmail.com.
Thank you in advance for your help.

February 11, 1921, Democratic Advocate (Westminster, Maryland)

WATERSVILLE

It is reported that Messrs. A. B. Sellman and brother will soon commence to operate a sewing factory at Mt. Airy.

May 27, 1921, The Democratic Advocate (Westminster, Maryland)

WATERSVILLE

Messrs. A. B. Sellman & Brother are having a sewing factory erected at Mt. Airy.

November 4, 1921 – Democratic Advocate (Westminster, Maryland)

Messrs. A. B. Sellman and brother have closed their canning factory for tomatoes for this season but their new enterprise at Mt. Airy, the sewing factory, is busily engaged and meeting with success.

December 2, 1921, Democratic Advocate (Westminster, Maryland)

Mr. A. B. Sellman and brother are busily engaged at their new sewing factory in Mt. Airy. Forty-two operators are employed. The work is making of clothes for men and a large amount is made daily.

June 10, 1925, Baltimore Sun

FORELADY on men's work pants; daylight factory; 40 machines. Apply by letter at once. MOUNT AIRY PANTS CO., Mount Airy, Md.

December 19, 1927 – Frederick News Post

The Mt. Airy Pants Co., has closed indefinitely. Many are out of employment.

April 4, 1930 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

LOCAL PANTS CO. WILL OPERATE ON FULL TIME

Will Close Down This Week End – Has Been Running Only Part Time Recently. – The Mt. Airy Pants Company, one of the most important industrial enterprises in this section, which for the past three weeks has been running only on part time, will close down entirely at the end of this week. However, operations will again be resumed April 15th on a full time basis. For some time past the factory has not been running at capacity and various employees have been idle from time to time.

Part-time operations and closing down of the factory was due entirely to the fact that the company from whom the local plant had been obtaining their work, namely The National Pants Company of Washington D. C., made a bid and obtained an estimate from the Richmond Penitentiary—where convict labor is obtained for practically nothing. This condition of unfair competition is becoming more and more pronounced yearly and should be controlled by adequate legislation.

Quite fortunate indeed was the local plant to obtain another contract with a Baltimore concern; especially at a time when such a large number of factories have ceased operations for an indefinite period of time.

This announcement will certainly be most welcome news to the 58 operators employed by the local concern—at a time when unemployment prevails throughout the entire country. It will be of great benefit to local business in general, for it represents a situation unique among business. Practically all of the many hundreds of dollars paid out weekly to local people represents foreign capital—brought to Mt. Airy and spent in and around this town.

This short lay-off is the first one made by the Pants Company for quite a number of years. All types of work pants are made at the local plant and they are sold and distributed in all parts of the country.

April 10, 1931 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

MT. AIRY PANTS FACTORY NOW RUNNING FULL TIME

Resumption of Operations Monday Gave Employment to Approximately 50 Persons.

Following six months of inactivity the Mt. Airy Pants Factory resumed operations Monday on a full-time schedule. Fulfillment of its present contract calling for a large order of white duck pants is expected to take nearly five months, according to Ralph Sellman, owner and manager of the factory.

Employment for the full force numbering about 50 persons was announced Saturday and operations were in full swing on Wednesday. Mr. Sellman stated that he expected the output of the factory would reach 4,000 pairs of pants weekly as soon as the working schedule is perfected.

August 17, 1931 – Frederick News Post

Pants Factory in Operation. A maximum force of 50 persons is being employed at the Mt. Airy pants factory, according to R. Sellman, proprietor who expects a full time schedule to continue throughout the remainder of the year. The present contract calls for a large quantity of work pants and after Thanksgiving operations will change to white duck pants. Between 3,500 and 4,000 pairs of work pants will be made weekly while operations are on a full time basis.

October 8, 1931 – The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

MT. AIRY COUPLE UNITED IN MARRIAGE – MT. AIRY. – John Flair and Mrs. Carrie Poole were married Saturday and are occupying their newly furnished home, which Mr. Flair recently purchased from Charles Harrison. Mrs. Flair is forelady at the Mt. Airy sewing establishment.

May 13, 1932 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

Pants Factory Operating.

The Mt. Airy Pants Factory, Ralph Sellman proprietor, resumed operations on Monday following a several months period of inactivity. The factory started running at compacity Tuesday morning, approximately 50 women being given employment. White duck pants and linens are being made and the plant will continue operation at least until August, it is believed.

December 9, 1932 – The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

A. B. Sellman & Bro., owners and managers of the Mt. Airy Pants Factory, began last week to enlarge their factory. They are rushing the work, and when completed will add 20 more machines which will help the unemployed. Sellman Bros. employ now between 50 and 75 persons.

December 12, 1932 – The News (Frederick, Maryland) & The Frederick Post

A. B. Sellman & Bro., owners and managers of the Mt. Airy Pants Factory, began last week to enlarge their factory. They are rushing the work, and when completed will add 20 more machines which will help the unemployed. Sellman Bros. employ now between 50 and 75 persons.

(Unknown Source)

In 1933 the Mt. Airy Pants Factory was closed down for several weeks to put an addition on the building to house fast-type sewing machines. An increased demand for products made it necessary to enlarge the plant.

Before shutdown, the Factory was working at capacity on a order for the American Red Cross for dark cotton trousers to be distributed to the needy by the organization.

The new addition is a 30' x 36' single story structure built by a local contractor, Archie Hood. The new structure will house 82 new sewing machines installed by Singer Sewing Company going from 50 employees to almost 100.

350 dozen pairs of trousers were produced a week. With new equipment it will increase to 600 dozen. Proprietor Ralph Sellman.

January 20, 1933 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

Pants Factory To Resume Operations After Brief Layoff

Local Plant, With Increased Facilities, Will Begin Work Monday With Increased Force.

Approximately 100 employees of the Mt. Airy Pants Factory, Ralph Sellman proprietor, will be called back to work Monday when the local establishment resumes operations after a shutdown of several weeks. Construction of the additional building to house new equipment has been completed, and already the new fast-type factory sewing machines have been installed.

An increased demand for the products of the local concern made it necessary to enlarge the plant, Mr. Sellman declared, and the shutdown was necessitated by the installation of the new machinery and equipment. Before operations were temporarily discontinued, the factory was turning out more work and employing a larger number of operators than at any previous time. An average of 350 dozen pairs of trousers a week had been maintained regularly and with the addition of the new equipment that output will be increased to 600 dozen per week.

Built by Archie Hood, local contractor, the new addition, a 30x36 one story frame structure, stands along side the old building. New equipment installed by the Singer Sewing Machine Company will increase the number of machines to 82. The former force of approximately 50 operators will be increased by 40, putting upwards of 100 people on the payroll.

Before the shutdown, the factory was operating at capacity on an order for the American Red Cross for dark cotton trousers, to be distributed to the needy by the national organization. When the plant opens Monday with its increased facilities, work will be started on the white duck trade, which usually begins in January.

January 21, 1933 – Evening Star (Washington, District of Columbia)

Employees Recalled to Work. MOUNT AIRY, Md., January 21 (Special) – Approximately 100 employees of the Mount Airy Pants Factory, Ralph Sellman, proprietor, will be called back to work Monday when the local establishment resumes operations after a shutdown of several weeks. An increased demand for products of the local concern made it necessary to construct an additional building to house new equipment. The former force of approximately 50 operators will be increased by 40, putting upward of 100 people on the payroll.

March 2, 1933 – The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

Garment Factory Resumes Work – The Mt. Airy pants factory, resumed work Monday after a shut down for

several months. About fifty local people are employed there. A. B. Sellman and brother, owners of the local plant, announced they have quite an assignment for present time.

