



BENJAMIN DAWSON HEATH (Photo courtesy of Harry Heath)

Benjamin Dawson Heath of Charlotte, N. C., achieved the success story his illustrious ancestor Sir Robert Heath must have envisioned when he received a large grant of land in the new world from King Charles I. Benjamin Heath started with a minimum of material possessions, but he judiciously employed his business acumen and myriad talents to carve a great textile development in the Carolinas.

Most Carolinians will not remember him so much for his business success, however, as for his many philanthropies. He was particularly interested in his church and left a number of bequests to Carolina Methodists including his church Conference, an orphanage in Winston-Salem, and Duke University.

Many attempts have been made to assess Mr. Heath's contribution to the textile industry, in particular and to the cultural, religious and economic advancement of his state in general, and many tributes have resulted. Perhaps the most penetrating was that of Bishop Kilgo who wrote:

*"In business, politics, education, and the church he was a foremost figure and a leading factor. There was in him a strange compound of seemingly contradictory elements. His hard fibre fitted him for the battle lines, the storms and big burdens, and from them he never flinched and in them he never wavered. But comingled with these hard elements was a modesty, a gentleness, a retiring spirit, and a peculiar light of quietude. His convictions were always deep and unyielding."*

Gilbert Brown Heath represented the second generation of the Heath family as president of Manetta Mills, with plants at Lando, South Carolina and Monroe, North Carolina. He served in this capacity from 1932 until he retired in 1955 to become Chairman of the Board of Directors. He served these mills most efficiently in a business way and was known for the personal interest he took in all of his employees.

Mr. Heath was a man of many interests. He was widely read and took an interest in both civic and church affairs. Heath Memorial Methodist Church, at Lando, claimed him as one of its most valued members, as did Bethel Methodist when he later moved his home to Chester.

Manetta Mills today is being operated by the third and fourth generations of the Heath family. Harry Bascom Heath succeeded his father as president of the firm in 1956 and he has with him now his two sons, Gilbert Allen and William White Heath.<sup>(1)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> Textile Leaders of the South, James R. Young, Publisher, 1963, pp. 93, 95.



GILBERT BROWN HEATH (Photo courtesy of Harry Heath)



HARRY BASCOM HEATH (Photo courtesy of Harry Heath)

## The Heaths

By: Harry Bascom Heath

A lot of water has passed under Fishing Creek Bridge since my grand-father, Benjamin Dawson Heath, bought the Lewisville Mill in 1886. There have been good times and bad, but the mill has been in continuous operation since then and is now being operated by the fourth generation of the Heath family. Ninety years is a long time, but Lando's history goes back much farther than that.

Lando was settled before the Revolutionary War days and was called "White's Mill" for the grist mill that was situated on the creek. After the surrender of Charlestown in 1780, the British set up military posts across the Piedmont and Col. Christian Huck, with 200 British regulars, a hundred Dragons and about 500 Tories, established a post at White's Mill. It became a traveling stop for the Britishers traveling in this area. The old-timers said that Cornwallis spent one night here. It must have been true, as the house in which he supposedly slept was thereafter referred to as "The Cornwallis House".

When the post fell to American troops, the town took the name of Eave's Mill to honor a colonial commander.

Almost a century had passed when a group of men, with F. H. Barber as president, bought the grist mill and surrounding land to organize the Fishing Creek Manufacturing Co. Early in 1894 this company declared bankruptcy and the mill put up for sale. Mr. Barber bought it and the name was changed to Lewisville Mills. Four years later, Mr. Barber sold his holdings to my grand-father and Manetta Mills was established.

I don't know the date of the name changing for the first conductor and superintendent of the Seaboard Railroad which ran from Edgemoor to Fishing Creek. They were Captains Lane and Dodson – hence, Lan-Do.

Now, to get back to our connection with Lando. My grand-father, B. D. Heath, was born in Lancaster County on July 26, 1849. He was married to Mary Wilson in 1870 and they were the parents of nine children. My father was one of

them. After her death in 1892, he later married Miss Nettie Morgan Haley of Columbia, Tenn. Seven children were born of this marriage.

My grand-father was a Charlotte business man. Although he never lived in Lando, he made regular trips here and personally supervised the first phases of both the mill and the community. Since he and his wife were natives of Lancaster County, later lived in Union and Mecklenburg Counties in North Carolina, it was only natural that some of the first employees of the mill came from these counties. As they came, additional houses were built to accommodate them. As the mill expanded, so did the size of the village.

Just as the name "Lando" was coined from two names, so was "Manetta". My grand-father's two wives were Mary and Nettie, therefore Ma-netta.

