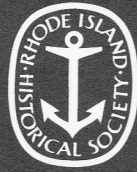


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La Survivance

Rhode Island History

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This issue of Rhode Island History reprints La Survivance: A Companion to the Exhibit at the Museum of Work & Culture, Woonsocket, Rhode Island. The text is by Anita Rafael, the museum's program specialist.

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Foreword

Je me souviens—"I remember"—is precisely the affirmation made by La Survivance, the permanent exhibit of the Museum of Work & Culture. The determination of the French Canadian immigrants to retain their culture, their faith, and their language was a very powerful drive. Although they had to give up their rural life, a life of outdoor work in harmony with the seasons, and accept the regimentation of the factory time clock and the foreman, they refused to give up the things that defined their personalities and their group identity. *La survivance* is often defined as "survival," but its meaning is in fact closer to "persistence and preservation." That is what this exhibit is really about: it is the story of the human spirit as it confronts change and challenge, a story of a deep commitment to preserve self-respect and the memory of one's origins and heritage.

Je me souviens can serve also as an appropriate phrase for characterizing the booklet you are now holding. As a guide and commentary to help you remember the museum experience, this booklet is intended as a true souvenir.

The Rhode Island Historical Society was honored by the people of Woonsocket with a request that it sponsor a grant application to the National Endowment for the Humanities. This grant became the catalyst for the Museum of Work & Culture and La Survivance. In response to the grant, contributions were made by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, area businesses and foundations, organized labor, and individuals.

The museum and its exhibits were the result of much work by a very able designer, Christopher Chadbourne and Associates, and an impressive supporting cast of subcontractors. The "immersion" technique used in the galleries places the visitor directly in the midst of the stories they tell.

We hope that you will find the La Survivance exhibit truly memorable, and that you will value this souvenir as a reminder of a remarkable story of struggle and perseverance.

Labor Day, 1997

ALBERT T. KLYBERG
Executive Director
The Rhode Island Historical Society

Artifacts



Man separating beans from straw with a winnowing basket, Valcourt d'Ely, Quebec, circa 1909. Ulric Bourgeois Collection, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire, Durham. Courtesy of the University of New Hampshire.

In rural environments in any culture, of any era, new ways—especially “city ways”—are usually slow to catch on among country people. For the Quebecois habitant, the need to produce essential items for the farm and family, while maintaining the leasehold on his land and house, was tied to the seasons of the year. Whether working the land, provisioning the household, obliging the seigneur, or obeying the church, the habitant and his family ordinarily had few unpredictable or spontaneous experiences during their lives. The hours that were not consumed by the tasks required for subsistence were spent in cultivating faith. With equal strictness, the Roman Catholic Church adhered to invariable religious precepts: set times of day for prayer, set days for the feasts of various saints, set seasons for the liturgical calendar. The first serious disruption of the ancestral traditions of this agrarian culture was the flight of habitants out of Quebec during the 1800s and early 1900s in search of the “streets paved with gold” in America’s industrial cities.

and Themes

SPINNING WHEEL: HOMESPUN

No other object, except perhaps the hand plow, is more symbolic of a simple, rural life than the spinning wheel. During the preindustrial era the spinning wheel was an implement of major importance: just as the process of growing food for the table began with hand-plowing the earth, the process of making clothing, towels, upholstery, blankets, bed sheets, curtains, and rugs began with hand-spinning raw fibers into thread. Like the hand plow, the spinning wheel remains in use in developing countries to this day.

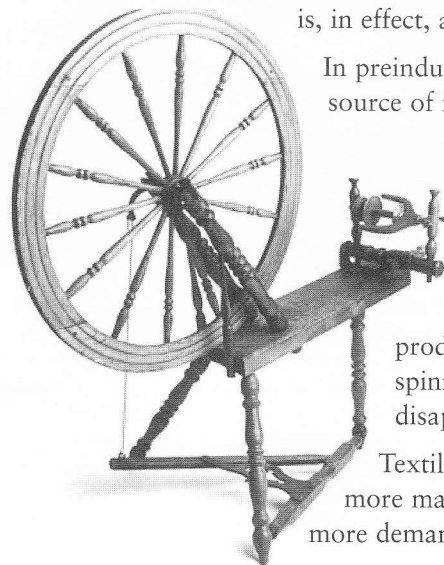
Although combed cotton, flax, or wool can be spun into thread simply by twisting the fibers in one's fingers, that is hardly an efficient method. A simple but effective device, the hand-spindle (or drop-spindle), appears in ancient Egyptian paintings from as early as 1900 B.C. This is essentially a pointed stick that also serves as the bobbin on which the thread is wound. The hand-spindle, too, is by no means obsolete; in many cultures it is still used as a convenient portable spinning device.

Spinning wheels can be traced back to India from about 500 B.C. Called *charkhas*, they may have been developed from a Chinese wheel for unwinding threads from silkworm cocoons. The addition of the pedal dates back to at least the early 1600s. Spinning the wheel with a treadle leaves the spinner with both hands free to guide the fibers.

A spinning wheel in motion is a mesmerizing sight: like magic, it seems, loose fibers entwine and wind into a fat spool of thread or yarn. Many people watching a spinner at work on a wheel assume that the wheel itself somehow forms the fibers into yarn. In fact, it does not; the wheel is just the "motor" from which a drive band rotates the flyer mechanism, where the fibers twist and then wind onto the bobbin. A spinning wheel is, in effect, a power-driven hand-spindle.

In preindustrial times a proficient spinner was a source of income to the household economy, since extra yarn or thread, like surplus garden produce, was an item that could be sold or bartered for other goods or services. But the early decades of the 1800s brought a proliferation of water-powered thread- and cloth-producing mills in New England, and the spinning wheel, once a domestic necessity, disappeared into the attic.

Textile-mill owners quickly found that the more manufactured goods they produced, the more demand they could create in the marketplace



Spinning wheel. Photograph by Paul Darling. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8749).

for fine cloth and ready-made garments, which replaced homespun fabrics and home-sewn apparel. A greater demand for high-quality goods meant that more and larger mills were built, and with these came an unprecedented demand for workers. To meet this need, in the 1840s millowners began looking to immigrants as a cheap source of industrial labor. Recruiting agents were sent out, and ads were placed in newspapers in Canada and other countries, promising “a better life” in America. The enticement was a steady livelihood with a regular wage.

To a Quebec habitant, unfamiliar with the implications of the “factory system,” the opportunity to earn a weekly salary and “benefits” was temptation enough to quit the hardships of working the barely arable land and forest for food, fuel, and rent, to reject the tedious spinning of wool into yarn for clothes and blankets, and to abandon the isolation of the small family farm in the rugged Quebec countryside. Since his wife and children were accustomed to working and contributing to the family economy, they too went to work in the New England mills. By 1900 nearly half of New England’s textile-mill workers were French Canadian men, women, or children.

Members of the Bourgeois family, dressed in factory-made clothing, on the steps of their home in Fulford, Quebec, 1908. Ulric Bourgeois Collection, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire, Durham. Courtesy of the University of New Hampshire.



In all, some half-million habitants and their families (one-fourth of the population of the French Canadian territories) left Canada by 1901. Although at least half may have eventually returned, enough remained in the “new land of promise and plenty” to make the French Canadians the fourth-largest ethnic group in America (after the English, the Irish, and the Germans). New England textile cities—Fall River, New Bedford, Lowell, and Lawrence, Massachusetts; Manchester, New Hampshire; Biddeford and Lewiston, Maine; and Pawtucket and Woonsocket, Rhode Island—drew the largest concentrations of French Canadian immigrants. By 1900 Woonsocket was known as *la ville la plus française aux Etats-Unis*, “the most French city in the United States.”



PRECIOUS BLOOD CHURCH: A MATTER OF FAITH

In 1763, when the British gained control of Canadian settlements founded by French colonists over a century earlier, the one consequence the French habitants feared most was the possibility of being forced to adapt to English ways. In an effort to preserve the Old World legacy of New France, the habitants embarked on a form of cultural resistance that had three aims: first, to protect the traditions of their French ancestry; second, to protect their language and their right to speak it as their “official” language; third, and most importantly, to protect their religion, that of the Roman Catholic Church.



Precious Blood Church, Woonsocket, circa 1900. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8398).

The oldest French Canadian Catholic parish in Woonsocket is l'église du Précieux Sang, founded in 1874. Leveled by a gale in 1876, the Church of the Precious Blood was rebuilt by 1881. The Carrington Avenue building (on which the museum's exhibit is modeled) seems like a fortress for the defense of French Canadian culture in America. The Victorian Gothic-style structure is of red brick, with light-colored granite detailing and trim. A landmark since the time of its construction on the southwesterly side of the Blackstone River, it was erected on that site to accommodate a large population of French Canadians living in the surrounding villages of Hamlet, Globe, and Bernon. By 1919 Woonsocket had five French Canadian Roman Catholic congregations, the most in the state. The city also had two Irish Catholic churches and both Polish and Ukrainian Catholic parishes.



St. Jean-Baptiste Day parade, down Clinton Street, looking toward Cumberland Street, Woonsocket, 1906. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 4397).

Since the founding of New France, the Catholic Church, rather than the government, had been the major cultural force in the habitants' daily lives, and it was the church that led the cause of cultural survival, or *la survivance*, in British-ruled Canada. In this role the Catholic establishment criticized, though it did not interfere with, all things that were not French and not Catholic. Under the guidance of local curés, the attitudes and behaviors of *la survivance* became ingrained in nearly every aspect of the lives of Quebec's French Canadians.

From the time when they began leaving the farmlands of Quebec for the mill villages of New England in the 1860s, the habitants brought with them their long-held belief that no matter what lay ahead, their culture—as French Canadians and as Catholics—must withstand the corrupting influences of other cultures. The church opposed the migration, warning habitants that their cherished traditions could be irretrievably lost in the alien world to the south, but the lure of work in the mills was strong, and, in any case, many intended to

return to their homeland someday (as many thousands in fact did). But though they defied church leaders by emigrating, the migrants maintained their Catholic identity, and the Catholic Church continued to be the major life-organizing influence among French Canadian immigrants in the United States well into the twentieth century.