March 3, 1933 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

Factory Resumes Operations After 2-Months' Layoff

Sixty-five Employees Recalled To Work Monday By Mt. Airy Pants Factory.

Approximately sixty-five employees of the Mt. Airy Pants Factory, Ralph Sellman, proprietor, were recalled to work this week when the plant resumed operations after a several months' period of inactivity.

Just how long the period of employment will continue, Mr. Sellman was unable to say, but in a few days the factory will be running at capacity. The new addition to the plant, practically doubling capacity, will not be put into operation at this time, he added.

April 17, 1933 – THE FREDERICK POST (Monday Morning)

FOUR POSTMASTERS TO BE NAMED SOON – Republican postmasters in four Carroll county towns will soon be replaced with members of the Democratic party. The postmasters affected are at Mt. Airy, Westminster, Union Bridge, and Manchester. Examination for aspirants to all postoffice vacancies in Carroll county will be held April 15.

In Mt. Airy where there are a dozen aspirants for the postmastership, reports indicate that the job will go to Ralph Sellman, proprietor of the Mt. Airy Pants Factory, who is a brother of A. B. Sellman, Mt. Airy chairman of the Democratic State Central committee for Carroll county. Benjamin Bryan, clerk in the office, will be retained, it is said.

Mr. Sellman is expected to succeed Mrs. Charles D. Routzahn, who has been acting as postmistress since the death of her husband last September. The appointment of Mr. Sellman as postmaster would have no effect upon the future operation of the pants factory, which will continue as before, under the management of an expert machinist.

April 17, 1933 – THE FREDERICK POST

Ralph Sellman is expected to succeed Mrs. Charles D. Routzahn at the Mt. Airy postoffice, which will be filled by a Democrat. Mrs. Routzahn has been acting postmistress, since the death of her husband last September, and also took the civil service examination in Frederick a few months ago. She ranked second in the examination. Mr. Sellman is the well known owner of the Mt. Airy Pants factory, in which business he will continue, and a brother of A. B. Sellman, chairman of the Democratic Central Committee. Benjamin Bryan, clerk of postoffice, will continue, it is reported.

August 4, 1933 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

Bearing of Code On Pants Factory Not Ascertained

Proprietor of Local Plant Unable To Say What the Future Policy Here Will Be.

What bearing the code submitted by government officials for the textile industry will have on the Mt. Airy Pants Factory is not known at this time, Ralph Sellman, the proprietor, intimated yesterday. Reports that the factory, now employing 90 persons, would close down immediately for an indefinite period, were denied by Mr. Sellman, who said he had not yet been able to obtain complete information as to the requirements of the code which will govern the needle trades.

Interviewed immediately after he returned from a conference with Dr. J. Knox Insley, Maryland

Commissioner of Labor, Mr. Sellman said he was able to obtain but little information in Baltimore. Things are pretty much in confusion there, he added, and all we know definitely is that the code submitted for the needle trade, under which classification our factory is listed, provides for a 40-hour week with a minimum wage of \$12.

The local factory, which was enlarged early this spring, has been operating at capacity. Operators are paid on a piece work basis and the contract on which the factory now holds with the National Pants Company, Washington, D. C., would make it impossible to pay all operators the minimum wage scale, it was explained. If the concerns who let the contracts are willing to advance prices sufficiently to care for the increase there is a possibility that the code might be workable here, but there is small likelihood that the manufacturers can be persuaded to take such steps.

Needle work contractors located throughout the counties, operated on plans similar to those employed here, must compete with prison labor in selling their services to the manufacturers, it was pointed out, and until the prison labor competition is eliminated, the privately-owned concerns will be faced with a type of competition that cannot be met.

August 24, 1933 – The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

Sewing Factory Closes – The Mt. Airy Pants factory, A. B. Sellman & Bro., owners and managers, closed their factory a week ago for an indefinite time. Between fifty and seventy-five persons were laid off by the closing of the plant.

September 22, 1933 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

Chamber Approves Exemption of Pants Factory From Code

Action Taken To Permit Reopening of Plant, Impossible Under Code

The Mt. Airy Chamber of Commerce in special session Tuesday night approved the exemption of the Mt. Airy Pants Factory from the provisions of the blanket code submitted for the needlework and cotton industry and authorized Ralph Sellman, proprietor of the local plant, to so notify NRA officials in Washington, D. C. Plants unable to comply with the NRA blanket code would be allowed certain exemptions, it was learned here last week, providing the working plan of those factories taking exception is approved by officials in Washington.

The local Pants Factory, employing 80 off operators, ceased operations early in August. Explaining the situation Tuesday night before 16 members of the Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Sellman said he was faced with the choice of one of two propositions. He could continue to operate by adopting the blanket code submitted for the textile industry, which provided for a minimum weekly wage of \$12 for all operators, or he could close the plant.

Because it was utterly impossible to pay all operators the minimum wage and further, because he felt that it was his duty to comply with the Recovery plans of the Administration and adopt the NRA is possible, Mr. Sellman Tuesday night said he had no choice in the matter. He accordingly closed the factory early in August, discontinuing a weekly payroll approximately \$700 and throwing out of work nearly 100 persons.

Submits Figures

Mr. Sellman submitted confidential figures at the meeting, showing that the plant was being operated on a close margin, which allowed little, if any profit. Asked why such a condition existed, he explained that the firms for which he worked had most of their clothing made at penal institutions and that the independent contractor met the competition of the Penitentiaries, or else the work was let to the prison operators.

Clearly it's an outrageously unfair type of competition, he continued, and the independent contractors in the summer were promised that it would be eliminated in the fall. Whether or not the prisons in the clothing manufacturing business will be forced to adopt a regulatory code, or whether they shall be allowed to continue on the present basis, no one at the present time knows, it was explained. At any rate, he pointed out, that is the type of competition the independent plant is facing and the clothing manufacturer naturally can't be expected to pay an independent several times as much as the prison operator does the work for.

Chamber Approves Plan

After hearing the matter explained in detail a motion that the Chamber of Commerce approved the Mt. Airy Pants Factory's plan of re-opening, which does not conform to that prescribed in the blanket code, was made by Charles A. Ogle. The motion was properly seconded and Mr. Sellman was instructed to advise NRA officials in Washington accordingly.

Under the terms of the plan which Mr. Sellman has already forwarded to Washington, wages of operators will be increased approximately 27 per cent. If Washington is disposed to approved the exceptions, Mr. Sellman intimated that the factory would be re-opened at an early date.

Chamber of Commerce members present were Walter L. Spurrier, H. P. Burdette, H. S. Beck, Ralph Sellman, C. C. Riddlemoser, Henry G. Hood, Robert K. Myers, Asa H. Watkins, Charles A. Ogle, M. E. Watkins, Chester R. Hood, R. E. Burdette, L. Pearce Bowlus, A.D. Phebus, Harry Bellison, and Dr. J. Stanley Grabill.

September 25, 1933 – Evening Star (Washington, District of Columbia)

EXEMPTION ASKED FROM CODE BASIS – Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce Backs Pants Factory Plea to N. R. A. Chiefs. – Special Dispatch to The Star. – MOUNT AIRY, Md., September 25 – The Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce in special session has approved the exemption of the Mount Airy pants factory from the provisions of the blanket code submitted for the needlework and cotton industry and authorized Ralph Sellman, proprietor of the local plant to so notify N. R. A. officials in Washington, D. C. Plants unable to comply with the N. R. A. blanket code would be allowed certain exemptions, it was learned here last week, providing the working plan of those factories taking exception is approved by officials in Washington.

