

# A VINDICATION OF THE CHARACTER AND CONDITION OF THE FEMALES EMPLOYED IN THE LOWELL MILLS pdf

## 1: Harriot F. Curtis Papers, Contents List

*A vindication of the character and condition of the females employed in the Lowell mills, against the charges contained in the Boston Times, and the Boston quarterly review by Bartlett, Elisha,*

The Special Committee to which was referred sundry petitions relating to the hours of labor, have considered the same and submit the following Report: The first petition which was referred to your committee, came from the city of Lowell, and was signed by Mr. John Quincy Adams Thayer, and eight hundred and fifty others, "peaceable, industrious, hard working men and women of Lowell. Clark and five hundred others, citizens of Andover, is in precisely the same words as the one from Fall River. The fourth petition is from Lowell, and is signed by James Carle and three hundred others. The whole number of names on the several petitions is 2,, of which 1, are from Lowell. A very large proportion of the Lowell petitioners are females. Nearly one half of the Andover petitioners are females. The petition from Fall River is signed exclusively by males. In view of the number and respectability of the petitioners who had brought their grievances before the Legislature, the Committee asked for and obtained leave of the House to send for "persons and papers," in order that they might enter into an examination of the matter, and report the result of their examination to the Legislature as a basis for legislative action, should any be deemed necessary. On the 13th of February, the Committee held a session to hear the petitioners from the city of Lowell. Six of the female and three of the male petitioners were present, and gave in their testimony. The first petitioner who testified was Eliza R. She had worked 2 years and 9 months in the Lowell Factories; 2 years in the Middlesex, and 9 months in the Hamilton Corporations. Her employment is weaving-works by the piece. The Hamilton Mill manufactures cotton fabrics. The Middlesex, woollen fabrics. She is now at work in the Middlesex Mills, and attends one loom. She complained of the hours for labor being too many, and the time for meals too limited. During eight months of the year, but half an hour is allowed for dinner. The air in the room she considered not to be wholesome. There were small lamps and 61 large lamps lighted in the room in which she worked, when evening work is required. These lamps are also lighted sometimes in the morning. About females, 11 men, and 12 children between the ages of 11 and 14 work in the room with her. She thought the children enjoyed about as good health as children generally do. The children work but 9 months out of The other 3 months they must attend school. Thinks that there is no day when there are less than six of the females out of the mill from sickness. Has known as many as thirty. She, herself, is out quite often, on account of sickness. There was more sickness in the Summer than in the Winter months; though in the Summer, lamps are not lighted. She thought there was a general desire among the females to work but ten hours, regardless of pay. Most of the girls are from the country, who work in the Lowell Mills. The average time which they remain there is about three years. She knew one girl who had worked there 14 years. Her health was poor when she left. Miss Hemmingway said her health was better where she now worked, than it was when she worked on the Hamilton Corporation. She did so to make more money. There is always a large number of girls at the gate wishing to get in before the bell rings. On the Middlesex Corporation one fourth part of the females go into the mill before they are obliged to. They do this to make more wages. A large number come to Lowell to make money to aid their parents who are poor. She knew of many cases where married women came to Lowell and worked in the mills to assist their husbands to pay for their farms. The moral character of the operatives is good. There was only one American female in the room with her who could not write her name. Bagley said she had worked in the Lowell Mills eight years and a half, six years and a half on the Hamilton Corporation, and two years on the Middlesex. She is a weaver, and works by the piece. She worked in the mills three years before her health began to fail. She is a native of New Hampshire, and went home six weeks during the summer. Last year she was out of the mill a third of the time. She thinks the health of the operatives is not so good as the health of females who do house-work or millinery business. The chief evil, so far as health is concerned, is the shortness of time allowed for meals. The next evil is the length of time employed-not giving them time to cultivate their minds. She spoke of the high moral and

