Carpets are carefully inspected several times during the weaving process and any blemishes are repaired by hand. Photo by Nancy Groce, Smithsonian Institution

NORTHERN IRELAND has been famous for the quality and sophistication of its weaving since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.

Ulster Carpets was founded in the mill town of Portadown in 1938, when George Walter Wilson, concerned about growing unemployment among local linen weavers, founded a carpet mill to harness the renowned skills of County Armagh textile workers.

Still a family-owned company, Ulster Carpets is one of the world’s largest producers of custom-woven “Axminster-style” carpets.

Elaborately designed Ulster Carpets are found in many Las Vegas casinos—including The Bellagio—and prestigious locations such as The Ritz Hotel in London, The Waldorf-Astoria in New York, and The Washington Hilton.

Modern technology permits Ulster Carpet designers to select from a palette of 528 colors and to weave carpets up to fifteen feet in width. Raw wool from the British Isles arrives at the mill where it is dyed, spun, and woven into finished carpets.