The pants factory, employing 80 odd operators, ceased operations early in August. Explaining the situation to the chamber of commerce, Mr. Sellman said he was unable to continue operating and comply with terms of the code, which provided a minimum weekly wage of \$12 for all operators.

After hearing the terms of Mr. Sellman's substitute plan outlined, the chamber of commerce voiced approval and Mr. Sellman was instructed to advise N. R. A. officials in Washington accordingly.

Under the terms of the plan, wages of operators will be increased approximately 27 per cent if Washington is disposed to approve the exceptions noted in the substituted code.

October 6, 1933 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

Re-Opening of Pants Factory Expected Soon

Steps To Be Taken To Resume Activities At Local Industry, Stopped Several Months Ago.

Plans whereby the Mt. Airy Pants Factory will be enabled to reopen are now being rushed to completion by the proprietor, Ralph Sellman, it was learned this week.

After waiting several weeks for a reply from Washington in response to the local Chamber of Commerce's action in approving the plant's reopening with modifications of the NRA code, Mr. Sellman made a trip to the capital to personally take up the matter with authorities.

Little enlightenment could be obtained there, it was said, and plans are now being made to reopen the local industry on the basis explained at the recent Chamber of Commerce meeting, which provided for a considerable increase in the salary of the 80-odd operators.

November 3, 1933 – The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

The Mt. Airy Pants factory opened on Monday morning for part time work, possibly three days a week. About 80 persons are employed by the local plant.

January 25, 1934 – The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

SLIGHT FIRE OCCURS AT MT. AIRY PLANT – MT. AIRY – Fire, thought to have been caused by spontaneous combustion, Wednesday morning caused slight damage at the plant of the Mt. Airy Sewing factory. The blaze was discovered shortly before noon by the proprietor, Ralph Sellman, who had practically extinguished the mounding flames when the Volunteer Fire Company arrived.

January 26, 1934 – The News (Frederick, Maryland)

Fire At Mt. Airy Sewing Factory. – Fire, thought to have been by spontaneous combustion, caused slight damage at the plant of the Mt. Airy sewing factory, shortly before noon on Wednesday. The blaze was discovered by proprietor, Ralph Sellman, who had practically extinguished the flames when the Mt. Airy Volunteer Fire Company arrived. Loss was confined to damaged walls and broken window panes.

March 20, 1935 – The News (Frederick, Maryland)

Operations have been resumed at the Mt. Airy Pants Factory, which had been closed for more than a year. Work is reported to be resumed on a small basis of about thirty operators, according to the explanation of Ralph Sellman, proprietor.

July 11, 1936 – The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

After being idle for three weeks the Mt. Airy pants factory resumed operation on Monday, not on full time basis. Mr. Sellman reported the lull is due to between seasons.

September 8, 1937, The Frederick Post (Frederick, Maryland)

ALONZO B. SELLMAN DIES AT MT. AIRY – Banker, Canner, And Former Democratic Leader In Carroll Had Been Ill Two Years

Mt. Airy, Md. September 7 – Alonzo B. Sellman, banker, canner, real estate operator and former Democratic leader in Carroll County, dies at his home here today after a two-year illness. He was born near here on November 27, 1877.

Mr. Sellman organized the Mt. Airy Building and Loan Association in 1917 and since served as president. He was vice-president of the First National Bank of Mt. Airy and has been postmaster at Watersville since 1901. Mr. Sellman was president of the County Board of Education Supervisors for eight years. In 1934 he relinquished the chairmanship of the County Democratic Committee.

Survivors include a sister, Mrs. Sallie McElroy, of Santa Anna, Texas, and two brothers, Malcolm G. Sellman of St. Louis and Ralph Sellman, postmaster of Mt. Airy. Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Thursday at the home of his cousin, Mrs. J. Albert Nice.

October 9, 1937 --The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

If negotiations now under way between Ralph Sellman and Baltimore interests are consummated, the local postmaster shortly will lease to them the Mt. Airy Pants Factory. Mr. Sellman said the deal appeared certain to go through, adding that the prospective lessees still have some time to ponder the affair. Should the lease be consummated, he said, the new operators will probably enlarge the plant and provide employment for more than 100 operators.

October 18, 1937 -- THE FREDERICK POST

FACTORY TO RE-OPEN -- *Baltimore Firm Signs Contract with Ralph Sellman.* -- An agreement which will permit the early re-opening of the Mt. Airy Pants Factory has been consummated between Ralph Sellman, former proprietor, and the Mt. Airy Mayor and Town Council. Mr. Sellman has accepted the offer made by the Forest Manufacturing Company, Baltimore. His contract with the Baltimore concern provides for purchase of the machinery and equipment now in the Mt. Airy factory and a five-year lease, with an option of ten years.

A hitch developed when the prospective lessee refused to pay a rental sufficient to permit Mr. Sellman, owner of the building, a 6% return on his investment. Aid of the Mt. Airy Chamber of Commerce was sought by the factory-owner, who asked that the trade body underwrite an amount approximating \$300, which would permit him the percent of return desired.

The Chamber was unable to grant this request and to the Mayor and Town Council of Mt. Airy. Mr. Sellman then went with his proposition.

Charles A. Ogle, mayor, following a special session of the Town Council, explained that his body had agreed to pay to Mr. Sellman approximately which would insure the early re-opening of the plant which prospects of immediate employment for upwards of 70 or 75 women and girls. He made it clear, however, that the town intends only to guarantee the sum involved and that merchants who voluntarily suggested that the factory should be re-opened at all cost, will be expected to contribute voluntarily, whatever cash the municipality is required to advance.

He explained that such a course of action was followed when the Town underwrote the cost of uniforms for the Boys' Band, involving a cash outlay of something over \$300. At present, he continued, practically all the money so advanced has been repaid.

November 26, 1937 -- The Evening Sun (Hanover Pennsylvania)

MT. AIRY -- Work at the Mt. Airy Pants factory was resumed Monday morning under new management and with a force of some 15-machine operators and other help to make ready for a full time operation in a short time which will employ upwards of 75 women and girls. The factory has been leased by the owner, Ralph Sellman to Charles Shuman and Leonard Rombro, of Baltimore. The Lessees have purchased the machinery and equipment now in the plant and have contracted for a five-year lease with an option of ten years.

March 23, 1938 -- THE FREDERICK POST

Charles Norwood, son of Mr. and Mrs. Norris E. Norwood, Mt. Airy, is recovering from severe burns sustained while operating a presser at the Mt. Airy pants factory.

March 25, 1938, The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

Charles Norwood, son of Mr. and Mrs. Norris Norwood, Mt. Airy, is recovering from severe burns, suffered last week while operating a presser at the Mt. Airy Factory.

September, 23, 1938 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

PANTS FACTORY INSTALLS NEW PRESSING MACHINES

Local Concern Now Using Ten Machines To Press the Finished Garments.

The Mt. Airy Pants Factory, operated by Forrest Manufacturing Co., Baltimore, is getting its share of work, it might be concluded, because new machinery has been installed at the local concern to better take care of the trade.

Julius Zipper, in charge of the concern here, said he now has in operation three new under pressers which press the seam from the hip pocket to the waistband; two toppers which press the waistband itself; three leggers which stamp a crease in the legs, and two seamers which care for the seams on the inside of the legs.

The new machinery is powered by electricity but it produces steam with which to make the crease permanent. Three new workers were added to the workforce to operate the new machinery.

Ralph Sellman, owner of the building which houses the Pants factory, denied reports that the premises had been sold to the lessee.

October 28, 1938 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

Sewing Factory To Comply With Wage-Hour Bill

Federal Statute Necessitated Dropping 10 Women From the Local Plant, Manager Reports.

