



TEXTILE HISTORY

Textile creating was not easy; producing the raw materials and then manufacturing them into the finished goods was a long and difficult task. After the textiles were made, they needed to be dyed for lasting appeal. Dyes were difficult to find and store; extracting the desired color was a long process. Colonists also had to learn how to impart the colors to the cloth, distinguish what colors would remain "fast," and determine which would hold to the linen, wool, or cotton.

The first fabrics used in this country were chiefly from England and were brought over by the early settlers. There is not a great deal of American evidence concerning fabrics other than family traditions. While France is rich in records of her textile industries, England is almost poor, and America destitute. Nothing has been found in America that equals the factory pattern books of the Peel Works in England.

Little is known about the true beginning of spinning and weaving, although we have always been taught that "when Adam delved, Eve spun." As the colonists were building their America, the textile industry was in full force in Europe. It had become a highly refined industry. The colonies would have to learn and refine the trade for themselves.

The materials woven on the early domestic looms, and later on the power driven factory looms, were used for all types of woven apparel and household necessities. The designs of these fabrics varied. Some were plain; others were figured. These basic or staple fabrics were treasured and were used for one or more purposes, first for clothing and then for quilt tops. The most common types of cotton fabrics found in early America were chintz, homespun, broadcloth, muslin, and percale.

By 1940, American manufacturers had reached the point of producing beautiful and desirable printed cotton. As a result of this, more attractive clothing and bedcovers could be made. From this point on, the colors, fabrics, and patterns improved and production increased. Fabrics were subject to availability because of the transportation of the goods or economic status of the buyer.

COTTON

Cotton is durable, dyes beautifully, and has a soft hand; it is easy to cut, sew, mark, press, and work with. Cotton holds its shape well and is available in a wide range of colors and printed designs.

In America, Columbus not only found cotton growing, but he also found cloth that had already been hand woven by the Native Americans. Cotton grew in abundance in Virginia, but it did not become important as a commodity until after the American Revolution. There were two reasons for this: the first was the discouragement by England of any cotton industry that would compete with their own, and the second was that there was no way of removing the seeds from the cotton boll.



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Cotton is a plant of the hollyhock family, with a fluffy seed pod called the "boll." It was first used as a decorative plant in the Americas. The best cotton we know today has a long fiber and is known as "Sea Island Cotton" because it is grown on the islands off the coast of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. It is generally accepted that next to Sea Island Cotton, Egyptian cotton has the greatest value. Marco Polo gave an early account of cotton as a vegetable wool growing on trees. He pictured them with sheep heads on the ends of the branches.

The fine cotton calicoes and chintz had to be imported from England until the nineteenth century. All scraps left after dressmaking were prized, preserved, and stitched together to make a new piece of cloth or a quilt top. Until the Industrial Revolution in the latter part of the 19th century, there was never enough cloth to make all that was wanted.

LINEN

In the past, linen was a common commodity. Then it was rarely used for a number of years because of the fact that it takes 16 months from the time of planting to the weaving of the fabric. However, linen has made a large comeback in the fashion industry in the last few years. Linen is durable but does not wear well due to the abrasion that occurs.

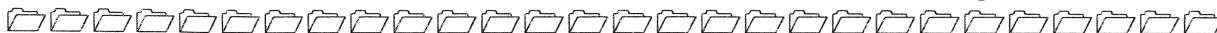
WOOL

Wool is a valuable and serviceable fabric. Even if it is patched several times, it gives lasting use. In early America, the woolen quilts were referred to as linsey-woolseys. This folk term goes back to English references in the 16th century and it refers to the coarse utility fabric combining a linen warp and wool weft. It was most suitable for winter hangings and upholstery. It was imported by the Hudson Bay Company and used for trade with the Indians. Most of the worsted and linsey-woolsey quilts were of one color and finely quilted. Such monochromatic creations were probably more popular in their day because they could add a sense of formality and magnificence to the bed coverings.

Woolen cloth, linsey-woolsey, and homespun (cotton) cloth were the only fabrics available to the early Americans, and they took a long time to manufacture. They were colored with indigo and natural dyes.

SILK

Silk had been around the Orient for centuries but was rarely used in early America because of its delicate nature and expense. It was sought out for its beauty and used primarily for elegant clothing.



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)SYNTHETIC FIBERS (MANUFACTURED

Without the synthetic fibers that chemists have created this century, we could not clothe the world to the extent that we do today. For the first time, fibers are actually made of materials that have no relation to natural fibers. Petroleum, natural gas, water, air, and even such things as corncobs are the raw materials of synthetic fibers. It took years of research and untold amounts of money to develop and market these fibers.

Synthetic fibers are produced in the laboratory; they are manufactured fibers. Raw materials are first made into a solution. Long filaments are formed by forcing the solution through a spinneret. These filaments can be left long or chopped into shorter lengths and spun like the natural fibers. The chemical solution from which a manufactured fiber is made may include additives to dull the fiber, to dye it, or to add other properties.

The great explosion of these synthetic fibers has occurred since the 1930s.

<u>Fiber</u>	<u>Year</u>
Nylon	1939
Modacrylic	1949
Acrylic	1950
Polyester	1953
Spandex	1959

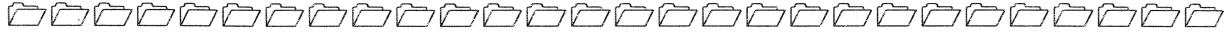
When producing the yarn, different types of fibers can be blended together, or the yarn can be from a single fiber source. The yarn can be twisted very tightly in the spinning process to give a pebbly or crepe-like surface to the fabric later. It can be crimped to add a spring-back characteristic or textured in other ways.

MAN-MADE FIBERS (MANUFACTURED)

Man-made fibers include those known as "cellulose" fibers. Wood pulp is the main source of cellulose fibers and the generic names of these fibers are rayon and acetate. Basically, these are natural fibers that have been chemically altered enough to produce a totally different type of fiber. Rayon was the first of these fibers to be developed in 1910, and later, acetate was developed. Both of these fibers are used extensively today.

TRADE NAMES

The first synthetic fiber was named nylon. It became such a household word that nylon is now the generic or family name of the fiber. We even refer to women's hosiery as nylons, since it has nearly replaced all the other fibers used in this product. There have been numerous variations and improvements to this fiber.



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Companies use their own trade names for synthetic fibers. A trade name identifies the product as belonging to a specific company. Great consumer confusion existed when companies began manufacturing similar fibers under their own trade names. An advertisement for a garment might list only the trade name. People thought different trade names, such as Orlon and Acrilan, were totally different fibers, instead of members of the acrylic family.

TEXTILE HISTORY

The history of textiles is ancient. No one knows for sure when the first cloth or fabric was discovered by man. Early man needed protection from the elements, so they needed fabric from which to make articles of clothing to protect their bodies from the extremes of temperature and various forms of precipitation.

A historical timeline for textile production is provided on the following page.