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intellectual character of the girls. That many were engaged as teachers in the Sunday schools. That many attended the lectures of the Lowell Institute; and she thought, if more time was allowed, that more lectures would be given and more girls attend. She thought that the girls generally were favorable to the ten hour system. She had presented a petition, same as the one before the Committee, to girls, most of whom said that they would prefer to work but ten hours. In a pecuniary point of view, it would be better, as their health would be improved. They would have more time for sewing. Their intellectual, moral and religious habits would also be benefited by the change. Miss Bagley said, in addition to her labor in the mills, she had kept evening school during the winter months, for four years, and thought that this extra labor must have injured her health. She was sick most of the time she was out. Seven years ago she went to work in the Boott Mills, and has remained there ever since; works by the piece. She has lost, during the last seven years, about one year from ill health. She is a weaver, and attends three looms. She was absent during the five weeks but half a day. She says there is a very general feeling in favor of the ten hour system among the operatives. She attributes her ill health to the long hours of labor, the shortness of time for meals, and the bad air of the mills. She had never spoken to Mr. French, the agent, or to the overseer of her room, in relation to these matters. She could not say that more operatives died in Lowell than other people. She has been home to New Hampshire to school. Her health never was good. The work is not laborious; can sit down about a quarter of the time. About fifty girls work in the spinning room with her, three of whom signed the petition. She is in favor of the ten hour system, and thinks that the long hours had an effect upon her health. She is kindly treated by her employers. There is hardly a week in which there is not some one out on account of sickness. Thinks the air is bad, on account of the small particles of cotton which fly about. She has never spoken with the agent or overseer about working only ten hours. Miss Cecilia Phillips has worked four years in Lowell. Her testimony was similar to that given by Miss Clark. Miss Elizabeth Rowe has worked in Lowell 16 months, all the time on the Lawrence Corporation, came from Maine, she is a weaver, works by the piece, runs four looms. She would prefer to work only ten hours. Between 50 and 60 work in the room with her. Her room is better ventilated and more healthy than most others. Girls who wish to attend lectures can go out before the bell rings; my overseer lets them go, also Saturdays they go out before the bell rings. It was her wish to attend four looms. She has a sister who has worked in the mill seven years. Her health is very good. The general health of the operatives is good. Have never spoken to my employers about the work being too hard, or the hours too long. I never attended any of the lectures in Lowell on the ten hour system. Gilman Gale, a member of the city council, and who keeps a provision store, testified that the short time allowed for meals he thought the greatest evil. He spoke highly of the character of the operatives and of the agents; also of the boarding houses and the public schools. He had two children in the mills who enjoyed good health. The mills are kept as clean and as well ventilated as it is possible for them to be. Herman Abbott had worked in the Lawrence Corporation 13 years.

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### 2: - NLM Catalog Result

*A vindication of the character and condition of the females employed in the Lowell mills against the charges contained in the Boston Times, and the Boston Quarterly Review. Lowell [Mass.]: L. Huntress, printer.*