The Mt. Airy Pants Factory will comply with the wage-hour law in every respect, Julius Zipper, manager of the local concern, informed this newspaper yesterday.

An attempt at compliance with the Federal statute which became effective Monday has necessitated the dropping of eight or ten women over 50 years of age. The manager explained that the move was necessitated because those employees, working entirely on a piece-work basis, could not earn the minimum of 25c an hour provided by the measure.

Mr. Zipper's announcement that his concern would fully comply with provisions of the Act will be favorably received, because rumors that employees were being paid minimum wages and been given wide circulation during the past few weeks. Hourly wages of 25c for a 40-hour week will provide approximately 50 women retained by the concern a weekly salary of around \$10.

Dropping of the women above 50, said to have been made necessary by the new act, in a number of instances will work a real hardship upon those families who depended in part upon their weekly wages at the factory. It is believed, however, that minimum wages of 25c hourly for the more than 50 women retained will necessitate a payroll substantially larger than that heretofore distributed.

Have 5-Year Lease.

Mr. Zipper manages the local concern which leased the building from the owner, Ralph Sellman, about a year ago. The lessees, Leonard Rombro and Charles Shuman, purchased the machinery and equipment in the plant and since taking over have added more machinery. Their lease covered a five-year period.

The sewing factory is probably the only local concern affected by the wage-hour Act. Meanwhile, pledges of co-operation were received by National compliance officials from Governors of 13 States.

Informed that a number of plants and big concerns were closing down because of the measure, Elmer Andrews, administrator of the Act, said there was nothing to get excited about. Seasonal shutdowns would

have occurred anyway, he said.

December 2, 1938 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)
PANTS FACTORY TO RESUME OPERATIONS DECEMBER 15

Cessation of work at the Mt. Airy Pants Factory, according to Julius Zipper, manager of the plant, will be only temporary. Some 50 or 60 women found themselves without employment when the plant ceased operations this week.

The manager said a skeleton force was now making samples of materials to be turned out for the spring and summer season. Operations on a full-time basis, he indicated, will be resumed on or about December 15.

January 13, 1939, The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)
Plant To Resume Work – Employees of Mt. Airy Pants factory have been notified that work will be resumed February 1. The plant has been closed for the past two months.

February 6, 1939, Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)
Pants Factory to Reopen.

Employees of the Mt. Airy Pants Factory, the operation of which was carried on last year by the Forrest Manufacturing Co., have been notified that work would be resumed February 1, 1939.

February 13, 1939, The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)
MT AIRY – From a recent report, the Mt. Airy pants factory will not open. The plant was to resume operations February 1, but a letter last week over the signature Forrest Manufacturing Co., 17 Hopkins Place read: "We do not believe we shall reopen the factory at Mt. Airy. However, in case we are able to sell it, the purchaser will in all likelihood open shortly". The Baltimore concern more than a year ago leased the plant from the former proprietor, Ralph Sellman. The plant closed about the last of November.

February 18, 1939, The Frederick Post

Mt. Airy – From a recent report, the Mt. Airy pants factory will not open. The plant was to resume operation February 1, but a letter last week over the signature Forrest Manufacturing Co., read: "We do not believe we shall reopen the factory at Mt. Airy. However, in case we are able to sell it, the purchaser will in all likelihood open shortly." The Baltimore concern more than a year ago leased the plant from the former proprietor Ralph Sellman. The plant closed about the last of November.

March 31, 1939 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)
LOCAL PANTS FACTORY REOPENS, HIRING SIXTY

Approximately 60 persons returned to work at the Mt. Airy Pants Factory Monday when operations were resumed at the local plant by the Forrest Manufacturing Company of Baltimore.

F. J. Bartose, foreman at the plant, said the volume of work in prospect indicated that operations would continue indefinitely. Practically all of the former employees of the concern have returned to work, he said.

The plant ceased operations last December.

April 8, 1939, The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

MT. AIRY. – Approximately 60 persons returned to work at the Mt. Airy Pants factory, Monday, when operations were resumed at the local plant by the Forrest Manufacturing Company of Baltimore. Practically all of the former employees of the concern have returned to work. The plant ceased operation last December.

January 5, 1940 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

MT. AIRY PANTS FACTORY WORKING FULL TIME

Prospects for steady work at the Mt. Airy Pants Factory, now operated by the Forrest Manufacturing Company of Baltimore, appear excellent, according to an employee of the concern.

Full-time operations were resumed this week after a week's lay-off for the Christmas holidays.

The concern is now employing 74 women.

November 8, 1940 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

SEWING FACTORY PLANS FULL TIME SCHEDULE JAN. 1

Full-time operations at the local sewing factory of Rombro Bros. Will be resumed January 1, an executive of the concern said this week.

The plant is now running three days a week, during the interim between seasons.

January 1, 1943 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

SEWING FACTORY MANAG'R WILL MOVE TO BALTIMORE

Because of an asthmatic condition which plagues him in the summer, Ralph Banks, manager of the local sewing factory, plans to move to Baltimore early in January.

The local man, who has managed the concern for Rombro Bros., of Baltimore, for four years, plans to move his wife and son to Baltimore in an effort to locate in a climate less irritating to his health. He said he was not bothered by the ailment during six years he spent in the nearby city.

Banks added that he would remain at the local factory, now employing some 80 persons, until a successor could be found. He now resides on South Main Street.

February 6, 1947, Daily Mail (Hagerstown, Maryland)

Mt. Airy Factory Is Burned To Ground

Mt. Airy, Md., Feb. 6 (AP) – The Mt. Airy sewing factory, operated by Rombro Bros., Inc., of Baltimore, burned to the ground early today with three fire companies attempting to save the one-story frame structure.

Mrs. Bertha Steel and her two sons, Lloyd and Jack were forced to flee their burning apartment over the factory.

Fire company officials estimated the loss at approximately \$50,000.

The factory, which manufactures men's clothing employs 90 men and women at an annual payroll of \$100,000 a company spokesman reported.

The fire started shortly before midnight in the ten-year-old building. Company officials said they hoped to have another establishment operating within a month.

February 7, 1947, The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

MT. AIRY SEWING PLANT DESTROYED – Loss of \$50,000 Estimated – 90 Persons Jobless – Firemen

Fight Blaze In Icy Weather – The large frame Mt. Airy sewing factory owned and operated by Rombro Bros.

of Baltimore, was completely destroyed early yesterday in a spectacular fire which sent wind-swept embers over much of the town and threatened for a time to spread to adjacent buildings.

An unofficial estimate placed the loss at approximately \$50,000 including the rambling building, machinery and stock, together with the personal belongings of Mrs. Bertha O. Steel and her two sons, Jack and Lloyd Steel, Jr., who occupied an apartment in the structure on Prospect Road. The property was reported fully insured.

Three engines from the Mt. Airy Volunteer Fire Company had five hose lines on the blaze and when a fuel tank in the basement exploded, adding to the conflagration, calls were sent to Damascus and Sykesville summoning engines from those towns to the scene. Firemen from the neighboring towns relieved the Mt. Airy volunteers, half-frozen in 10-above zero temperatures.

The destruction of the building at least temporarily idled approximately 90 women from the Mt. Airy locality who had been making men's summer garments and pants at the plant. The annual payroll is believed around \$100,000. Representatives of the Rombro firm were in Mt. Airy seeking a temporary site to resume operations and were reported hopeful that work could be restarted in around 30 days.

Robert Williar, who resides a short distance from the factory, noticed the blaze and turned in the alarm just about midnight. The Steel family was immediately notified but so quickly did the flames spread that the three persons occupying the apartment had to flee with only the clothes they were wearing.

