

Stella Barbara Petchark Wheeler 1913-2014

My mother Stella B. Petchark Wheeler lived in Clinton, MA, the oldest of three children, born to immigrant parents from Poland. At the age of 16 she went to work in the Lancaster Mills to help support the family. Her name along with her family members appears on the 1930 census of Clinton, MA as working in the cotton mill. Her name appears as Statia Pietrzak, which is the Polish spelling of her name. Later she would change it to Stella Petchark.

[Catalog Record](#)

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Lancaster Mills was a cotton textile manufacturer in Clinton, Massachusetts, that also controlled several other cotton mills in Massachusetts. The collection is notable for a long run of payroll records from 1852 to 1913. In 1852, the vast majority of over 400 weavers and 200 spoolers were women. Women also worked in carding, frame spinning, reeling, quilling, and warping rooms. In addition, they were present in the mule spinning department, usually an exclusively male occupation.

Accident reports from 1893 to 1905 contain considerable information about the physical tasks included in various job descriptions, as well as the name, age, occupation, nationality, marital status, ability to speak English, and wages of each injured worker.

Twentieth century records contain many women's names and addresses in stockholder lists from 1927 to 1931 and the appearance of two women in the administrative offices of the mill, including Miss Barbara Hammond, a secretary who earned \$125 a month in 1925.

Lancaster Mills Clinton, MA



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When the family moved to New London, CT, again my mother sought employment in the mill. She was a machine operator at Max Pollack and Company thread mill on Poquonnock Rd, Groton, CT. It operated from 1920 to 1958, Max Pollock spun heavy thread for sewing baseball equipment and automobile upholstery. They also made regular sewing thread. The building has been torn down and is now a vacant lot.

My mother was able to save enough money from working at the mill to put herself through Hairdressing School. She attended the New London Academy of Hairdressing and worked in the New London area as a hairdresser and later as a manicurist until her retirement.

*Max Pollock Thread Mill
Groton, CT*