Lowell Mill Girls and the factory system, A Spotlight on a Primary Source by torin Lowell, Massachusetts, named in honor of Francis Cabot Lowell, was founded in the early s as a planned town for the manufacture of textiles. It introduced a new system of integrated manufacturing to the United States and established new patterns of employment and urban development that were soon replicated around New England and elsewhere. By , the factories in Lowell employed at some estimates more than 8, textile workers, commonly known as mill girls or factory girls. These "operatives"â€”so-called because they operated the looms and other machineryâ€”were primarily women and children from farming backgrounds. The Lowell mills were the first hint of the industrial revolution to come in the United States, and with their success came two different views of the factories. For many of the mill girls, employment brought a sense of freedom. Unlike most young women of that era, they were free from parental authority, were able to earn their own money, and had broader educational opportunities. Many observers saw this challenge to the traditional roles of women as a threat to the American way of life. Others criticized the entire wage-labor factory system as a form of slavery and actively condemned and campaigned against the harsh working conditions and long hours and the increasing divisions between workers and factory owners. It is an attack on the entire wage system but particularly focuses on how factory jobs affect the mill girls: The author was probably Harriet Jane Farley, a mill girl who eventually became editor of the Lowell Offering. The operatives are well dressed, and we are told, well paid. They are said to be healthy, contented, and happy. This is the fair side of the picture. There is a dark side, moral as well as physical. Of the common operatives, few, if any, by their wages, acquire a competence. The bills of mortality in these factory villages are not striking, we admit, for the poor girls when they can toil no longer go home to die. The average life, working life we mean, of the girls that come to Lowell, for instance, from Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, we have been assured, is only about three years. What becomes of them then? Few of them ever marry; fewer still ever return to their native places with reputations unimpaired. Think, for a moment, how many of the next generation are to spring from mothers doomed to infamy! It has been asserted that to put ourselves under the influence and restraints of corporate bodies, is contrary to the spirit of our institutions, and to that love of independence which we ought to cherish. We are under restraints, but they are voluntarily assumed; and we are at liberty to withdraw from them, whenever they become galling or irksome. Neither have I ever discovered that any restraints were imposed upon us but those which were necessary for the peace and comfort of the whole, and for the promotion of the design for which we are collected, namely, to get money, as much of it and as fast as we can; and it is because our toil is so unremitting, that the wages of factory girls are higher than those of females engaged in most other occupations. It is these wages which, in spite of toil, restraint, discomfort, and prejudice, have drawn so many worthy, virtuous, intelligent, and well-educated girls to Lowell, and other factories; and it is the wages which are in great degree to decide the characters of the factory girls as a class. Brownson may rail as much as he pleases against the real injustice of capitalists against operatives, and we will bid him God speed, if he will but keep truth and common sense upon his side. Still, the avails of factory labor are now greater than those of many domestics, seamstresses, and school-teachers; and strange would it be, if in money-loving New England, one of the most lucrative female employments should be rejected because it is toilsome, or because some people are prejudiced against it. Yankee girls have too much independence for that. And now, if Mr. Brownson is a man, he will endeavor to retrieve the injury he has done;. Questions for Discussion Read the introduction, view the images of the two original documents, and read the edited excerpts. Then apply your knowledge of American history to answer the following questions: Locate the following words and attempt to define them from context clues: If necessary, employ a dictionary. Describe the conditions in America around

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that encouraged young women to seek employment outside of their home. The men in the images are engaged in factory work, construction of skyscrapers, and working on the railroads.

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## 3: Lowell Mill Girls - Wikipedia

*A vindication of the character and condition of the females employed in the Lowell Mills against the charges contained in the Boston Times, and the Boston Quarterly Review.*

Curtis Papers, Harriot F. Curtis papers, Bulk: Terms of Access and Use: The Papers are open to research according to the regulations of the Sophia Smith Collection without any additional restrictions. Permission must be obtained to publish reproductions or quotations beyond "fair use. It is the responsibility of the researcher to identify and satisfy the holders of all copyrights. Permission to publish reproductions or quotations beyond "fair use" must also be obtained from the Sophia Smith Collection as owners of the physical property. Like thousands of other young women in rural New England during the antebellum era, Curtis defied her parents and moved to Lowell, Massachusetts, to work in its burgeoning textile industry. Also a writer, the Lowell Casket, in which she had published, offered her an editorship position in . In she began publishing in the corporate-sponsored literary magazine, Lowell Offering. Curtis became one of its two editors in ; responsible for soliciting subscriptions, she traveled widely. A year later, she and co-editor Harriet Farley bought the Lowell Offering, but the journal only lasted another two years and publication stopped in . During the s and 40s, the open-minded Curtis maintained an interest in Swedenborgianism, threatened to join Shaker communes, and not only studied phrenology, but became a public lecturer on the topic and claimed eminent phrenologist O. Fowler as a mentor before disavowing the discipline by . From to , she served as editor of the Lowell weekly, Vox Populi. The antithesis of the Lowell Offering, the industry-critical Vox Populi spoke for workers rather than their employers. Curtis gave up her career after , providing care to her ailing mother in Vermont. Writing in that "matrimony is an ocean upon which I shall not probably ever embark," Curtis never married, a lifestyle her friend and fellow former mill worker Harriet Hanson Robinson attributed to a shortage of suitable suitors. The spirited and often flirtatious letters from Curtis to Hezekiah Morse Wead have been fully transcribed and those typed transcriptions are also included in the collection. Organization of the collection This collection is organized into six series:

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## 4: Buffum-Bartlett papers

*Bartlett, Elisha () A Vindication of the Character and Condition of the Females Employed in the Lowell Mills, Against the Charges Contained in The Boston Times and the Boston Quarterly Review. Lowell, MA: Leonard Huntress, Printer; Massachusetts Historical Society.*

This section needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. December Learn how and when to remove this template message In , businessman Francis Cabot Lowell formed a company, the Boston Manufacturing Company , and built a textile mill next to the Charles River in Waltham , Massachusetts. Unlike the earlier Rhode Island System , where only carding and spinning were done in a factory while the weaving was often put out to neighboring farms to be done by hand, the Waltham mill was the first integrated mill in the United States, transforming raw cotton into cotton cloth in one building. Incorporated as the Town of Lowell in , by , the textile mills employed almost 8, workers “ mostly women between the ages of 15 and New, large scale machinery, which had come to dominate the production of cloth by , was being rapidly developed in lockstep with the equally new ways of organizing workers for mass production. Together, these mutually reinforcing technological and social changes produced staggering increases: Most corporations recorded similarly high profits during this period. Work and living environment[ edit ] This section needs additional citations for verification. December Learn how and when to remove this template message The social position of the factory girls had been degraded considerably in France and England. In her autobiography, Harriet Hanson Robinson who worked in the Lowell mills from “ suggests that "It was to overcome this prejudice that such high wages had been offered to women that they might be induced to become mill girls, in spite of the opprobrium that still clung to this degrading occupation. A few girls who came with their mothers or older sisters were as young as ten years old, some were middle-aged, but the average age was about They were paired with more experienced women, who trained them in the ways of the factory. Employees worked from 5: The noise of the machines was described by one worker as "something frightful and infernal", and although the rooms were hot, windows were often kept closed during the summer so that conditions for thread work remained optimal. The air, meanwhile, was filled with particles of thread and cloth. Living quarters[ edit ] The investors or factory owners built hundreds of boarding houses near the mills, where textile workers lived year-round. A curfew of About 26 women lived in each boarding house, with up to six sharing a bedroom. However, half-days and short paid vacations were possible due to the nature of the piece-work; one girl would work the machines of another in addition to her own such that no wages would be lost. These close quarters fostered community as well as resentment. Newcomers were mentored by older women in areas such as dress, speech, behavior, and the general ways of the community. Workers often recruited their friends or relatives to the factories, creating a familial atmosphere among many of the rank and file. The Handbook to Lowell noted that the company would "not employ anyone who is habitually absent from public worship on the Sabbath, or known to be guilty of immorality". Please help improve this section by adding citations to reliable sources. December Learn how and when to remove this template message As for many young women, the allure of Lowell was in the opportunities afforded for further study and learning. Most had already completed some measure of formal education and were resolutely bent on self-improvement. Upon their arrival, they found a vibrant, lively working-class intellectual culture: Many even pursued literary composition. Defying factory rules, operatives would affix verses to their spinning frames, "to train their memories", and pin-up mathematical problems in the rooms where they worked. In the evenings, many enrolled in courses offered by the mills and attended public lectures at the Lyceum, a theatre built at company expense offering 25 lectures per season for 25 cents. The Voice of Industry is alive with notices for upcoming lectures, courses, and meetings on topics ranging from astronomy to music. But this masked the bitter opposition of many workers to the 12“14 hours of exhausting, monotonous work, which they saw was