The G. E. Roop ice plant several feet away had holes burned in the roof and side but firemen quickly extinguished the small patches of fire.

Just about the time the firemen appeared to be getting control of the flames, the fuel oil tank which apparently was used to power some of the machinery in the building exploded and the resultant fierce fire precluded any possibility of saving even a portion of the structure. Flames soared high in the air and embers began to spread over the town, with the result that Sykesville and Damascus were notified.

The building had been rented for about ten years by the Baltimore firm from Postmaster Ralph Sellman, of Mt. Airy and was purchased from him about a year ago.

February 7, 1947 --The Baltimore Sun

Mt. Airy Sewing Factory Is Destroyed By Fire -- Mount Airy, MD., Feb/ 6 (AP) -- The Mount Airy Sewing Factory, operated by Romberg Bros., Inc., of Baltimore, burned to the ground early today with three fire companies attempting to save the one story frame structure.

Mrs. Bertha Steel and her two sons, Lloyd and Jack, were forced to flee their burning apartment over the factory. Fire company officials estimated the loss at approximately \$50,000.

The factory, which manufactures men's clothing, employs 90 men and women at an annual pay roll of \$100,000, a company spokesman reported.

The fire started shortly before midnight in the ten-year-old building. Company officials said they hoped to have another establishment operating within a month.

February 7, 1947 (Source unknown)

One of the most disastrous recent fires within the town limits totally destroyed the local clothing factory and an upper floor apartment, throwing approximately 90 persons out of work and rendering a family homeless with the total loss of all their belongings. The large frame building owned by Postmaster Ralph Sellman and used by Rombro Brothers, Inc., of Baltimore, had on the first floors a manufacturing...

February 7, 1947 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

Heavy Fire Loss Here Wednesday About Midnight

Clothing Factory Burns – Steele Family Lose All – 90 Out Of Work

One of the most disastrous recent fires within the town limits of Mt. Airy totally destroyed the building housing the local clothing factory and an upper floor apartment on Wednesday night, throwing an approximate 90 persons out of work and rendering a family homeless with the total loss of all their belongings.

The large frame building owned by Rombro Brothers, Inc., of Baltimore, and occupied by them on the first floor as a manufacturing plant, was discovered to be in flames shortly before midnight, driving the family of Mrs. Bertha O. Steel from their second floor apartment clad only in their nightclothes. The fire appeared to have originated in a portion of the building directly over the furnace room and when discovered was already breaking through the floor into the Steel apartment. Mrs. Steel and her two sons, Jack and Lloyd, Jr., barely had time to escape with their lives, losing all of their personal belongings, including furniture and clothing.

The building, machinery and stock of cloth to be manufactured into clothing were valued by the owners at approximately \$50,000, and the loss was total. No estimate was immediately available on the personal loss to the Steele family. Most serious immediate result of the conflagration was the throwing out of employment of 90 or more persons working at the factory, which has an approximate \$100,000 annual payroll. The plant, located in the rear of the bank building, had been operated for the past 10 years by Rombro Brothers, Inc., who succeeded Postmaster Ralph Sellman in the manufacturing venture. They purchased the real estate and improvements thereon only last year.

Embers from the burning structure fanned by the wind, were carried for great distances and fear that other blazes might result prompted the calling of the Damascus and Sykesville Volunteer Fire companies to the assistance of the Mount Airy Company in fighting the flames. Plenty of water was available and the combined work of the three companies prevented the blaze from spreading.

The management immediately announced plans for resuming operations as soon as temporary quarters can be obtained, which they...

February 21, 1947, Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

Early Reopening of Sewing Factory Here Is Indicated

Dance Floor At Wildwood Park Is Being Remodeled To Accommodate Rombro Plant.

Considerable progress has been made in converting a building in Wildwood Park from a dining hall into a room to accommodate the sewing operation of Rombro Brothers, Inc., according to Preston Brown. Young Brown, who has been in charge of the conversion project, said only inability to secure materials promptly would prevent him from turning the building over to the lessees in less than two weeks.

Fire the night of February 5, it will be recalled, completely destroyed the building, together with all equipment and raw materials therein, which housed the sewing operation conducted by Rombro Brothers, Inc. Max Rombro, a member of the Baltimore firm, disclosed last week that his concern had entered into a agreement with Raymond G. Brown, whereby the owner of Wildwood Park had leased a large building to his outfit.

The building a 45x150 ft. structure, only last summer was enlarged and modernized by the owner to provide more ample dining and dancing facilities for Firemen's Carnival activities. Immediately after the owner and the lessees came to terms, the job of converting the building into quarters to house the sewing

operation was begun.

A force of workmen, Preston Brown indicated, have been covering the inside walls with sheetrock while brick siding is being put on the outside surface. A forced air heating plant, of the blower type, is being installed, and the phase of the work has been completed. In addition, a boiler room has been added to the rear of the building.

No machinery or equipment, Brown said, will be moved into the building until it is ready to be turned over to the leasing firm. A spokesman for the Rombro firm indicated, however, that all new machinery was available and its installation awaited only final completion of the conversion job.

Terms of the lease, and the length of time it is to run, were not disclosed by the contracting parties

February 14, 1947 (Source unknown)

The owner of Wildwood Park, Raymond G. Brown, indicated this week that executives of the firm operating the Mount Airy Sewing Factory had contracted him relative to leasing one of the buildings on the property to house sewing operation. The building is the structure used as a dance pavilion and eating hall when the Firemen's Carnival activities are held in the park. Letting the building to Rombro Brothers will not interfere with carnival activities. To provide dining facilities and dance floor, Mr. Brown proposes to erect another building in the park.

February 15, 1947, The Frederick Post

SEWING FACTORY TO RESUME

Arrangements have been made to house the Mt. Airy sewing factory, which was wiped out by fire recently, at Wildwood Park, site of Mt. Airy Fire Department carnivals. Raymond G. Brown, owner of the park property, said the 45 by 150 foot building will be enclosed and heating equipment installed to house new sewing machines in the immediate future. The building will be leased to Rombro Brothers, Baltimore firm which operated the plant recently destroyed.

The park owner said he will erect a new dance floor and dining room on the park grounds for use of the firemen.

February 19, 1947, The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

MT. AIRY SEWING FACTORY WILL RESUME OPERATIONS – Arrangements have been made to house the Mt. Airy sewing factory, which was wiped out by fire recently, in the dance hall building at Wildwood Park, site of Mt. Airy Fire Department carnivals. Raymond G. Brown, owner of the park property, said the 45 by 150 foot building will be enclosed and heating equipment installed to house new sewing machines in the immediate future. The building will be leased to Rombro Brothers, Baltimore firm, which operated the plant recently destroyed.

The park owner said he will erect a new dance floor and dining room on the park grounds for use of the firemen.

April 4, 1947 – Community Reporter (Mt. Airy, MD)

Early Reopening Of Sewing Factory Here is Indicted

Facilities In Wildwood Park Reconverted by Owner R. G. Brown, Sr.

Early re-opening of the Rombro Bros. sewing plant, which was put out of operation when fire destroyed the building and all contents early in the morning of February 6, last, is indicated.

The owner of the building which has been converted into a sewing room indicated that the operators have installed new equipment and machinery in the building and that it is hoped to get into actual operations on or about April 15.

No effort was made to rebuild on the site of the old building, totally destroyed by the fire. Immediately after the blaze, arrangements were made with Raymond G. Brown, Sr., to convert the building used as a dance pavilion and dining hall, on Wildwood Park, into a unit to house the sewing operations. Once a lease was consummated, Brown immediately began work on the structure and in a matter of weeks the building was enclosed and remodeled to specifications to suit the lessees.