Despite the country's founding principle of church-state separation, the immigrants were fearful that they might be required to change their faith (along with their language, style of dress, and eating habits) on the road to their becoming Americans. After all, the United States, like British Canada, was largely Protestant; moreover, most Catholic Americans were Irish Catholics, and thus part of an alien, English-speaking institution. To French Canadian immigrants between the 1870s and the 1930s, *la survivance* was a mission to protect both the faith and the faithful. In Woonsocket, as in several other places, French Canadians immigrants believed that if they were to protect their heritage, it was necessary that they establish French Canadian Catholic parishes, with French Canadian priests and, eventually, French Canadian bishops, and that they send their children to French Canadian parochial schools, where instruction would be bilingual.

For many decades the scope of the church's power among the immigrants in the United States seemed as unlimited as it had been among the habitants in Quebec Province. To families making the difficult transition from farm life to life in industrial cities and mill villages, the church offered guidance and consolation: have faith, it counseled, and adhere to the traditional values of your heritage—ritual diligence to work, however tedious; resolute fealty to employers, however cruel; unquestioning obedience to authority, however harsh.



The French Canadian Roman Catholic congregation of St. Joseph Church, West Warwick, R.I., circa 1900. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8686).

After World War I, however, when there came a swell of national enthusiasm to “Americanize” every immigrant, the church’s pastors seemed to contradict both their teachings and their commitment to *la survivance*. Fearing that the growth of organized labor would weaken the power of the church over the lives of its

working-class adherents, church leaders proposed alliances with both the government, labor, and management to promote French Canadian acculturation and assimilation. When labor unions advertised that “Unionism is Americanism,” the church countered, just as enthusiastically, that “Catholicism is Americanism too.” When the local church failed to wholeheartedly resist a 1922 Rhode Island state law requiring that certain subjects be taught in English in the parochial elementary schools, the intervention of the pope was eventually needed to calm the outrage of Woonsocket’s French Canadians. To the descendants of the Quebecois habitant, there seemed to be no greater proof that their own Catholic Church had sold out to the American way of life and abandoned the cause of *la survivance*.



Remembrance of First Holy Communion,
1930. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical
Society (RHi X3 8712).



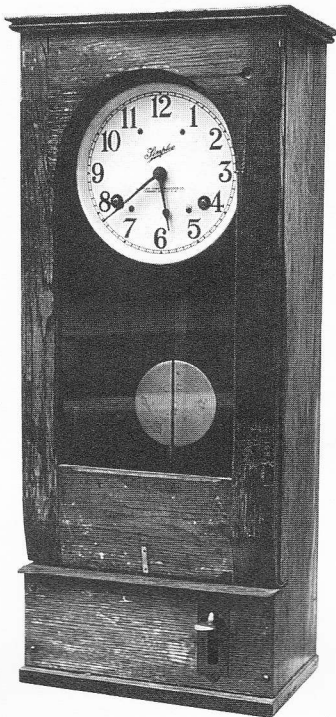
TIME CLOCK: *TEMPUS REGIT*

Every traveler to a picturesque Old World city brings home a souvenir snapshot of the medieval-era bell tower rising majestically over the city's public square. Few, however, realize that the lovely bell was primarily an instrument of control over the lives of the community's inhabitants. The town bell-ringer's duty was to melodiously signal the day's events or emergencies and, of course, to mark the start and the end of the workday for shopkeepers, laborers, craftsmen, and civil servants.

In fact, *tempus regit*—time rules. In agricultural life the seasons, the sun, and the sounds of hungry livestock are the natural time signals of a farmer's workday. But in city life the coordination and synchronization of activities depends on trustworthy timekeepers with accurate timepieces. One crucial activity, work for wages, involves a daily exchange: management buys the workers' time, and workers sell their time to management. Therefore, after the wage or cost of labor is determined, the most important thing to both the buyers and the sellers is keeping track of the precise amount of time bought or sold.

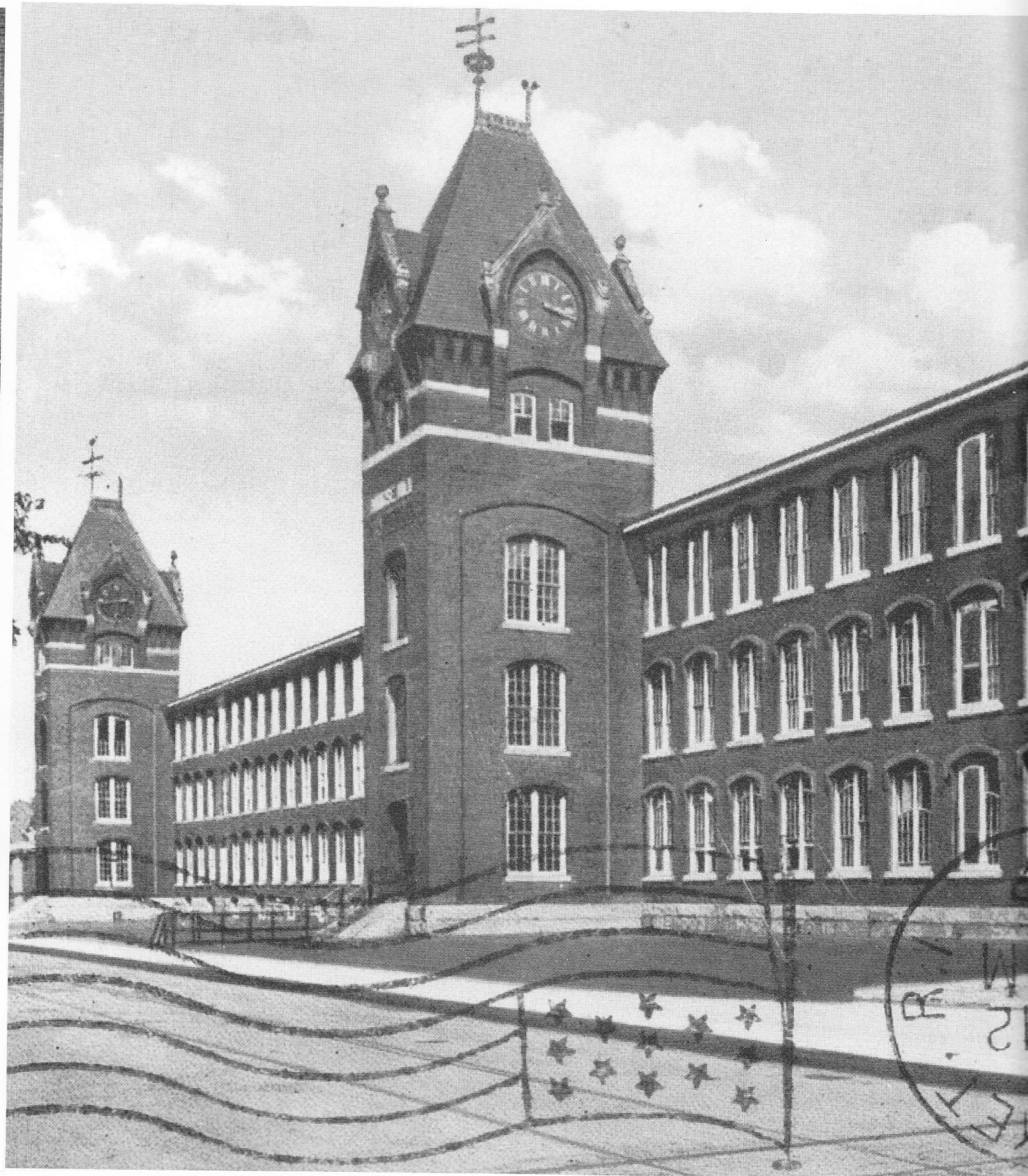
In Europe, England, and America, textile manufacturers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were among the first entrepreneurs to develop large-scale mill operations. In these establishments sizable numbers of workers needed to be told when to start work, when to break to eat, and when to quit for the day. The outdoor public bell, which had long served as a common convenience that sounded out the hours for all the local inhabitants, gradually gave way to an indoor time-signaling device on each shop floor—the factory owner's personally controlled gong or whistle. Inevitably the workers challenged such devices at once: without a way of telling time on their own, how could they know if the gong or whistle signaled the honest length of time from the start to the finish of the workday?

A clock with a dial (from the Latin *dies*, or "day") might have calmed such concerns, but workers had no guarantee that a "company" timepiece—particularly one kept in the manager's vest pocket or in a private office—was not rigged to run slower in order to steal uncompensated labor. During the 1700s, 1800s, and much of the 1900s, few working-class individuals could afford portable timepieces of their own, although their homes might have a wall or mantel clock proudly displayed. Sometimes employees at the same workplace pooled their financial resources and purchased a clock to measure their working hours against their manager's computations. Suspecting that mill managers



Simplex time clock, model JCI/R-3.
Photograph by Paul Darling. Courtesy of the
Rhode Island Historical Society (RH X3
8750).

The story of the Simplex Time Recorder Company begins with a clock designed in 1886 by Edward G. Watkins, a mechanical engineer at the Heywood Furniture Company in Gardner, Massachusetts. Watkins's father, Gardner—also an engineer at Heywood, and the inventor of a machine that spliced cane for chairs and another that wove the cane into seats—asked his son to devise a machine to keep track of the working hours of the Heywood employees. Edward did. In 1902 Edward Watkins bought the patents for the time clock he had invented, the machinery that made the time clock, and the stock of Heywood Furniture's time-recording department, and he became president of a new corporation, the Simplex Time Recorder Company. Within fifteen years he bought out two of his time clock competitors. Always innovating, Simplex began manufacturing electric time clocks in 1923. In 1958, with Edward's son Curtis Watkins at the corporate helm, the company acquired the time recorder division of IBM. Curtis's son Chris Watkins is now forging the company's future with another technological innovation, a microprocessor to totally integrate site-systems management.



*Nourse Mill, Woonsocket, circa 1907.
Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical
Society (RHi X3 8710).*

The number of hours' labor required of all employees in this room is 10½ hours for the first five working days, and 7½ hours on Saturday, and to be in the mill at the ringing of the last bell in the morning and at noon, and remain at their work until the bell rings out.

TIME TABLE.

