

The Factory System

(Source unknown)

As trade and business grew, it became necessary to change the way goods were made. In order to see how goods were made in the 1600s and 1700s, let us look at the wool industry in England.

The first step in making wool cloth was to clip the wool from the sheep. Then the wool was sold to the *factor*, or middle man. The factor brought the wool to a group of people who would card, or comb, it. Next, the factor took the wool to other people who would dye it.

The factor then brought the wool to a farmer's house. The farmer's wife or daughter would spin the wool into thread on the family spinning machine. Spinning was thought to be a man's work because the hands of the spinners had to be smooth. There were few smooth hands in farm families, but women's hands were thought to be the best for the job. Also, unmarried women in a household were given the job of spinning. Hence, the development of the word "spinster" to describe an unmarried woman.

When the wool had been spun into thread, the factor returned. He then took the thread to another farm family that owned a small weaving machine. In their spare time, this family would weave the thread into cloth. Finally, the factor picked up the finished cloth and brought it into town. There he sold it to a *clothier* who used it to make clothing.

All this carrying between farmers, carders, spinners, weavers, and clothiers was a big bother. It was also an expensive way to make cloth. This system of production was called the *domestic* system. The word "domestic" means having to do with things in the home. The domestic system got its name because much of the work was done in people's homes.

By the 1700s, this way of making cloth began to change. Now factors rented or built large buildings near fast running streams. In the buildings were machines that could card, dye, spin, and weave cloth. The nearby streams provided waterpower for the machines. The factors then hired workers who would be paid to run the machines.

With this new arrangement all production was brought under a single roof. These new buildings, called *factories*, became the center of England's wool industry.



Review:

1. Define the following terms:

Factor:

Spinner:

Spinster:

Clothier:

Domestic System:

Factories:

2. List the steps required to make wool below.
3. Why would a factory system be more efficient (require less effort to make the same amount)? Explain why in a 5-7 sentence paragraph below and on the back.