When inventory was taken after the fire, it was discovered that some 90 employees had been thrown out of work and that the actual property damage was no less than \$50,000. The plant located in the rear of the First National Bank building had been operated for the past 10 years by Rombro Brothers, Inc., who succeeded Ralph Sellman. The operators last summer acquired the real estate from the owner, Mr. Sellman.

June 16, 1947, The News (Frederick, Maryland)

New Factory Replaces One Razed By Fire

Work at the Rombro Brothers sewing factory, in Mt. Airy, halted since late in February when fire destroyed their plant on the Prospect Road, has been resumed in a new building erected especially for the concern in Wildwood Park, Mt. Airy.

Immediately after the fire which left some 70 employees jobless, the Baltimore operators negotiated a lease with Raymond G. Brown, after which the latter began enclosing and refitting the building which in past years had been used as a dining and dance hall.

March 2, 1966, The Morning Herald and The Daily Mail (Hagerstown, Maryland)

Police Press Pants Theft Investigation – MT. AIRY – The trouser wardrobe of unidentified thieves was increased Monday night after 1,800 pairs of pants were taken from the Mt. Airy Pants Co. factory here, according to the police.

State police reported that the Mt. Airy theft accounted for \$4,500 of an estimated \$18,000 worth of clothing taken in two Carroll County break-ins Monday night.

Police said clothing valued at \$13,500 was also taken from Ben's Mens Shop in the Westminster Shopping Center.

March 2, 1966, The Cumberland News (Cumberland, Maryland)

\$18,000 In Clothing Taken By Thieves – WESTMINSTER, Md. (AP) – State Police report thieves took clothing worth an estimated \$18,000 in two break-ins in Carroll County Monday night.

Police said clothing value at \$13,500 was taken from Ben's Mens Shop in the Westminster Shopping Center.

Police said 1,800 pairs of pants worth about \$4,500 were taken from the Mt. Airy Pants Co. factory at Mt. Airy.

April 1, 1966, The News (Frederick, Maryland)

Two More Area Firms Hit By Pants Thieves – Men in the Frederick County area may soon be forced to wear Bermuda shorts. It won't be because they want to, however, but because the clothing thieves continue to

rob area factories.

Manufacturing companies in Waynesboro, Pa. and Hampstead were robbed this week bringing to five the number of area firms hit by the pants thieves.

Earlier in March thieves made off with men's trousers from the Londoun Manufacturing Company in Emmitsburg; the Mt. Airy Pants Company and Ben's Men's Store in Westminster.

Nearly 4,000 pairs of men's trousers and other types of men's clothing valued at nearly \$40,000 has been taken in the five March robberies.

The latest robbery occurred early yesterday when an undetermined amount of men's clothing was taken from the Maryland-Hampstead Company at Hampstead. Police said the thieves gained entrance by prying open a door.

Early Wednesday the Ron-Rob Manufacturing Company of Waynesboro, Pa. was broken into and an estimated 1,000 pairs of men's pants and 250 swim trunks were stolen.

Police said the thieves broke open a side door to the plant to gain entrance and used a station wagon to make their getaway.

Grayson D. Shealer of Waynesboro, said his station wagon, parked near the clothing firm, was stolen during the night. Tire tracks near the factory matched the description of tires on his station wagon, police said.

The burglars took pants from all departments and concentrated on finished goods. Sixty pair of unfinished trousers were abandoned in an alley near the factory, police said.

No suspects have been found in any of the five cases.

June 4, 1966, The News (Frederick, Maryland)

Help Wanted – Forelady for Mt. Airy sewing factory. Supervisory and sewing experience required. Call Balto. BE 5-0500.

August 16, 1971, The Baltimore Sun

MECHANIC/MACHINIST – For High powered sewing machines. Mt. Airy Pants Factory, 32 mi. from Balto. Good hours, good pay, fringe benefits, Station Wagon Use. Managerial potential desired. Call 235-0500.

August 31, 1971, The Frederick Post

HELP WANTED

SEWING MACHINE OPERATORS & YOUNG MEN – Factory Help Mt Airy Pants Factory 207 Center St Mt Airy Md

December 16, 1976, The News (Frederick, Maryland)

MT. AIRY PANTS FACTORY. 9:11 p.m., building fire. Tankers from New Market and Libertytown responded.

December 16, 1976, The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania)

Mt. Airy, Damascus, Lisban, Westminster, New Market, Libertytown, 9:09 p.m., building fire, Mt. Airy pants factory, Center St., Mt. Airy.

October 17, 1984, The Evening Sun, Hanover Pennsylvania

Mount Airy, 5:33 p.m., automatic alarm, Mount Airy Pants Factory, Center Street, out 46 minutes.

October 18, 1984, The Evening Sun, Hanover Pennsylvania

Fire log

Mount Airy, 5:26 p.m., automatic fire alarm sounding, Mount Airy Pants Factory, 207 Center St., out 16 minutes.

Mount Airy, 4:33 p.m., engine transfer to Lisbon Station in Howard County, out one hour and 20 minutes.

August 8, 1984 – Carroll County Times (Westminster, Maryland) Front Page

Union organizing at Mt. Airy plant by Bill Lombardi, Staff Writer – The Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers union is organizing at one of Mt. Airy's largest employers, the Mt. Airy Shirt Factory, where workers are scheduled to vote Friday on whether to unionize.

Voting will also occur Friday at three other Maryland shops owned by the same firm.

Union organizing director Woody Biggs said he and other officials are working to install the union so employees can bargain for better salaries and benefits and lower insurance premiums at Rombro Brothers Inc.'s four garment shops – two on the Eastern Shore, one in Baltimore and one in Mt. Airy.

Working conditions also are an issue at the Mt. Airy factory, he added.

"We were contacted by many of the workers in the shops, mostly from the Eastern Shore," said Biggs, a Jackson, Miss., resident who has been organizing in Mt. Airy for about three months.

Most complaints against the employer involved what Biggs termed "low wages" and "very poor benefits." He said employees, in many instances, could not afford to pay corporation insurance premiums.

Friday's election will involve about 365 employees statewide, including about 60 employees at the sewing room of the Mt. Airy Shirt Factory, which produces frostproof flannel shirts, he said.

The election will be conducted by agents of the National Labor Relations Board. Results of the secret balloting will be tabulated at 6:30 p.m. Friday at the board's Baltimore office, said Biggs.

To be accepted, the union must garner a simple majority – 51 percent – of votes cast by employees.

The union's New York attorney also is investigating to determine if the corporation violated the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act by allegedly not notifying employees about the corporation's pension plan, not giving employees handbooks and not informing them of their rights under the act, said Biggs.

Rombro Brothers of Baltimore has two sewing rooms in Wicomico County on the Eastern Shore, in Delmar, a small town on the Maryland-Delaware line, and in Powellville, a crossroads town about 12 miles east of Salisbury. The corporation also operates a cutting and shipping department in Baltimore, where the corporation pays benefits, said Biggs.

While representing garment workers in "big suit factories" around the nation, the union also represents employees at Londontown Corp. in Eldersburg and J. Schoeneman Inc. in Owings Mills, he said.

If the union is voted in, it would become certified by the federal government to be a bargaining agent "in the matter of wages, hours and working conditions," he said.

The Mt. Airy factory employs mostly women. Biggs said "the big majority" of Mt. Airy employees signed union cards – application for union membership – during the first days union organizers approached employees.

The NLRB requires more than 30 percent of the employees to sign union cards and a petition before an election can be held.

Biggs called the chances "excellent" that the union will be voted in.