MONDAY,	6.30 a. m. to 12 m., 1 p. m. to 6 p. m.
TUESDAY,	6.30 a. m. to 12 m., 1 p. m. to 6 p. m.
WEDNESDAY,	6.30 a. m. to 12 m., 1 p. m. to 6 p. m.
THURSDAY,	6.30 a. m. to 12 m., 1 p. m. to 6 p. m.
FRIDAY,	6.30 a. m. to 12 m., 1 p. m. to 6 p. m.
SATURDAY,	6.30 a. m. to 12 m., 1 p. m. to 3 p. m.

3 MINUTES ALLOWED FOR STARTING MACHINERY.

Timetable of working hours at a New England mill, early twentieth century. Courtesy of the Museum of American Textile History, Lowell, Mass. (P2282.1).

were cheating them with dishonest factory clocks, in 1828 workers in Pawtucket paid to have the "real" time publicly displayed by a clock mounted high on the steeple of the new Congregational church, overlooking the mills below.

Keeping an accurate record of hours worked was a dilemma for both workers and management. How could a manager keep tabs on the hours of each individual worker in a huge mill complex employing hundreds of operatives? Without a timepiece of his own, how could a worker be certain that his department supervisor or the company time clerk was recording his arrivals and departures correctly? Would the lowly time clerk seek to improve his standing with management by shorting workers on their hours, or would he be more likely to overstate workers' hours out of sympathy for other toilers like himself? Hours might be recorded manually or mechanically, by managers or by time clerks, but however they were recorded, and regardless of who recorded them, there were always possibilities of error, fraud, and mistrust.

Automatic time-recording devices are machines to measure the transactions of buying and selling time. In factories, stores, and offices today, whether the time clock ticks by the mechanical swing of a pendulum or zips along the circuits of a chip, the daily ritual of punching in and punching out merely signals the beginning and end of the time/sales transaction. Is it time to start work? Is it time to go home yet?

Although the worker's time may be clocked to the nanosecond, no device has yet been invented that can record the amount of time workers spend clock-watching. Clocks are not perfect mechanisms. Yet, in their power to control the actions of human beings, they have a perfection of another kind, one that Lewis Mumford recognized in his 1934 book *Technics and Civilization*. "The clock, not the steam engine, is the key-machine of the modern industrial age," he wrote. "It marks a perfection toward which other machines aspire."



"The Dining Hour, J. & P. Coats Thread Mills, Central Falls, R.I.," 1907. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 5945).

Even after the Civil War, there were small handicraft manufactories that might have tolerated or even delighted in moments of casual informality among their employees during work—storytelling, singing, perhaps even drinking in the workshop. In large-scale industrial production, however, factory workers faced a more controlled time regimen, with strict workplace discipline. Calculating production and labor costs to the penny, mill overseers discussed at length in textile trade publications whether workers should continue at their machines until the factory whistle blew for the lunch break or the end of the shift, or whether workers should be allowed five minutes to wash and don their hats and coats on company time.



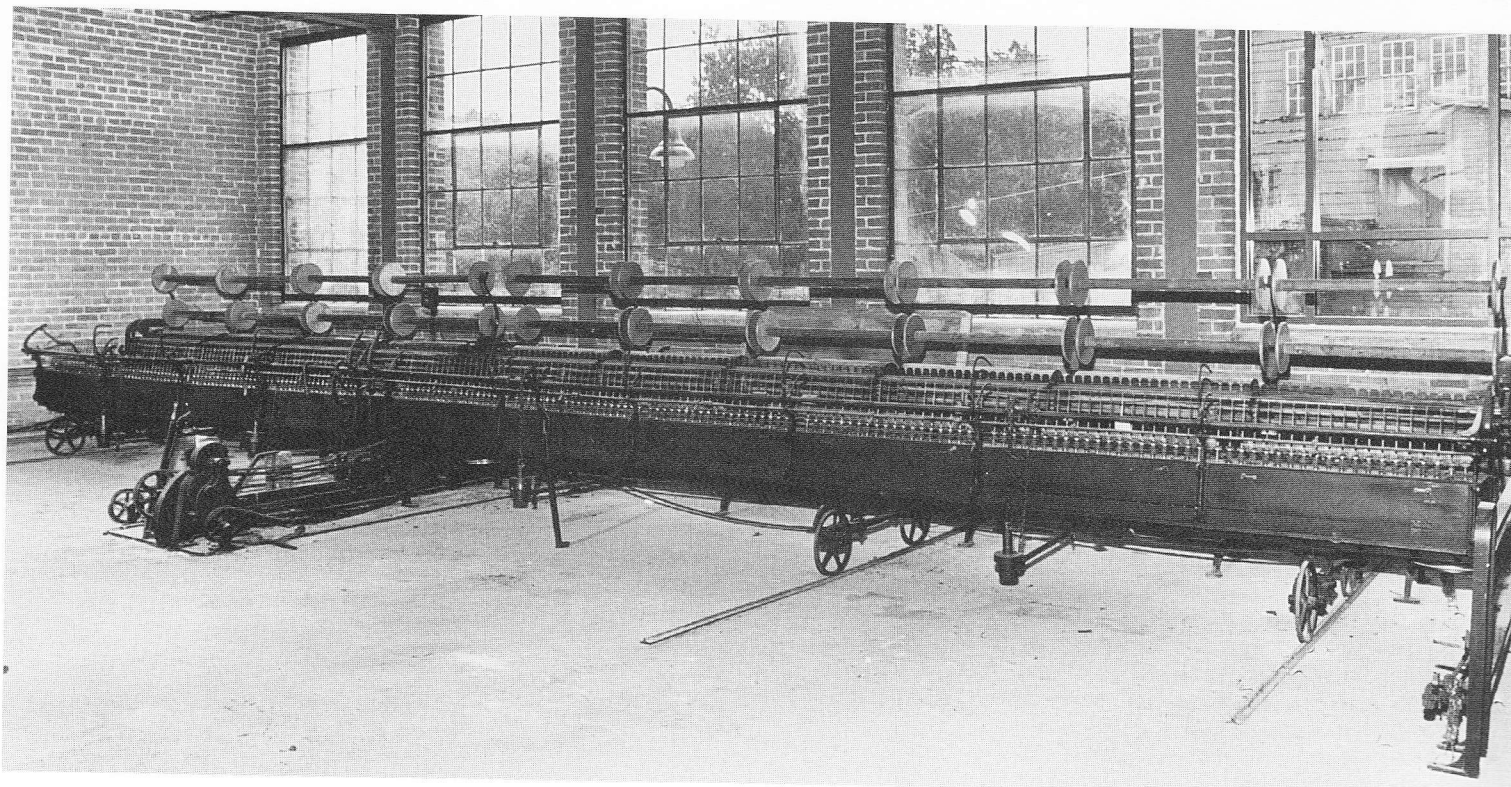
MILL-FLOOR MACHINERY: THE TEXTILE NEWS

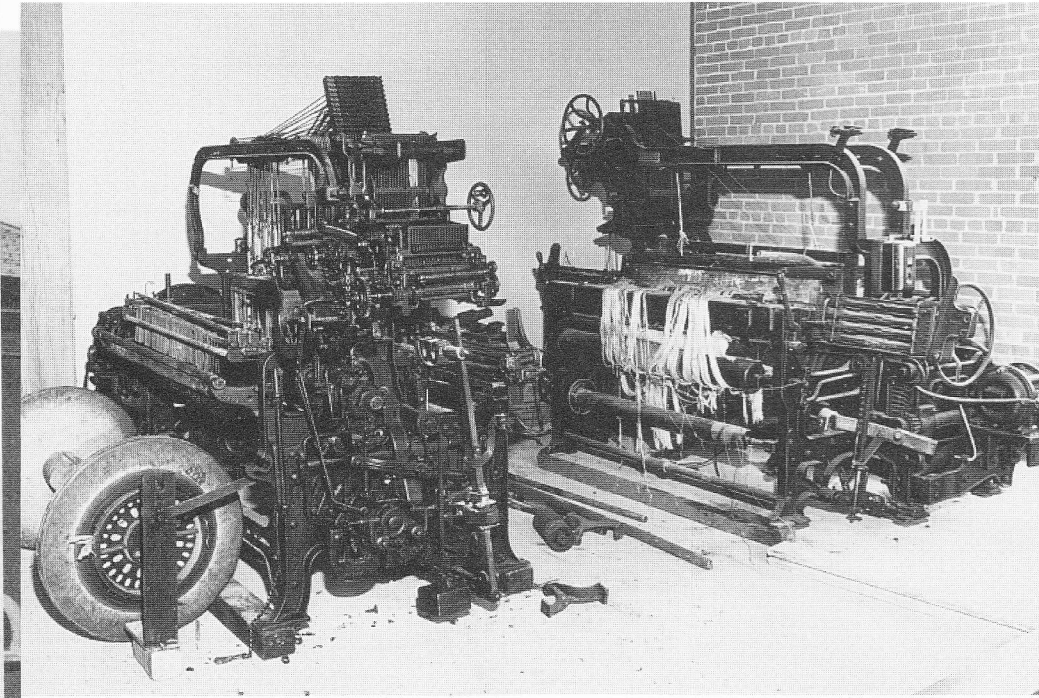
Among the several types of fiber-processing and fabric-finishing machines used in textile mills, two pieces of equipment were central to significantly increasing production for a global marketplace in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. These were the spinning mule and the loom.

A spinning mule performs the same task as a spinning wheel, but without the help of human hands. Loose fibers of cotton, wool, or other material—even asbestos—are drawn out, or “draughted,” and then twisted into thread or yarn, which is wound onto bobbins set on pins called spindles. At first, strong-shouldered operators had to physically push and pull the wide beam of the spinning mule back and forth as multiple rows of fibers were drawn, spun, and wound. Considered skilled labor, mule spinners commanded higher pay, and considerably greater respect, than other operatives in the mule-room hierarchy, even organizing their own separate trade unions. Although the carriages were eventually made self-traversing and could have been tended by unskilled workers, even by children, the mule spinners retained their shop-floor prestige. One operator, running a 1936 model Johnson & Bassett spinning mule with 336 spindles, could spin almost a half ton of ten-twist yarn during an eight-hour shift. With a mule spinner’s wage at about seventy cents an hour at the time, the labor cost in a pound of good-quality worsted yarn was less than three-quarters of a penny.