From the time the mill was bought in 1886 it was a yarn mill only. Then in 1904 an addition was made, looms were installed and the first weaving began. The first blankets woven were in three colors only – white, gray and tan. They were packed for shipment in wooden veneer cases – 100 double bed sizes or 200 singles per case. These cases were discontinued in 1950 and the present day cardboard containers were adopted.

In 1919, after my grand-father's death, his son Bascom became the new president of the mill. Although he never moved to Lando from Charlotte, he was responsible for further additions to the mill. The three-story section was extended on the creekside to double the floor space. Wool equipment was installed in this section about 1926 and the first part-wool blankets were made. They were discontinued in 1960 with the advent of synthetics, as there was little demand for cotton and wool mixtures.

It was during Uncle Bascom's time that the present store – office building and the schoolhouse were erected. The new school was considered one of the finest in the county.

It was also during this era that the churches were expanded.

The first church at Lando was built sometime between 1882 and 1890. It was a Presbyterian Church, but Union Services were held there for all the people in the area. I am not sure when the Methodist took it over, but they used it until they decided to dismantle the wooden structure and build a new one in 1927. While the present Heath Memorial Church was being built, the Methodists held services in the schoolhouse.

The first Baptist Church, (now the Church of God), was built in 1910. The Sunday School rooms were added in 1927. The present church was finished in 1957 and the first service held on Easter Sunday.

The Church of God was established in Lando in a small building near the present Youth Center. They later built a church near Tadlock's Store which was used until they acquired and renovated the church vacated by the Baptists in 1957.

After Uncle Bascom's death in 1932, my father, Gilbert Brown Heath took over the operation of the mill. He served in this capacity from 1932 until he retired in 1955 to become Chairman of the Board of Directors.

My father was born in Union County, North Carolina on February 22, 1886. At the age of five, he moved to Charlotte with his parents. After he was graduated from Trinity College (now Duke University), he came to Lando to work with his father. He worked in the mill for a time and then took over the operation of the store and Post Office. It was here that he met and married my mother, Lela Estelle Miller, daughter of C. F. C. and Josephine Miller from Cabarrus County, North Carolina in 1910. I was the first of their four children. The others were: Genola (Mrs. H. E. Hall of Chester); Mary Miller (Mrs. K. D. Harris of Lancaster, deceased) and Gilbert Brown, Jr. of Lancaster, deceased.



CROSSING THE FERRY TO MONROE, l. to r.: Lela, Harry, Genola, and Gilbert Heath and the ferryman. (Photo courtesy of Myrt Long)

My father was a man of many interests. He was serious about his responsibility of running the mills and was genuinely interested in the welfare of all the employees. He was just as serious about enjoying himself after business hours. He loved reading, sports, trips, his friends and especially jokes, which were usually at the expense of his friends or children. He told so many stories about his early days here, that I felt I was personally a part of it all. One of his favorite stories was about a Fourth of July picnic which ended in disaster when one of the foremen, (who had had a little too much to drink), fell into a tub of lemonade. That one always made him laugh.

I feel that I was very fortunate in being able to draw on my father's experience and knowledge of textile manufacturing. He was always ready and willing to discuss any problem that came up. Believe me, when I started working here full time in 1934, we were in the middle of the depression and there were plenty of problems.

When I was old enough to push a broom I started working in the mill during summer vacations. Since then I have worked in every department and frankly liked them all. After finishing school, I worked full time in the cloth room. During the summer of 1935 I took on two new responsibilities. I was made second-hand in the clothroom and married Susie White of Chester. We lived in the house across the street from the store, where Helen and Homer Miller now live. Wages were at an all-time low during this period, but the young people in



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Lando had a good time in spite of not much money. There were always good baseball games for summer afternoons, as we had one of the best teams in the area. Since all the boys were good hunters and loved to fish, we got together on weekends for quail and fish dinners. We ate well even though we didn't have any luxuries.

Our two boys were born while we were living here. Gilbert Allen (who was made president of the mills in 2-13-74) and William White (manager of Manetta Mills in Monroe, N. C.). Our daughter Harriet (Mrs. Rufus N. Ferguson of Charlotte) was born after we moved to Chester.

Lando has always been and will remain a very special place for me. I am proud to have been born here. The mill has been my challenge during my entire life and the people continue to be my friends and teachers. I could have accomplished nothing without them. I take special pride in the fact that I am still "Harry" to all the old-timers. I think that says something about our mutual trust and esteem. ■



HARRY HEATH: "I take special pride in the fact that I'm still 'Harry' to all the old-timers."