Max Rombro, president and owner of the corporation, said he would reserve most of his comment for next Monday, after the election. "We're fighting the union very strongly. Our lawyers made speeches up there. We think we have the girls on our side. We have helped the economy of Mt. Airy. They have to realize the economical thing it's going to bring to Mt. Airy," Rombro said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

The factory, a white, inconspicuous building on Center Street, initially operated from 1938 until about three years ago as a work pants factory.

Sharlene Etzler of Union Bridge, who has worked for three years at the Mt. Airy factory, said yesterday she knew how she would vote Friday, but was keeping it to herself, as many other employees were doing.

"I don't really support it," she said. "A lot of places have gone out of business where the union was. If you don't give, you go out on strike, and the employees suffer and the company suffers." She said union organizers visited her at home.

September 28, 1985, The Evening Sun, Hanover Pennsylvania

Fire log

Mount Airy, New Market (Frederick Co), 7:36 a.m., automatic fire alarm, Mount Airy Pants Factory, 202 Center Street, out 14 minutes.

SOME MEMORIES ABOUT THE PANTS FACTORY AS TOLD BY PEOPLE WHO WORKED THERE OR WORKED NEARBY.

Many had family members that worked there the same time they did. Mothers, daughters, sons, aunt, uncles, grandparents, etc.

A few couples met at the sewing factory, fell in love, and got married. There was also some matchmaking.

Formaldehyde was sprayed on newly made clothing and baked in ovens to help prevent wrinkling. (according to Betty Loy Hunt)

On pay days, the local bank had to be ready for the "rush" at the factory's lunch break. The people who worked at the bank knew the factory workers had limited time to get their checks cashed and have some time for a quick bite to eat. The bank employees would see the workers, through the bank's windows, "almost running" down Center Street heading for the bank on the corner of Main and Prospect. (according to Pat Norwood)

Many of the employees of the Pant's Factory brought their own lunch or went to Myers' Drug Store and sat at the counter for lunch.

Some of the ladies did not drive, so some walked to work, some got rides from others who did drive, and some even rode the B&O passenger train from Watersville to the Mt. Airy Station and walked to work from there.

The Pant's Factory employed mostly women, however, there were a few men who worked there. At its peak, close to 100 employees worked at the factory.

There were three locations of the Pant's Factory. Prospect Road behind the bank which opened in October 1921, Wildwood Park after the factory burnt to the ground in 1947, and the final location was Center Street where the Mt. Airy Police Department is currently located.

The lunch counters at both the restaurant and drug store had their "regulars". Ruby Kimble, Dorothy Bridges, or Stella Alder would get everything made and at noon the whistle would blow at the sewing factory up Center Street. The sewing factory ladies would hurry down the hill and line the lunch counter for a sandwich, soup and a coke. No time for small talk as they went off to the bank or whatever else needed tending to in their hour lunch break before the whistle blew again! This routine was the same every day of the week at Myers Drug Store. They were hard working ladies! (as remembered by Mary Lynn Myers Kuhn)

I am glad you are doing the history of the Mt. Airy Pants Factory. My grandmother, Julia Fleming worked there when she was a young lady. She subsequently lived in Ridgeville and worked with her husband Gaver Fleming in the nursery/landscaping business and remained a resident of Mt. Airy for the rest of her days.

I remember her telling me stories of how she enjoyed talking to the other ladies working at the Mt. Airy Pants Factory (she referred to it as the Sewing Factory). She did not drive but boarded the train at Watersville and then disembarked at the Mt. Airy train station for her commute to and from work.

Julia Marie Fleming (nee Speis) was born in Harford County Sept. 29, 1901 and passed in Mt. Airy on May 1, 1983. She is buried with her husband Gaver Edward Fleming (Jan. 23, 1901 - Dec. 4, 1968) in the historic Pine Grove Chapel cemetery. (Later confirmed Julia's actual date of birth was Sept. 13, 1901).

Julia's parents and brother died during the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic and her siblings were split up. Julia was sent to Watersville to live with her uncle and aunt, Harry and Julia Brown. She helped them at their store and later worked at the Mt. Airy Pants (Sewing) Factory. Julia boarded the train at Watersville for her commute to the Mt. Airy Train station for her job at the Sewing Factory. She would talk about how hard she and the other girls worked and how much she enjoyed conversation with them at their lunch time. Julia married Gaver Fleming, who was born at Plane No 4. Gaver worked for Ridgeville Nursery. They lived in Ridgeville near the stone mile marker that states 32 miles to Baltimore (marker is still standing and has been recognized with a nearby informational sign). Gaver later had a small nursery at their home where Julia worked with him. Their home was located near where Starbucks in the Mt. Airy Shopping Center is now located in 2021. Their house was purchased by realtor Pee Wee Sherman and moved to Merridale Gardens, where it still stands today (with additions) on Flower Avenue.

Joanne Davis (nee Grimes)

Mt. Airy

I read your article in the *Mt. Airy Messenger* concerning the "pants factory". My grandparents and mother worked there when I was a kid. I remember going to Wildwood Park to pick up my grandparents at the end of the day. My grandparents stopped working there in the early 1950's. My mother worked at the Center

Street factory until the mid-sixties. I can remember that she would come home sometimes with band-aids on her fingers from where she had run a sewing machine needle through them. I also remember pictures of the entire factory workforce taken in front of their building on Center Street. Unfortunately, I don't have any of those pictures. I worked there briefly in the mid-sixties. I think it was on Thursday evenings a truck load of material would arrive and I would help unload it. I'm looking forward to your display at the museum in October.

Skip Isaacs

Mt. Airy, MD

Doris, has anyone mentioned a bus going to Woobine (or other locations) to give transportation to women for work at the factory? Ralph Banks' granddaughter thinks she has a photo of him riding on a bus, and I'm wondering if he drove the bus to Woodbine. (Nancy Norwood)

A bit about Ralph Louis Banks.

He was born in 1905, on the Eastern Shore, Wicomico County, son of Lewis and Ella Banks. In 1920, his older brother, Willard, worked as a laborer at the shirt factory. In 1930, Ralph and Elizabeth McGrath Banks were newly married and living in Cambridge. He worked as a sewing machine machinist and Elizabeth as a seamstress at the shirt factory. Before the 1940 census, he and Elizabeth lived in Baltimore. In 1940, Ralph and Elizabeth and their son, Ralph Jr., lived on South Main St (Frederick County). He was foreman at the pants factory. I have not found death dates for Ralph or Elizabeth. (information provided by Nancy Norwood)

Information below was taken from 1940 Census researched and provided by Nancy Norwood:

Ralph L Banks, 35, ~1905, husband of Elizabeth G, father of Ralph L Jr, 3; foreman at pants factory.

Hattie R Norwood, 36, 1903, seamstress at clothing factory, mother of Charles K. 14. and Margaret J.

Della Becroft/Becraft, 45, ~1895, niece of India Smith, mother of Ruth E Beacraft, 16; [1930: wife of Gilmore, mother of Earl L, Mary V, Ruth I, not working 1930]; examiner at sewing factory

Effie Scheller, 54, ~1886, wife of William C Scheller, seamstress at pants factory

Laura Brown, 31, ~1909, widow, mother of George R, 5, and Done B, 2; Operator of serging machine at pants factory.

Anna M Esworthy, 39, ~1901, wife of John R Esworthy, 43; seamstress at pants factory

Isabel Winebrenner, 24, ~1916, granddaughter of Grafton Harrison, 74, ?Fred Curtis, 11; seamstress at pants factory

Anna Brady, 38, ~1902, widow, daughter of Clinton, 70, and Elizabeth, 70, ~1870 Rinkle; seamstress at shirt factory.