Johnson & Bassett, Inc., was founded in 1870 in Worcester, Massachusetts, a city at the headwaters of the Blackstone River. According to the company’s

*Spinning mule. Photograph by Paul Darling.
Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical
Society (RHi X3 8752).*





Mechanical loom. Photograph by Paul Darling. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8751).

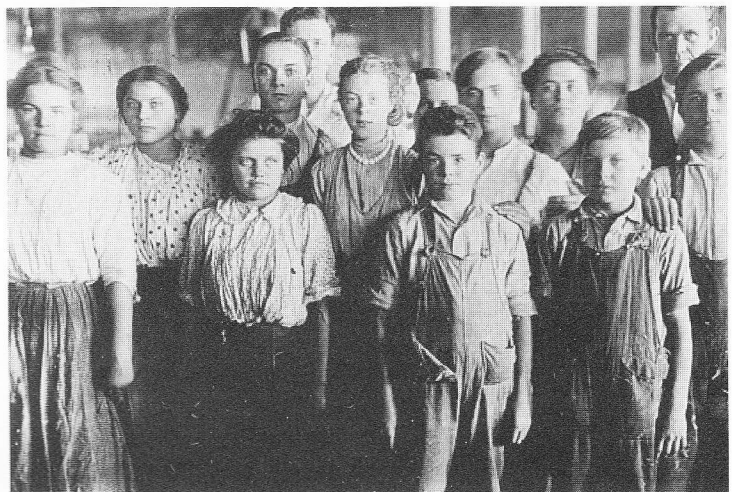
sales catalogs, some of the spinning mules pioneered by Johnson & Bassett engineers in 1871 were still in operation a half century later. While the claim testified to the quality of workmanship in Johnson & Bassett machines, it had less happy implications as well: industry analysts have theorized that one of the many reasons for the decline of the northern textile industry in the 1920s was the reluctance of northern millowners to modernize their production with updated faster and more efficient spinning machinery—the kind that was being shipped to new mills in the South. An 1896 issue of the *Providence Journal of Commerce* carried a report about the Draper Company, another prominent Blackstone River Valley machinery manufacturer:

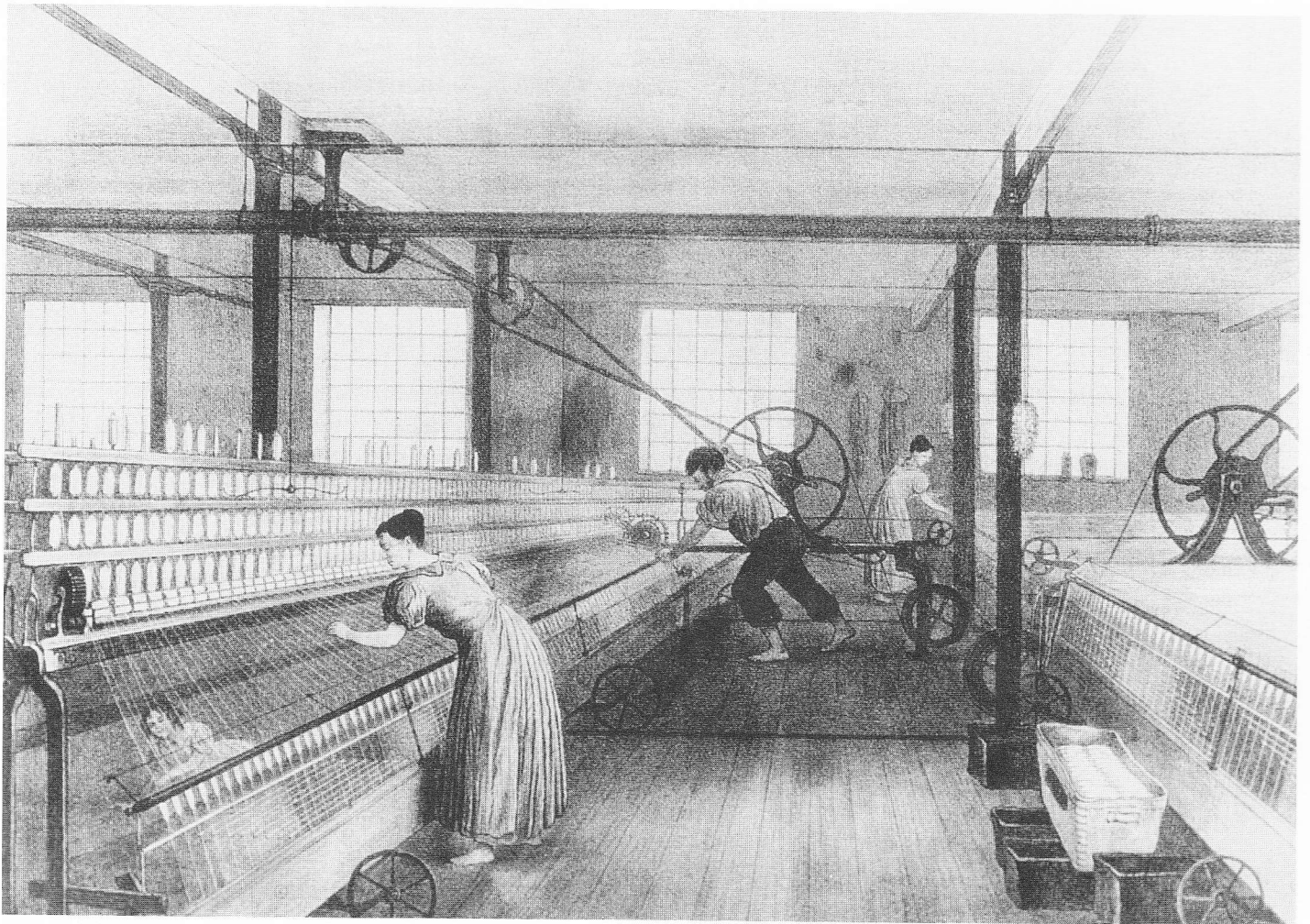
The Drapers, the widely known loom builders, Hopedale, Mass., are about to ship 80 cars of their looms to the South. As each car has a capacity of 20 looms, the total shipment will aggregate about 1,600 looms. They intend to ship four cars per day.

Though it was hardly evident at the time, the future decline of the northern textile industry was foreshadowed in such “good” news.

Carding room workers at Lonsdale Cotton Mills, Lonsdale, R.I., 1912. Photograph by Lewis Hine, no. 3158. Courtesy of Slater Mill Historic Site, Pawtucket, R.I.

Shooting nearly a thousand photographs a year for over a decade in the early 1900s, Lewis Hine referred to himself as a “social photographer.” His images of mill workers, particularly his thousands of pictures of children working in grim conditions, brought federal and state governments face-to-face with reality, ultimately challenging them to act against the exploitation of children in industrial labor. In 1931 the executive committee of the Cotton Textile Institute, a trade advisory organization, recommended ending the employment of women and of minors under eighteen years of age during the hours between 9 P.M. and 6 A.M.





*"Mule spinning, Progress of Cotton."
Lithograph, 1835-1840. Courtesy of Slater
Mill Historic Site, Pawtucket, R.I.*

A spinning mule performs the same task as a spinning wheel, but without the help of human hands. Loose fibers of cotton, wool, or other material—even asbestos—are drawn out, or "draughted," and then twisted into thread or yarn, which is wound onto bobbins set on pins called spindles.

A mechanically driven loom performs the same task as a hand-loom, but without the need for human hands to move the shuttle carrying the weft (crosswise) thread back and forth across the warp (lengthwise) threads. Whereas one hand-loom requires one weaver, a cluster of several power looms on the mill floor could be tended by a single operative. Like a hand-loom, however, a power loom needed to have the warp threads prepared on its harness one strand at a time before production could begin. Warpers—who were usually women with deft fingers, excellent eyesight, and immense patience—were among the highest-paid female workers in the loom rooms of textile factories.

