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MILL LIFE

In 2007, UNC historian Robert Allen stumbled upon photographs at the Library of Congress of child workers at the Loray (cotton) Mill in Gastonia, N.C. The photographs were taken in 1908 by Lewis W. Hine, who was investigating child labor conditions in the U.S. Hines wrote about the boys and girls (pictured above in two photographs): "Smallest boy on the right hand end, John Moore. 13 years old. Been in the mill 6 years as sweeper, doffer and spinner" and "Oldest girl, Minnie Carpenter. Spinner. Makes fifty cents a day for 10 hours. Younger girl works irregularly."

Allen, the James Logan Godfrey Professor in American studies, history and communication studies, is a native of Gastonia. His grandmother worked in the cotton mill as a child, and his grandfather lived on the same street as several of Hine's subjects in 1908. He uses the photographs in his First Year Seminar on the history of the family. He has tracked down descendants of a number of the children in Hines' Gastonia photographs, including the great-nephew of Minnie Carpenter. In November, Allen will participate in a centennial commemoration and exhibition of the photographs in partnership with the Gaston Public Library and the Gaston County Museum of Art and History. To search for more photos in the collection, visit <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/nclquery.html> and type in "Gastonia." Contact Allen if you know more about the subjects in the photos at (919) 962-5165, robert_allen@unc.edu.