John Boulie, 40, ~1900, widower, laborer at clothing factory

Evelyn Magers, 49, ~1891, wife of Howard Magers, 49, mother of Howard Jr, 18; operator in sewing at clothing factory.

Howard Magers, Jr, 18, ~1922; son of Howard and Evelyn Magers; clothing presser at clothing factory.

Emma Snowden, 26, ~1914, wife of Gilbert Snowden, 33, ~1907, mother of Shirley, 6, ~1934; seamstress at clothing factory.

Paul Frizzell, 24, ~1916, husband of Ruth Frizzell, 21, ~1919; laborer at clothing factory.

Ruth Frizzell, 21, ~1919, wife of Paul Frizzell, 24, ~1916; seamstress at clothing factory.

Addie Porter, 34, ~1906, wife of Elmer Porter, 35, ~1905, mother of William, 15, ~1925 and Dorothy, 12, ~1928; seamstress at clothing factory.

Irene Unglesbee, 23, ~1917, wife of Ralph Unglesbee, 20, ~1920; illegible (seamstress at stocking factory).

Florrie Gilbert, 37, ~1903, wife of Lewis F Gilbert, 44, ~1896, mother of Lewis Jr, 17, ~1923; seamstress at clothing factory.

Beulah Morgan, 27, ~1913 widow, mother of Hammond, 8, ~1932,; seamstress at clothing factor

George E. Main, 45, ~1895, husband of Ada Main, 42, ~1898, father of George, 18, ~1922; pressman at pants factory.

Margaret Spencer, 52, ~1888, wife of John W Spencer, 62, ~1878, mother of Paul Spencer, 18, ~ 1922; seamstress at pants factory.

Paul Spencer, 18, ~1922, son of John W and Margaret Spencer; pressman at pants factory.

Florence Driver, 34, ~1906, wife of William Driver, 34, ~1906, mother of Hattie, 16, ~ 1924; seamstress at pants factory.

Interview with Ben Gue on February 24, 2021

Ben had a lot of relatives working at the Pants Factory in Mt. Airy. Ben's grandmother, Ann Rhinecker, worked there 47 years and his other grandma, Rose Brown, worked there about 40 years. Ben's uncle, Leo Thomas, was the floor manager and Ben's step father worked at the factory and there were only a few men who worked at the factory. When Ben was a kid, he and his brothers, would help load the bundles of pants wrapped in brown paper onto the tractor trailer to take to Baltimore. His mother worked at the factory before her children were born and then went back in the late 60s. Ben started working at the Mt. Airy Pants Factory at the age of 15 ½ (with a work permit) in the summer of 1969. Grandmother Rhinecker asked Ben to come to work because the boy who numbered the pants legs quit and the boss was asking if anyone knew of someone who would number the pants. Ben was only suppose to work through the summer, however, he never went back to school. He stayed and worked at the factory for about 2 ½ years. Ben ended up doing just about every job there was at the factory. He made \$1.40 an hour when he started. Some time later he was using a machine to put the slides on the zippers and he would get 3 cents extra per dozen after the 135 dozen quota.

There were fans but no AC in the summer and not much heat in the winter. With all the machines in the factory and the oven for the permanent press, it got hot in the building even in the winter. One of the ladies would say, "Open the window from the top a little to let some air in." Another woman would say, "There is cold air on my neck, close that window!" Ben shared a story of one of the ladies that had jumped up on her

sewing table and screamed because a snake had come into the building. Ben's Uncle Leo used the big machete that he cut the belt loops with to kill the snake and throw it out the window.

In the summer the workers would make corduroy pants for men and in the winter they made men's white duck pants. Ben recalls that the ducks pants were a pain because of the oil in the machines and the pants were white. There had to be extra steps taken to keep these pants clean such as some working areas were covered with brown paper to keep the pants from getting dirty. Ben worked with over 100 women along with a few men who ran the pressers and the oven. The factory made pants for the longest time, however, the last 10 years or so they ended up making shirts. That is why some called the factory the "shirt factory".

Some of the people Ben Gue remembers working with were Margaret Gue Fritz (Ben's mother), Charles Fritz (Ben's stepfather), Linda Phebus, Mike Gue (Ben's brother), Nadine Magers (Ben's cousin), Lorraine Wolfe, Leo & Rose Thomas (Ben's Uncle & Aunt), Worth White, Eleanor Frizzell, Hattie Norwood, Louise Dayhoff, Ruth Frizzell, Emma Snowden, Eva Summers, Dorothy Gosnell, and Mary Green.

Interview with Nellie Fleming Brown on July 20, 2021

At the time, Nellie lived across from Pine Grove Chapel, S. Main Street, Mt. Airy and she would walk downtown and stop at Smith & Wagners to get something to take for lunch. She then continued to walk to work at the Pants Factory which was behind the First National Bank on N. Main Street. Nellie started to work at the Pants Factory in 1943 until she married Leroy Brown in 1944. The hours were from 7 am to 4 pm. Her sister, Flora, was employed at the factory prior to Nellie being hired. Ralph Banks was her boss and she commented that he was a nice man. Her quota was to bar-tack 18 dozen pair of pants a day and she shared that she made \$18 a week. Nellie is a 1942 graduate of Lisbon High School.

Interview with Betty Loy Hunt on August 31, 2021

Betty worked at the Pants Factory from approximately 1971 to 1977. She met a lot of people and made friends. Many are no longer with us. She remembers the camaraderie. Most people, for the most part, got along. Some of the jobs she had over the years were sewing down waistbands, inseaming, hemming, trimming, and her mother, Alice Loy, who worked at the factory before and after Betty, showed her how to sew in front pockets.

Betty was young enough to stand the heat of the oven so that was one of the jobs she learned as well. Pants were sprayed with formaldehyde and then racks of pants were put into a big oven to bake. This made the pants permanent press.

Some of the people Betty remembers working with were Alice J. Loy (her mother), Louise Frizzell, Mildred Dayhoff, Ruth Magers Frizzell, Nadine Magers, Annie Perry, Alberta Smith, Margaret Fritz, Lillian Sier, Leo Thomas, Rose Thomas, Nancy Thompson, Hollis Pickett, Carlene Henry, Lorraine Wolfe, Eleanor Frizzell, Mary Green, Betty Ann Smith, Florence Driver, Cora Moxley, Ruth Kline, Ben Gue, and Mr. Howard.

Interview with Pat Norwood on September 3, 2021

On pay days, the local bank had to be ready for the "rush" at the factory's lunch break. The people who

worked at the bank knew the factory workers had limited time to get their checks cashed and have some time for a quick bite to eat. One of the bank's employees would see the workers, through the windows, "almost running" down Center Street heading for the bank on the corner of Main and Prospect.

Pat Norwood worked at Farmers and Mechanics Bank on N. Main Street for a long while and she shared a memory of working at the bank on Pants Factory Friday paydays. This would have been in the 1960's and 1970's. Pat spoke of there being a person in the bank that could see the ladies coming down the hill and would alert the rest at the bank, "They are coming." Some of the factory workers (mostly women) would be walking quickly trying to be one of the first ones to the bank to cash their pay checks. A little pushing and shoving here and there coming in the door, as Pat recalls. She does not remember many depositing their check, mostly cashing their checks so it did not take very long for each person. IDs were not required at that time when they did not have an account at the bank and all knew the checks were good therefore things moved pretty quickly. Some of the factory workers would go to Myers Drug Store afterwards for lunch and then back to work. It was a little running joke at the bank of what would take place on factory paydays and the bank tellers had to be prepared to work quickly.