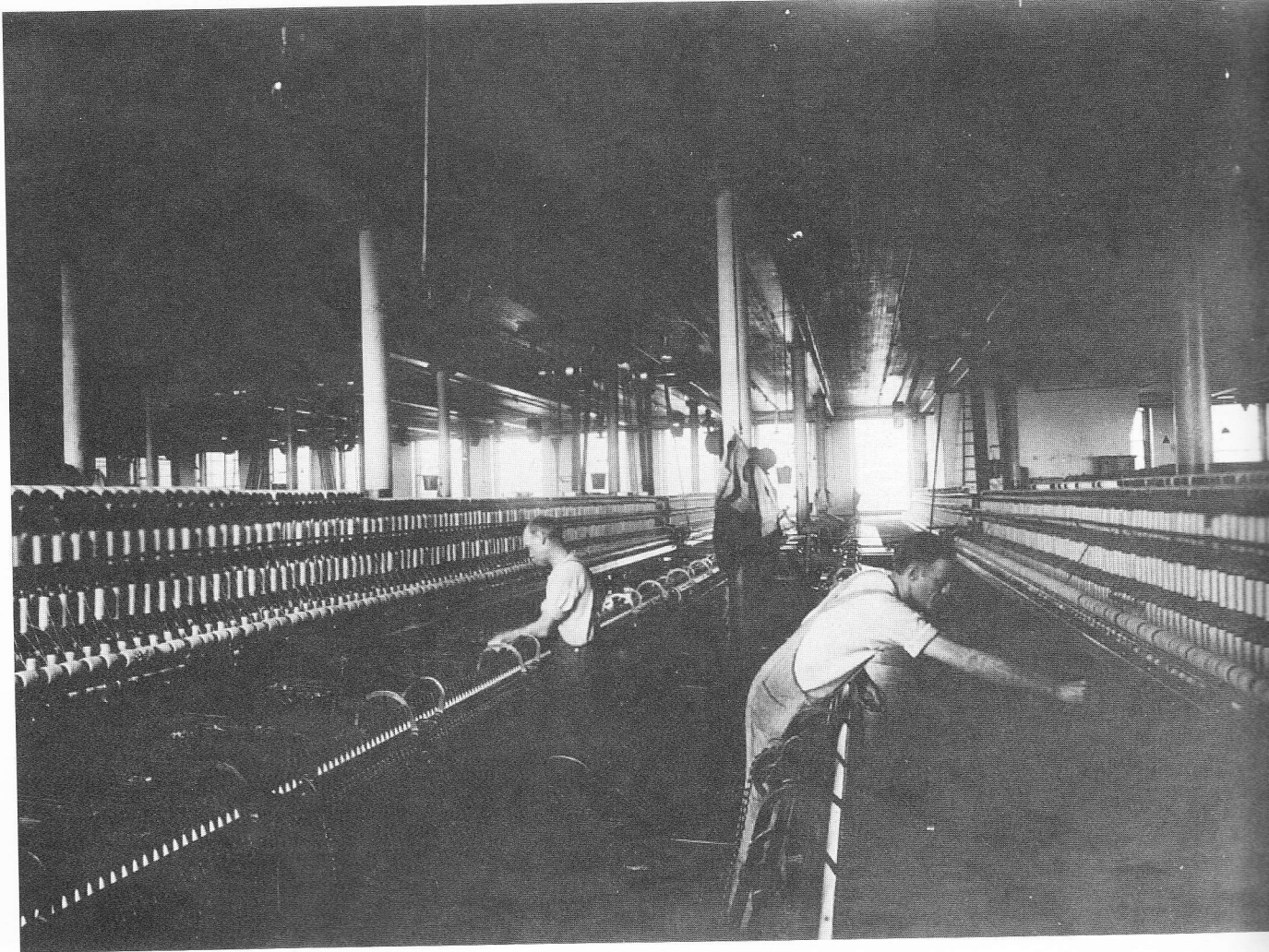
In 1837 William Crompton, an English immigrant, patented an elaborate power loom that could vary weaving patterns mechanically by means of a special chain and encoded disks. His son George Crompton, of Crompton Loom Works in Worcester, Massachusetts, and Lucius Knowles, of Knowles Loom Works, also in Worcester, patented dozens of improvements to this loom after 1850. Unrivaled as the largest loom makers in the world, in 1896 the two firms merged into the Worcester-based Crompton & Knowles Loom Works, with a third-generation Crompton, Charles, as president and Francis Knowles, Lucius's brother, as vice president. By 1931 Crompton & Knowles declared

that the precision of its new equipment made it possible for one weaver to oversee a dozen looms, and for a single worker to produce over two and a quarter miles of fabric in a forty-eight-hour week.

With local textile firms facing growing competition from the South, the Crompton & Knowles Loom Works promoted its machines as “built for replacement, not to encourage expansion” in the mills. Still trying to sell its latest models to the hemorrhaging New England textile industry in the 1930s, the company advertised on the front cover of the trade weekly *Textile World* with photographs of discarded looms and reassurances that “C & K have definite ideas as to how a gradual replacement program can be worked out . . . Will operate to the fullest in spreading the burden.”

Throughout more than a century of innovation in textile manufacturing, from Samuel Slater’s first water-powered spinning frames in the late 1700s to the electric-engine looms of the early 1900s, textile machines were usually obsolete almost as soon as they were installed on the shop floor. The development of these machines was not unlike that of today’s computer equipment: refinement and new technology were always just around the corner.

Mule room at Lonsdale Cotton Mills, Lonsdale, R.I., November 1912. Photograph by Lewis Hine, no. 3156. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8635).

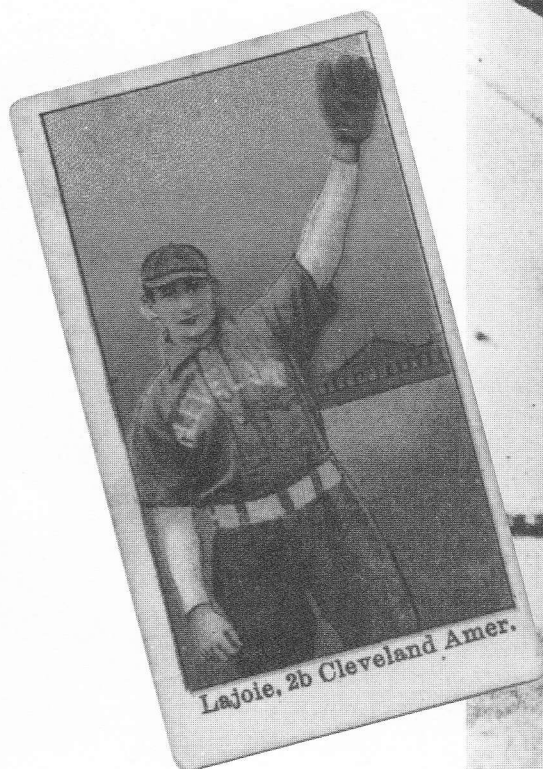


NAPOLEON LAJOIE: SO GREAT THEY EVEN NAMED THE TEAM AFTER HIM

While immigrant workers in the Blackstone River Valley, particularly the French Canadians, seemed resistant to “Americanize” in the early 1900s, the one American thing that French Canadians and nearly everyone else in the nation were not at all slow to embrace was the “Great American Pastime”—the game of baseball. And no history of baseball is complete without mention of Woonsocket-born Napoleon Lajoie, one of the game’s greatest players.

Besides being a source of tremendous pride for French Canadians and for Woonsocket, just how great a baseball player was Napoleon Lajoie? As his statistics show, he was one of the best. Of the thousands of players who have

Baseball card, “one of a set of 50 base ball players . . . , one of which is wrapped with every package of Base Ball Gum,” circa 1905. Courtesy of Christopher Chadbourne.



Napoleon Lajoie (1874-1959). Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 1236).

played in the major leagues, he ranks among the top twenty-five in runs batted in and among the top ten in hitting doubles (higher than Carl Yastrzemski); in overall batting average he is still seventeenth (higher than Joe DiMaggio and just one one-hundredth of a point below Lou Gehrig). He was tops in fielding in the American League for seven seasons. In recognition of his greatness, he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1937, long after his playing days had ended.

Napoleon Lajoie

Years played:	21
Teams:	Philadelphia Phillies, NL, 1896-1901 Philadelphia Athletics, AL, 1901 Cleveland "Naps," AL, 1902-1914 Philadelphia Athletics, AL, 1915-1916 Toronto Maple Leafs, CL, 1917
Games played:	2,480
Times at bat:	9,589
Overall batting average:	.380
Slugging average:	.467
Runs batted in:	1,599
Home runs:	83
Career highlights:	American League record for highest season batting average, .422, in 1901 Triple Crown championships in 1901, 1903, and 1904*

*In 1910 the Triple Crown (with the prize of a new Chalmers 30 automobile) was awarded to Ty Cobb. Seventy years later a baseball statistician discovered that an error in calculation had been made, and that the title should actually have gone to Lajoie.

Lajoie was working as a teamster at City Lumber in Woonsocket for \$7.50 a week and playing baseball for two local teams, the Globe Stars and the Woonsocketers, when he was scouted by the New England League's Fall River team in 1895. Spotted at once as a major talent, he was sent a telegram asking him about his interest in big-league baseball. "I am out for the stuff," he answered. He was signed for \$100 a month, but he was almost immediately grabbed for the major leagues by the Philadelphia Phillies.

After batting over .300 for five consecutive seasons with the Phillies, by 1900 Lajoie was the highest-paid player in the National League, earning the league maximum of \$2,400. In a bidding war for his services, Connie Mack, of the new American League, then offered "the Big Frenchman" \$24,000 to play for the Philadelphia Athletics for four years. Although the Phillies' owner countered with a salary offer more than twice as high, Lajoie chose to go to the Athletics.

In 1901, at the age of twenty-seven, the tall, graceful second baseman led the American League in hits, doubles, batting

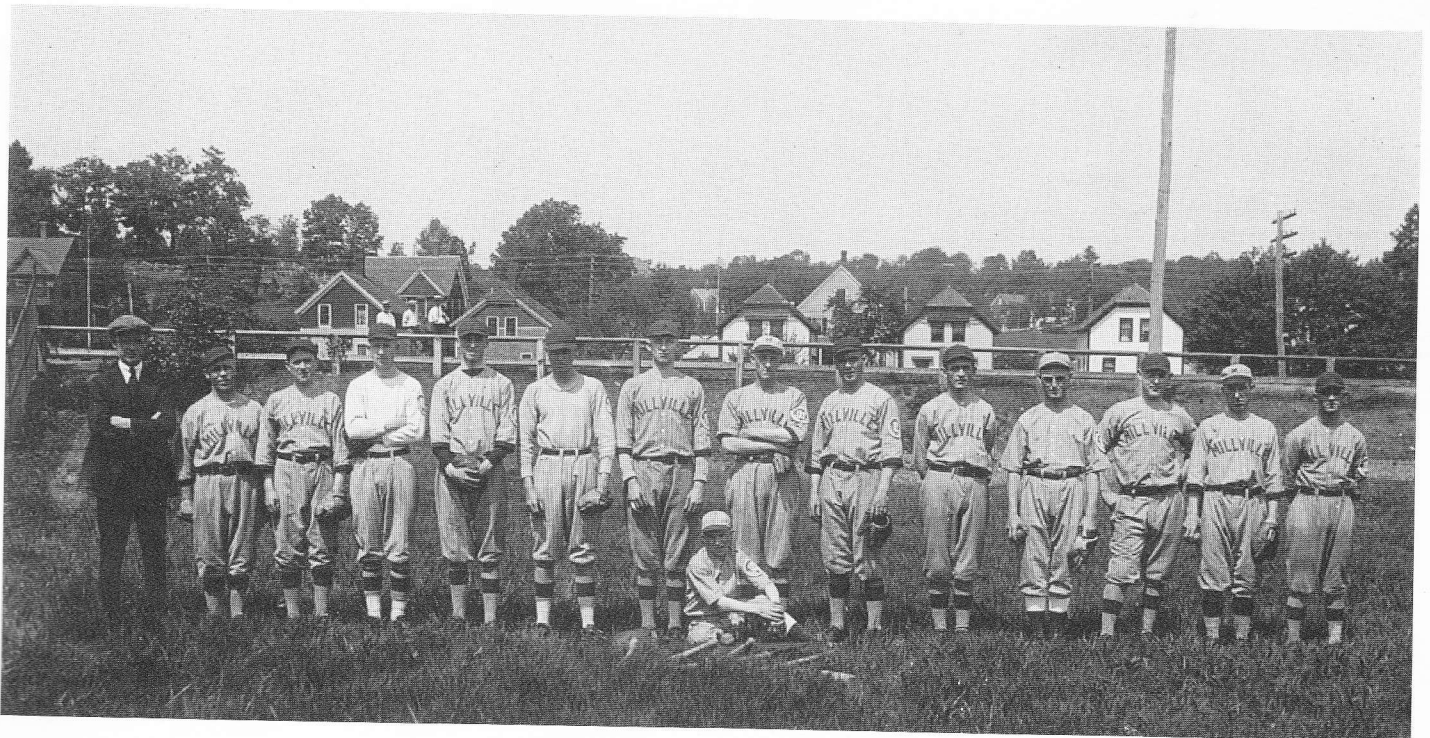
average, slugging average, runs scored, putouts, and fielding percentage. In what is called the Dead-Ball Era of the game, when a top hitter's total number of home runs might be only seven or eight a season, Lajoie belted fourteen homers. His season batting average—an amazing .422—still stands as the highest ever in the American League and the second highest in modern baseball history.

