

Survey Studies Textile Trends

THE SURVEY conducted by the Ontario Department of Agriculture, Home Economics Service and the Rural Sociology Unit of the Canada Department of Agriculture, to study farm homes and homemakers, has brought to light some interesting information on the Ontario rural homemaker's experience and interests in the field of textiles and clothing.

It was shown that farm families are fairly heavy consumers of both ready made clothes and yard goods for home sewing. During the year over 90% of the women questioned had purchased overalls and shirts for their men and 77% had bought "Good dresses" for themselves. 73% had bought slips; 71%, coats; and 65% children's clothing. Less than 50% had bought either pyjamas or house dresses.

Of the same group of women questioned, 78% said they had bought goods by the yard to make up into clothing or home furnishings. Asked what kind of material they bought and the purpose for which they used it, the women gave this report: Cotton was used in larger quantities than any other textile. 78% of the women had bought cotton during the year and had used it for clothing, sheets, towels, curtains and other household articles. Woollen came next with 24% of the homemakers buying it and making it into clothing. Rayon was used for clothing by 13% of the women; nylon by 10%, for clothing and draperies. Then came the blended fibres. 9% of the women used these, mostly for clothing, with a few making them into draperies, curtains and slip covers. Linen was purchased by 8% of the women surveyed and was used mostly for towels, with a smaller quantity going into clothing, sheets and tablecloths. 7% used silk and only in making clothing and 6% used an "unknown" or "unidentified" material, also for clothing. Terylene and Orlon were used by a few women for both clothing and draperies or curtains. And a still smaller number had used others of the many

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Rachel Albright

The old brick tavern, built in Forty-eight,
Is on a byroad now; no longer can
It give a feather bed and warming pan
To travelers; the creaking picket gate
Will swing no more for men who journeyed West
With oxen teams; for women, worn, sedate
And sad, who bore within their hearts a quest
That only courage held inviolate.

Yet while the traffic on the asphalt trail
Tonight is pleasure-bound until the dawn,
Cicadas carol of an ancient grail,
The whippoorwills lament for something gone
And mist that whitely veils the valley still
Shows covered wagons on a lonely hill.

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synthetics fabrics recently come on the market—acetate, arnel, dynel, fibre glass.

So the present day homemaker is working with a great variety of textile materials, many of which are not well understood except by experts who have worked and experimented with them. And the survey discovered that a good proportion of the homemakers visited had problems in the matter of washing or laundering, pressing or ironing, durability, sewing, drycleaning and finding the pattern printed not in line with the grain of the fabric.

In laundering the problems were loss of shape, poor dye or finish, "pilling"; in durability, poor weaving, poor seam construction, fading, poor thread or elastic; in pressing or ironing, fabric sticking to the iron, claims of "no ironing needed" being incorrect; in sewing, puckering, slipping, ravelling or fraying; in dry cleaning, loss of shape or colour.

Two-thirds of the women expressed a desire for help in overcoming the difficulties they have been having in buying, making or caring for clothing and household furnishings. Buying, they said, involves a need for more informative labels, more knowledge of the wearing qualities, the choice of colour and design and choice of accessories. Caring for textiles calls for more knowledge of the right methods of laundering or cleaning, ironing or pressing the article in question. And the making of fabrics into articles of clothing or house furnishings requires skill in sewing techniques, following a pattern and fitting.

Where do women look for this help? The survey shows that 42% of the women, when they want information in buying textiles, ask the storekeeper or clerk. Almost as many, 41%, depend on what they can learn from friends or relatives or neighbors. 28% made use of mass media—magazines and newspapers. About 20% of the women interviewed said that they depend for their information on Home Economics Service, short courses, training schools, study kits, pamphlets, 4-H Homemaking Clubs and what they learn at Women's Institute meetings. About 11% of those questioned look to the labels on articles for their information. Less than 10% use television or radio or consult home economics teachers at their day school or night school. About 5% go to a commercial sewing centre. A few make inquiries of a manufacturer or a consumer organization such as the Canadian Association of Consumers or the Consumer's Guide.

The conclusion from this section of the survey is that "the information indicates a continuance of difficulties in buying, making or caring for clothing and household furnishings for those homemakers who do not take advantage of existing well-informed sources of help. It also indicates the need to help more rural homemakers become aware of existing well-informed sources of information and guidance in this general field."