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corrosive to their desire to learn. As one operative asked in the *Voice*, "who, after thirteen hours of steady application to monotonous work, can sit down and apply her mind to deep and long-continued thought? I am sure few possessed a more ardent desire for knowledge than I did, but such was the effect of the long hour system, that my chief delight was, after the evening meal, to place my aching feet in an easy position, and read a novel. As the magazine grew in popularity, women contributed poems, ballads, essays, and fiction" often using their characters to report on conditions and situations in their lives. This, in turn, led to organized "turn-outs" or strikes. After a series of meetings, the female textile workers organized a "turn-out" or strike. The women involved in "turn-out" immediately withdrew their savings, causing "a run" on two local banks. This dismayed the agents of the factories, who portrayed the turnout as a betrayal of femininity. As the economic calamity continued in October, the Directors proposed an additional rent hike to be paid by the textile workers living in the company boarding houses. Harriet Hanson Robinson, an eleven-year-old doffer at the time of the strike, recalled in her memoirs: This was the first time a woman had spoken in public in Lowell, and the event caused surprise and consternation among her audience. The proposed rent hike was seen as a violation of the written contract between the employers and the employees. Although the "turn-out" was a success, the weakness of the system was evident, and worsened further in the Panic of 1837. Sarah Bagley The sense of community that arose from working and living together contributed directly to the energy and growth of the first union of women workers, the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association. Started by 12 operatives in January, its membership grew to within six months, and continued to expand rapidly. The Association was run completely by the women themselves: They organized fairs, parties, and social gatherings. Unlike many middle-class women activists, the operatives found considerable support from working-class men who welcomed them into their reform organizations and advocated for their treatment as equals. One of its first actions was to send petitions signed by thousands of textile workers to the Massachusetts General Court demanding a ten-hour work day. In response, the Massachusetts Legislature established a committee chaired by William Schouler, Representative from Lowell, to investigate and hold public hearings, during which workers testified about conditions in the factories and the physical demands of their twelve-hour days. These were the first investigations into labor conditions by a governmental body in the United States. The impact of working men [Democrats] and working women [non-voting] was very limited. The next year Schouler was re-elected to the State Legislature. Lowell textile workers continued to petition and pressure for improved working conditions, [5] and in 1835, the Lowell corporations reduced the workday to eleven hours. The New England textile industry was rapidly expanding in the 1830s and 1840s. Unable to recruit enough Yankee women to fill all the new jobs, to supplement the workforce textile managers turned to survivors of the Great Irish Famine who had recently immigrated to the United States in large numbers. After the war, the textile mills reopened, recruiting French Canadian men and women. Although large numbers of Irish and French Canadian immigrants moved to Lowell to work in the textile mills, Yankee women still dominated the workforce until the mid-1840s. Framing their struggle for shorter work days and better pay as a matter of rights and personal dignity, they sought to place themselves in the larger context of the American Revolution. During the "turn-out" or strike" they warned that "the oppressing hand of avarice would enslave us," [5] the women included a poem which read: In the first of these, subtitled "Factory Life As It Is", the author proclaims "that our rights cannot be trampled upon with impunity; that we WILL not longer submit to that arbitrary power which has for the last ten years been so abundantly exercised over us. When you sell your product, you retain your person. But when you sell your labour, you sell yourself, losing the rights of free men and becoming vassals of mammoth establishments of a monied aristocracy that threatens annihilation to anyone who questions their right to enslave and oppress. Those who work in the mills ought to own them, not have the status of machines ruled by private despots who are entrenching monarchic principles on democratic soil as they drive downwards freedom and rights, civilization, health, morals and intellectuality in the new commercial feudalism.

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### 5: Elisha Bartlett (Author of The History, Diagnosis, and Treatment of Typhoid and of Typhus Fever)

*A Vindication of the Character and Condition of the Females Employed in the Lowell Mills, Against the Charges Contained in the Boston Times, and the Boston Quarterly Review (Classic Reprint) Paperback - 27 Feb*

### 6: Harriot F. Curtis Papers,

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*A Vindication of the Character and Condition of the Females Employed in the Lowell Mills by Elisha Bartlett Call Number: Online - free - Harvard Open Collections Program Against the Charges contained in The Boston times, and The Boston quarterly review.*

### 9: Lowell Mill Girls and the factory system, | Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

1. Author(s): Bartlett,Elisha, Title(s): *A vindication of the character and condition of the females employed in the Lowell mills, against the charges contained in the Boston Times, and the Boston quarterly review/ by Elisha Bartlett.*

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