In a case that centered on baseball's reserve clause, in 1902 Lajoie became the first player to be involved in a serious contract dispute. Bitter about losing a former star, the Phillies sued Connie Mack for wooing him away. Lajoie testified in rebuttal that his playing was "not of a unique or extraordinary character"; in no way had his departure damaged the Phillies, he claimed, since the team could easily find someone to replace him. But after carefully considering Lajoie's hefty batting average, the judges of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court disagreed, ruling that Lajoie was to be prohibited from playing for any other club but the Phillies for the term of his contract. Determined to keep Lajoie

the American League, the league's president then transferred him to its team in Cleveland, and for the next several years Lajoie avoided the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania court by staying home when his team traveled to Philadelphia.

Initially known as the Blues, and then as the Broncos, in 1903 the Cleveland team was renamed the Naps in honor of its star player. Lajoie captured the league batting title again that year, and for a third time the year after. In addition to chalking up the league's highest batting average in 1904, Lajoie was tops in hits, doubles, total bases, runs batted in, runs scored, and slugging average. With a record of 86 wins and 65 losses, Cleveland finished the year in fourth place. In 1905 Lajoie was named the team's player-manager, and although the Naps improved under his leadership, they were never able to win a pennant during that time. A ten-game winning streak during the 1908 season carried them to a down-to-the-wire pennant race with Chicago and Detroit, but they finally had to settle for a second-place finish.

In 1909 Lajoie gave up his manager's job to devote his full energies to playing. The following year, at the age of thirty-six, he raised his sagging batting average from below .300 to .384, the second-highest season average of his career. That year the illustrious second baseman from Woonsocket, who as a boy had quit school to drive a wagon, earned more than double the pay of most established ball players. At \$7,000 annually, his income was about fourteen times



Millville, Mass., baseball team, 1920. Gift of Raymond Auclair. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8669).

Women employees of the Sayles Finishing Plant, Saylesville, R.I., enjoy a noontime game of baseball, 1912. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8683)



Nothing more than a willingness to try and a good sense of humor qualified anyone, male or female, to take a swing at the ball in a mill workers' extemporaneous game of baseball. Because of baseball's popularity, millowners organized the Blackstone Valley League in 1924 with teams made up of their employees. Keen on corporate rivalry, some millowners put semiprofessional baseball players on their payrolls to strengthen their company teams.



the average American worker's yearly wage. (His hometown newspaper, the French daily *La Tribune*, reported in 1913 that Lajoie had used his bountiful income to buy his mother a new house in Woonsocket.)

After the Naps fell to a last-place finish in the league in 1914, Lajoie left the team (which fans then voted to rename the Indians) and returned to Philadelphia to play the next two seasons with the Athletics. In 1917, at age forty-two, he became player-manager for the Toronto Maple Leafs and led the Canadian league with a batting average of .380. When play was suspended because of World War I, Lajoie retired from the game, leaving behind him one of the most impressive records in the history of baseball.

TRIPLE-DECKER: A CITY OF PORCHES

The characteristic look of the city of Woonsocket to a large extent results from an abundance of three-story houses, or, as they are called, triple-deckers. Most of these have three separate one-floor apartments, sometimes with both a front and a back porch, or a smaller side porch, at each story. The apartments are typically deeper than they are wide, with a parlor in the front, then a dining room, kitchen, and bathroom off a long central hallway, and bedrooms at the back. Some triple-deckers have six units, with two adjacent apartments on each floor.

For about three decades prior to the 1930s, triple-deckers were the most common residential structures built in Woonsocket. Though occasionally constructed of masonry, hundreds were built of wood, at less expense. With so many immigrant families coming to Woonsocket around 1900, the earlier style of two-and-a-half-story, two-family house evolved into a three-unit urban apartment house to meet the demand for affordable housing. A century ago it was common to find the same family name above all three triple-decker doorbells, with

Along streets where many triple-deckers remain unspoiled, the housing is so distinctively characteristic of cities in the Blackstone River Valley that the neighborhoods may well deserve formal designation—on a local, state, or national level—as historic districts. Such designation can protect a community's particular character by discouraging demolition of older buildings to make way for "modernization." To better imagine how many of Woonsocket's streets must have looked a hundred years ago, see Rathbun Street near George Street, Chester Street off George, or the west end of Lincoln Street.

Page Street (now Cummings Way) at the corner of Clinton Street, Woonsocket, 1908. Social Mill is in the background. Courtesy of William Houle.



relatives and in-laws of a family all living under one roof. Such arrangements can still be found today.

Although at a glance most triple-deckers might appear to be identical, the stacked-up porches, with their lively folk-Victorian details, give each house a separate personality. From house to house there is an imaginative variety in different posts and columns, the delicate spindlework, the fancy corner brackets, and the decorated cornices. Compare the triple-deckers whose three-tiered porches are still intact to the ones whose porches have been converted into rooms, enclosed for privacy, or torn off completely, and it is easy to see that it is the porches that can give triple-decker facades their distinctive character and individuality.

Set close to the sidewalks in unattached rows on narrow lots, triple-deckers built side by side and back to back left little room for big yards or broad lawns. "Porch life" was consequently an important feature of high-density apartment living in downtown Woonsocket when the city's streets were lined mainly with triple-deckers. Before the coming of television a family's evening entertainment often consisted of sitting outdoors on the porch to watch passersby in the street below, chat with neighbors on their own porches next door, and listen to accordion or fiddles playing familiar Quebecois or European ballads from porches nearby. One very useful feature of the triple-decker porch remains unchanged today: it was, and is, the most practical place to hang a clothesline.



A French Canadian family on their front porch on Page Street, Woonsocket, circa 1910. Courtesy of Mrs. Armand Savaria.

MANAGEMENT'S VIEW: THE COMPANY TOWN

Aside from the tall white spires of venerable village churches, no feature is more typical of the New England scene, especially throughout the river valleys of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, than old mills and mill villages. Beginning in colonial times, mills hugged the riverbanks for their “mill



Mill village housing on Roger Williams Avenue, East Providence, R.I., circa 1912. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8684).

The tree-lined streets, pleasant houses, well-stocked modern stores, clean hospitals, good schools, green parks, manicured baseball diamonds, and even gaily-lit amusement parks were all intended to keep potentially rebellious workers contented and occupied.

privileges,” tapping the rivers’ waterpower to run their machinery and drawing water for use in various manufacturing processes. Then, in the early years of the Industrial Revolution, there came a new phenomenon: the company-owned mill village. Entire settlements and communities were brought into being by the men who owned the mills.

In planning the construction of a new village, the industrialist had both the worker and the investor in mind. On the one hand, the creation of a company village was intended to be seen by workers as the philanthropic act of a benevolent millowner, a perception that would help to inspire worker loyalty. At the same time, the enterprise had to be seen by investors as a justified expense, one that would ensure consistent profits by allowing management to control almost every aspect of the lives of its workers, whether on the job or at leisure, at home or in church, indoor or outdoors, in sickness or in health.

Every feature of these villages—their buildings, street layout, parks and playgrounds—was the product of careful thought and planning by millowners and their advisers. Company-owned housing was provided for workers within

NOTICE.

Tenants will be held accountable for damage done to houses, inside and outside of their respective tenements.

ALBION COMPANY,
J. H. & J. CHACE, TREAS.

AVIS!

Les locataires seront tenus responsables des dommages causes a l'exterieur et a l'interieur des maisons ou ils demeurent.

ALBION COMPANY,
J. H. & J. CHACE, TREAS.

Notice to residents of mill village housing, Albion Company, Albion, R.I., n.d. Courtesy of Slater Mill Historic Site, Pawtucket, R.I.

walking distance of their job, and within hearing distance of the company's bell or whistle; company-owned stores stocked everything that workers and their families might need. This arrangement was not only convenient for workers, but it was advantageous to the company as well: whether wages were paid to employees in company scrip or in actual currency, the housing and the stores recycled those wages back to the company as income.

However exhausting the work and demeaning the conditions on the factory floor, management theorized that an attractive, well-run village would draw and retain good workers, thus insuring a stable, reliable labor force and, ultimately, substantial profits. Brutal working conditions and the dehumanizing mechanical aspects of factory work could be justified with the claim that the benefits were outweighed by the attractive surroundings and life-enhancing activities provided for workers outside the job site. The tree-lined streets, pleasant houses, well-stocked modern stores, clean hospitals, good schools, green parks, manicured baseball diamonds, and even gaily-lit amusement parks were all intended to keep potentially rebellious workers contented and occupied. Ever fearful of worker unrest, millowners and managers reasoned that the more appealing the environment and the more wholesome the leisure opportunities offered to the workers, the less likely the workers would be to spend their nonworking hours in brooding about working conditions and banding together with their fellow workers to demand that management make improvements.

Slatersville 1904



Slatersville, R.I., 1904. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 5439).

