

CLINTON
MILLS

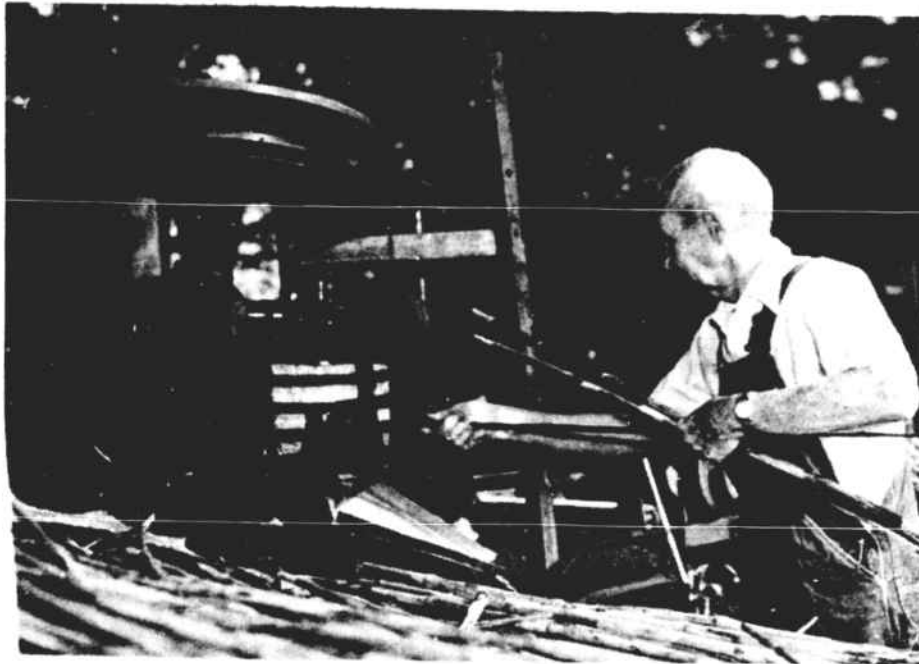
Superior Quality Fabrics

CLOTHMAKER

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"Cane syrup goes natural with
fist size biscuits."

—MAC CUNNINGHAM

"A truck load of cane yields
about three gallons of syrup."

—LESTER IVESTER



It's Fall At Clinton Mills

The hint of fall's first frost this year has inspired a generations old ritual among Mac Leese Cunningham and his nephew, James Compton, and neighbor, Lester Ivester, a retired Clinton Mills Old Timer. The ritual - of course - is making cane syrup.

James Compton planted an acre of sugar cane, and the men have watched it flourish during the summer, and as fall approached, Compton and Cunningham chopped the cane and stripped off its leaves and seeds in preparation for extracting the sweet cane juice.

The operation has drawn friends, neighbors, and others from miles around to watch the grinding operation and swap stories about yesteryear.

The Comptons set the mill up at Sam Compton's Sales and Service just off Highway 308.

"But it was James' idea to start the mill again," noted Sam. The mill was originally owned by G.W. Cunningham, grandfather of the Compton brothers.

The cane mill which is mounted on a pre-1900 International Harvester tractor frame cranks out juice as the stalks are hand fed into the machine.

In past years a mule was used to power the mill, but this year the Comptons and Cunninghams rigged up a gasoline engine and utilizing a series of belts and pulleys smashed out a truck load of sugar cane in a matter of hours.

"It takes about 10 gallons of juice to make a gallon of syrup," says Cunningham, who is a Plant No. 2 Weaving employee.

"After the cane juice is squeezed out, it is taken to an evaporator which is a long sectioned, boiling vat that the syrup will eventually come from," says Cunningham.

"The evaporator is located at my nephew James' house," he continued.

The cane juice is cooked for several hours as someone works the juice around in the vat with a wooden block with a cloth wrapped around it. This prevents any sticking or scorching.

A truck load of cane makes about 30 gallons of juice, and this will yield about three gallons of syrup.

The juice must be prepared for the right amount of time, until it is thick and dark. It is constantly stirred and skimmed at times to remove a bubbling froth of impurities.

Once cooked, it is strained, cooled, and poured into containers for use later.

"The thick, dark syrup just goes natural with fist size biscuits and butter," says Cunningham.

"It's a hard job and most young people aren't too interested in the operation, but it's well worth the effort when it comes to eating," he added.