

"Shoeless" 
watch as history unfolds



through the eyes of
baseball legend
Joe Jackson

"Shoeless"

the story of Joe Jackson

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I've been around my share
of cotton while
working at the
Brandon
Textile Mill.



1 — A Day at the Mill

Have you ever *breathed* cotton? I'm not talking about seeing it, or touching it, or even smelling it... I mean have you ever *breathed* it?

I have. Almost every day I breathe in the "cotton dust" at the Brandon Mills, and I've been working in textile factories since I was 6 years old. That's over *ten years* of breathing the cotton!

It sort of tickles the nose at first, but it's so thick that you can't make yourself sneeze. The

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dust has a stench that's hard to explain, almost like taking a whiff of the freezing air inside of an icebox.

Luckily, I don't have to put up with it as much now that I'm on the crew to fix the looms and the spinners. They won't let the cotton dust fly in this room, not with all of these fancy machines weaving the cotton threads into fabric. The boss men wouldn't have it.

But when I used to work the loading dock, or stack the cotton bales, or sweep the warehouse floor... those are dirty jobs, and I've done them all. I've *breathed* my share of cotton!

I guess you do what you've got to do for \$1.25 a day.

"Are you daydreaming over there, Joe?"

Hank has caught me staring into space, remembering when I was a little kid trying to carry a cotton bale that weighed as much as I did.

I smile at him. "I'm just thinking about how much time I've spent in this old mill."

If I'm not playing, I'm
usually *thinking* about baseball.



"Well stop it," replies Hank. "You need to think about baseball. You've got a big game tomorrow."

Most of the time I *am* thinking about baseball. Too much, sometimes. I've learned that I play best when I relax and let my mind wander. Otherwise, I stay up all night and can't relax until the third inning.

"I don't get you, Joe." says Hank, although I'm barely listening. "You ain't just the best player in West Greenville. You're the

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best player of the 20th century, I'm telling you. And here you are thinking about the textile mill."

I appreciate that Hank thinks so highly of me, even though he only cares because he probably bet a dollar on tomorrow's game just like he does every week.

And I hardly think I'm the best player of the "20th century." For starters, it's only 1907, which means there are over 90 years left in this century (and I'm sure a few other good players will come along during that time).

Second, I've only played against teams from the other textile mills around the Carolinas. It's not like I'm playing against the professionals in Boston or New York.

I've gotta be honest, though. I'd like to see one of those pros try to pitch a baseball past me. I don't care what big city you live in. Hitting a baseball is the same no matter where you are.

Tomorrow morning, our Brandon Mills team is going to be playing the Inman Mills

Everyone looks forward to
the textile teams
playing their
Saturday
games.



team. It's just a bunch of textile workers playing baseball, but it may as well be the Chicago Cubs against the Detroit Tigers.

Folks take their baseball seriously around here. And I've been treated like a hero for the past few years, ever since I started knocking home runs and throwing runners out from near the fence.

Fridays are a hard day to get any work done. I have to try to keep myself from

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thinking about the Saturday game, and that's impossible with everyone talking about it.

"Good luck tomorrow, Joe."

"I'm looking forward to another Saturday Special, Joe."

"Show them how we play baseball here in Greenville, Joe."

Fridays are the worst. It's like the clock stands still, and there's just no way to tune out everyone else who wants to wish me luck or give me last-minute advice.

Saturday will be here soon enough. And I love Saturdays. That's when it's time to play ball.