Some company villages carried the name of their mill, such as the Woonsocket-area villages of Globe, Hamlet, and Social. Others honored their investors or creators; for example, Slatersville, not far from Woonsocket, is named for John Slater, Samuel Slater's brother. Built as an industrial village around 1807, Slatersville was the first planned community in America. It included a mill, a company store, two tenement buildings for workers, and, later, a Congregational church on a hill. The quaint appearance of the village today is largely due to "improvements" made in 1916. A self-guided walking tour explaining the mill village features of Slatersville is available from the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission.



BILINGUAL SCHOOLBOOK: NEW ENGLAND WAS NOT QUEBEC, BUT THE CHURCH WAS ALWAYS ROME

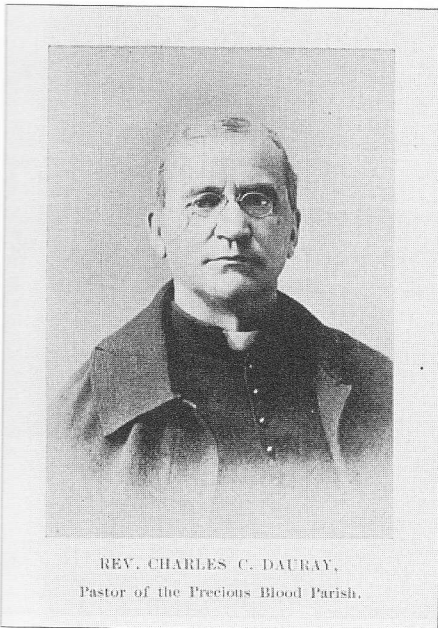
That a child's lesson book in two languages, French and English, would occupy the Woonsocket community, cause local Catholic priests to barricade church doors on Sunday mornings, and occasionally attract the attention of the national media over a period of seven years in the 1920s seems unbelievable. Yet before the dust settled over the issue of bilingual, multicultural education in private schools, several residents of Woonsocket nearly incurred eternal damnation for challenging what was considered the divinely ordained supremacy of the church.

In 1922 the Rhode Island General Assembly and Governor Emery San Souci, a French Canadian Catholic, passed into law a Republican-sponsored bill requiring that the basic subjects of public elementary education—math, history, civics, and English—be taught in the English language in all private (including parochial) schools throughout the state. (Other subjects, such as art, music, French history, and religion, could be taught in other languages.) To some of the French Canadian population of Woonsocket, where three out of four French Canadian children were taught in French-language parochial classrooms, the new law, known as the Peck Act, seemed to be a direct attack on the long-standing struggle for *la survivance*.

A French-language Woonsocket newspaper, *La Sentinelle*, assumed a leading role in the opposition to the Peck Act, charging that it was nothing less than an intentional assassination of the French legacy. As a result of the paper's involvement, the dispute over which language French Canadian parochial-school children would learn their lesson in, and, later, which kind of school (all French Canadian or mixed-ethnic) they would attend and which people were the best defenders of *la survivance*, became known as the Sentinelle Affair. In their opposition to the new law the local "Sentinellistes" drew sympathy and support from interested individuals in Central Falls and Pawtucket, as well as Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and even Quebec.

Against a background of mounting nationwide sentiment for making American citizens out of all the country's immigrants, heated arguments raged over the Peck Act—its constitutional legitimacy, its enforcement, the possibility of its repeal. Pleas for compromise went unheard amid the uproar. With some of the more impassioned Sentinellistes accusing church leaders of apostasy for obeying the law, the conflict raged within the church bureaucracy itself.

The fiery emotions behind the clash over whether French or English should be used in parochial school classrooms, and whether or not those classrooms should be multiethnic, were fueled by the threat that American mass culture posed to French Canadian identity. Second- and third-generation French Canadians—born in the United States, and therefore legal American citizens—were inescapably more Americanized than their parents and grandparents. Though they might speak mainly French at home, at work, in church, and among friends, they were nonetheless likely to share in the general American enthusiasm for such institutions as baseball, Hollywood movies, popular music, trendy fashions, and, of course, new cars. As long as the ethnic community's religious leaders retained strict control over parochial classroom instruction,



REV. CHARLES C. DAURAY,
Pastor of the Precious Blood Parish.

The Reverend Charles C. Dauray. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8652).

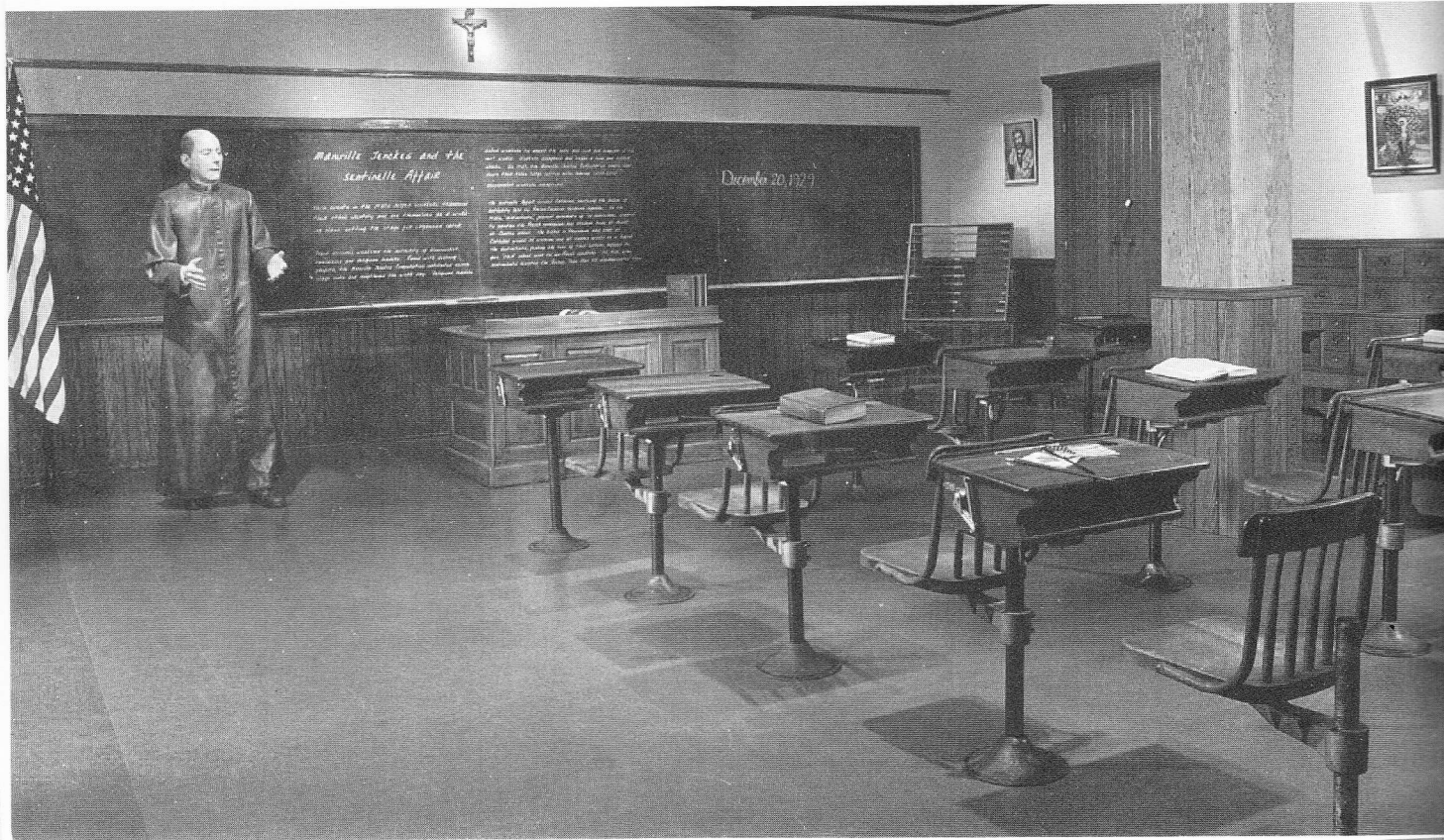
Woonsocket's first Catholic school for French-speaking children was established at Precious Blood Parish in 1884. At the invitation of Father Charles Dauray, six nuns—Mother Ste. Scholastique, Mother Marie de la Visitation, Mother Marie de la Nativité, Mother St. Eloi, Mother Ste. Placide, and Sister Ste. Sabine—came to Woonsocket from Les Religieuses de Jesus-Marie in Sillery, Quebec. Spending their first year in Woonsocket with the Sisters of Mercy at St. Charles Parish, an Irish Catholic parish where Sunday school classes had been held in French to accommodate the growing French-speaking population, they inaugurated their school in the basement of Precious Blood Church. The following year the school relocated, with the sisters, to a new three-story building on nearby Hamlet Avenue. A decade later the school moved to still larger quarters on Park Avenue. In honor of the pastor of Precious Blood Parish, the new gothic-style school building was called Le Castel Dauray.

devotional duties, and, to some extent, the recreational activities of their followers, *la survivance* seemed secure. But when the French Canadian Catholic own diocese, local French Canadian clergy, church-endorsed French Canadian state legislators, and the state's French Canadian governor all appeared to betray the cause by supporting the Peck Act in 1922, and then, to make matters worse, promoted an ethnically integrated parochial high school in Woonsocket in 1924, the perils of American culture loomed too large for comfort for many in the French Canadian community.

Taking a militant position, the Sentinellistes fought the government, attempted to sue the church, and paraded to reignite their people's passion for *la survivance*. A larger group, including the governor himself, took more moderate ground. This group reasoned that risking the exposure of French Canadian youth to American customs in Catholic school classrooms was far less dangerous than defying the authority of the church, and swimming against the strong current of American patriotism as well. Moreover, these moderates felt, it had to be recognized that urbanized, industrialized twentieth-century New England was not nineteenth-century Quebec.

Finally the Vatican intervened to end the bitter hostilities among Woonsocket Catholics. Ruling in 1928 in favor of the moderates' view, which supported the church's capitulation on the Peck Act, the pope excommunicated more than sixty of the most belligerent Sentinelle protesters. Horrified though they were by this action, the Sentinellistes were ultimately swayed by their profound reverence for the church, and with the church's authority reestablished, the Sentinelle Affair came to an end. Each of those excommunicated subsequently signed a statement of repentance and rejoined the church the following year.

