

**MILL WORKERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:
LEWISTON-AUBURN, MAINE**

Ann Bousquet
(Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu)

MWOH# 021
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Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the Mill Workers Oral History project. The date is February 9th, 2006. Today I'm interviewing Ann Bousquet at her home on Central Avenue in Lewiston, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start just by giving me your full name?

Ann Bousquet: Ann Bousquet.

AL: And your maiden name?

AB: Was Ann Lajoie.

AL: And when were you born?

AB: In Lewiston.

AL: And the date?

AB: Date was July 29, 1913.

AL: And did you grow up in the Lewiston area?

AB: Yes, all my life.

AL: Were your parents from here as well?

AB: They were from the northern part of Maine, and they came to Lewiston.

AL: Aroostook County?

AB: Yes.

AL: And they came to Lewiston after they were married?

AB: Yes.

AL: So what was Lewiston like when you were growing up, in the '20s and '30s?

AB: Well, kind of hard to remember. Such a long time ago.

AL: Lisbon Street was a lot different, wasn't it?

AB: Oh yes, we used to go walking on Lisbon Street, and the traffic both ways was better than today.

AL: And there were, was there a lot of shopping?

AB: Yes, stores were all lined up on Lisbon Street.

AL: And did either of your parents work in the mill?

AB: No, my father was, worked in a shoe shop.

AL: Yeah, the shoe shops were thriving at that time, too, weren't they.

AB: Yes, they were.

AL: Which shoe shop did he work in?

AB: He worked at Clark Shoe, I remember the last one, and Cushman (*unintelligible word*).

AL: Did your mum work outside of the home, or was she a homemaker?

AB: She was a homemaker.

AL: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

AB: I was the oldest of nine children.

AL: Nine.

AB: Yes, I have two brothers and six sisters.

AL: What was it like growing up in a family that big, you being the oldest?

AB: I was the oldest and, well, we all helped one another.

AL: Yeah, you must have had siblings that you helped your mom with?

AB: Oh yes.

AL: That were much younger.

AB: Especially the youngest.

AL: Quite a few years younger than you?

AB: Twelve years, yes, twelve years. We were pretty close, one every year almost.

AL: And how did you decide to go to the mill to work?

AB: Well, after I was married I had a sister that worked in the office and I needed to be out, because inside the house was always too much to do. Decided to work on second shift and to help out, and my husband stayed at, was home at night with the, I had four girls, and so it made out, worked out good that way for us.

AL: Did your husband work in the mill, too?

AB: No, he worked in a shoe shop. He was a hand sewer.

AL: So did you go into the mill and start out as a stitcher, or did you begin with something else?

AB: No, I started as a spot cleaner, and then I worked on inspection, and then when there was an opening for stitcher I applied and started to stitch.

AL: Did it pay better than the other job?

AB: Well, it was piece work, and so, you know, hoping to do my minimum anyways.

AL: And what year did you start working at the mill?

AB: I started in I think it was '57, and then worked a few years and then I was laid off, and then I went to work at Raytheon and worked there for a few years. And then when they closed, then I went back to the Bates Mill and that's where I stayed after, for seventeen years.

AL: Were you able to have time to make friends with people you worked with?

AB: Oh yes, we had some friends, people we worked with. We had, you know, sometimes we had little parties, even there, during the holidays, our birthdays.

AL: And I understand there was like a bowling league at one time. Was that something you participated in?

AB: No, I didn't take part in that.

AL: When you were at the mill, what were your supervisors like?

AB: It was okay, I mean I had no problem with any of them. Always treated me fairly.

AL: And can you talk about the stitching and the piece work, and what sort of, like a typical day would have been like?

AB: Well, stitching, I was a fringe stitcher, I stitched the fringe. It's kind of hard to explain, you know, you have a roll of fringe and you (*unintelligible word*), you know.

AL: When you were doing the stitching, did your job and how much, how fast you could go or how much you could get done depend on others that you worked with?

AB: No.

AL: It was pretty much individual?

AB: Yes, yes. Because I was stitching, and then it would go in to be washed, so it wasn't like you stitch and they fold it.

AL: So you stitch, and then it goes to the next process?

AB: Yes.

AL: Were you there during any of the strikes?

AB: No, I wasn't, I wasn't. I went after they had the strike.

AL: And the union was there at the time.

AB: The union was there.

AL: Did you ever get involved with the union at all?

AB: No, no. I just worked and came home and take care of my family.

AL: And you said you worked second shift?

AB: Second shift, and then after a while I had a chance to go on third shift and I went on the third shift. At that time, well, my children were all married and I could be at home with my husband at night.

AL: Were there any people you worked with, in terms of co-workers or managers, that you remember, that stick out in your mind? Their personalities, or?

AB: Not too many.

AL: Because I can only interview people that are still living, and so I like to ask if there are some who have passed away that you can recall working with. And it said in my notes that you also worked on the steam table?

AB: Yes, that was the first, the beginning.

AL: Oh, that was the first.

AB: The spot cleaning, that was the steam table. And then I did some inspection, and then I did some folding, and then I went into stitching.

AL: Did you see the mill change at all over the years that you were there?

AB: Oh yes, there was always some changes for the better.

AL: Can you give me examples of what sort of things changed?

AB: Well, the way everything was moving, you know, from one operation to the other. Everything was made so it would go easier and better.

AL: Did the equipment change as well?

AB: Not that much, not that much considering that it's been twenty five years now that I've been gone, you know, from stitching.

AL: Is there anything about the mills that you remember that you want to add that I haven't asked you about, that you remember from those days?

AB: No, not that much.

AL: Thank you very much.

AB: Oh, you're welcome.

End of Interview