La Survivance parochial classroom exhibit.
Photograph by Paul Darling. Courtesy of the
Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8814).



LABOR UNIONS: ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Scab, yellow-dog contract, picket, sit-down, lockout. The language of labor—words about working and worker behavior, and especially labor protest—colors the daily conversations of employees and management, particularly in factories and mills. Many words and phrases are distinct to the world of workers. Knowing these words, knowing where they came from and how they are used, makes it possible to hear the voices of the people who spoke them. Listening to their way of speaking gives us a glimpse into how they thought and felt.

shop Not surprisingly, the noun *shop* means both a place where things are made and the place where things are sold. The word is derived from the Old English *sceoppa*, meaning “booth” or “shed.” By about the 1600s the place where things are made was also called a *works* (as in “carriage works”), from the Old English *weorc*, or a *manufactory*, from the Middle French and Latin *manu* and *manus*, “hand,” plus *facere* and *factus*, “to do.” *Factory*, a place where things are done, comes from the latter words.

union As used to mean a workers' organization, the word *union*, from the Latin *unus*, “one,” dates from the early 1800s. It was first recorded in England. The idea of unions, or associations of workers, developed from medieval craft and trade guilds, such as those formed by goldsmiths and shoemakers. By the late 1800s a union member or organizer was also called a *laborite*. The word *labor*, with its present meaning, came into the English language unchanged from Latin through Old French.

closed shop, open shop As the terms have been used since 1900, a workplace is *closed* when management has a contract to employ only union workers and *open* when there is no such contract and jobs are accessible to all workers, both union and nonunion. In a *nonunion shop* no unions or union members are

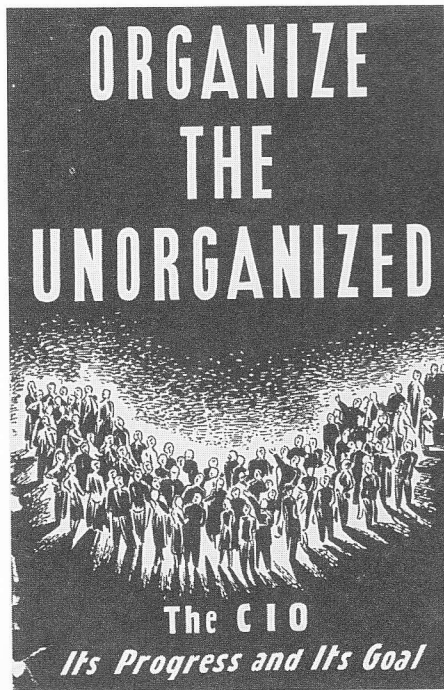
strike In nautical lingo, to strike the sails is to lower them. In 1768 a band of British sailors refused to work by striking their sails, so when a group of English hatters refused to work that same year, they were said to *strike* also. In America the noun *strike* dates back to the early 1800s. A *wildcat strike*, an expression in use since the 1940s, is an unauthorized demonstration, that is, one not planned and sanctioned by union chiefs or other workers' leaders. Before the word *strike* was used, a workers' protest action was called a *turnout*.

sit-down In a *sit-down*, workers stop work and literally sit down in place at their jobs, where they will be in the way of anyone who might try to continue their work. Sometimes they refuse to leave the premises until their grievances are heard or their demands are met. A *walkout*, in which workers walk out from their jobs in protest, is a strike. In either case, work is stopped.

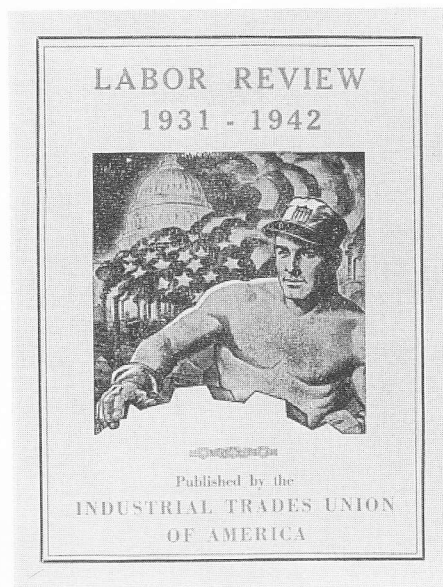
slowdown Workers stay at their jobs in a *slowdown*, but to direct the attention of management to their issues, they do as little work as possible. Factory workers and salespeople typically had a *stint*, or a set amount that they agreed to produce or sell in exchange for a set wage. Overzealous individuals, usually newly hired, who exceeded the stint, thereby making coworkers look less efficient and productive by comparison, were extremely unpopular among their

VOTE
TEXTILE
WORKERS
UNION OF
AMERICA
C.I.O.

Textile Workers Union of America, CIO, broadside, circa 1940. Courtesy of the Museum of American Textile History, Lowell, Mass. (1989.43).



CIO pamphlet, 1939. Courtesy of Scott Molloy.



Magazine cover. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8650).

fellow employees, who usually made their feelings clear to them very quickly. Management was generally unsuccessful in trying to figure out how workers tacitly determined among themselves what they considered a fair stint. Sometimes management attempted to create or increase output quotas by means of *speedup*, in which the machinery or production line was made to move faster. This tactic could result in a strike.

lockout A *lockout* is a means of retaliation by management for workers to stage some form of protest. By closing the doors of the factory and locking the workers out of their jobs before a strike can take place, management sometimes force workers to come to terms—usually management's terms—quickly. The term *lockout* appeared in labor jargon before 1600.

picket Oddly, the word *picket* is believed to be traceable to the Latin word meaning "woodpecker," a bird known for its sharply pointed beak. In ancient languages a picket is a sharply pointed stake or fence pale, sometimes used as a defense. In military language dating from the mid-1700s, a detachment of soldiers, armed and sent out as a defensive maneuver to watch for an enemy, is said to picket. Likewise, by the mid-1800s in England a line of picketing workers sent out to watch for other workers trying to get into the factory was also said to picket.

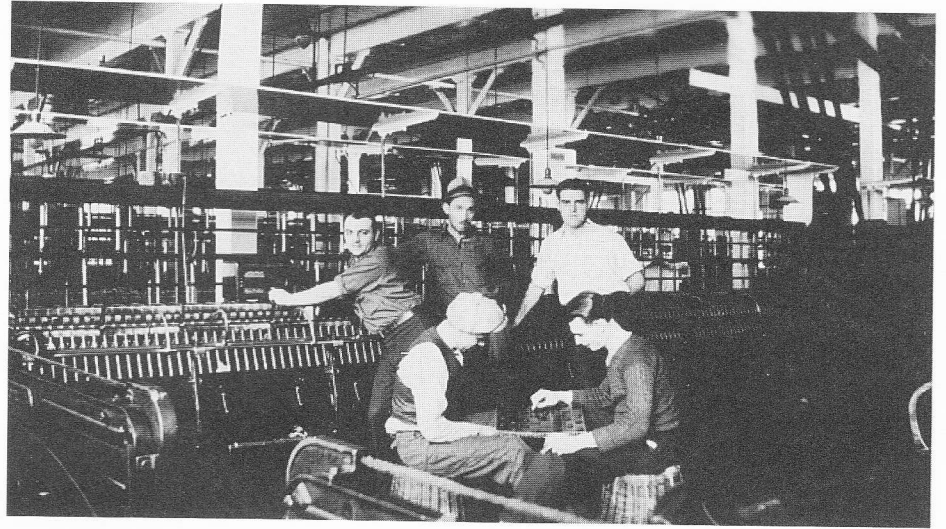
scab *Scab* has been a slang word for a contemptible person since the late 18th century. The word *scab* derives from the Latin *scabere*, "to scratch." Brought into English from Scandinavian, *scab*, meaning the crust over a wound, is the root of *scabies*, an itchy skin disease with scabs, caused by parasitic mites. Nevertheless, a scabby person with this highly contagious condition would generally be considered loathsome. Just after 1800 *scab* became a word of insult applied to someone—a nonmember of a union, or a person willing to work for less than union wages—who replaced another worker during a strike. Such an individual was also disparagingly called a *blackleg*.

strikebreaker A *strikebreaker* is a person who goes to work during a strike who helps management find people to take over the jobs of striking workers. Outside organizations or groups of people, typically armed, who attempt to break a strike, sometimes by violence, are also called strikebreakers.

blacklist The word *blacklist* came into use as a labor term in the late 19th century to refer to a list of workers that management refused to hire because of their connections or their past history as troublemakers. Blacklists were commonly circulated from factory to factory from the mid-1800s onward.

yellow-dog contract The slang words *yellow* and *yellow-bellied*, used to describe cowards or cowardly behavior, date from the mid-1800s. A worthless person was called a *yellow dog* about that time; later, an electoral slate that included an undesirable candidate, but that good party members were expected to support, was called a *yellow-dog ticket*. During the 1920s an agreement scheme became popular: to gain or keep a job, workers were required to sign an agreement promising not to organize or join a labor union. Unions called these agreements—which are no longer legal—*yellow-dog contracts*.





A sit-down strike at the French Worsted Mill, Woonsocket, 1937. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8622).



Police arrest a striking worker after a clash at the Royal Weaving Plant in Pawtucket, July 1931. Courtesy of Scott Molloy.

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

A PROCLAMATION

By His Excellency

R. LIVINGSTON BEECKMAN, Governor

French Independence Day

The Fourth of July, America's Independence Day, was this year observed as never before, practically all of the Nations allied against Germany celebrating our great holiday as though it was a universal day of independence.

Sunday, July the fourteenth, is the great French holiday, the anniversary of the fall of the Bastile, marking as it does the rebirth of France. France and her people have taken a very important part in this war. Her borders were invaded in the early days of this conflict and it was only by the great courage of her troops and splendid strategy of her Generals that the German horde was turned back at the first battle of the Marne. The Northern part of her country has been continuously occupied by the enemy, but her resolute will and determination to fight on until a victorious peace is forced upon Germany has always been foremost in her mind.

Let us see that Bastile Day is as fittingly observed here as our Independence Day was in France. I appeal to the citizens of our State to display the French tricolor on that day and, wherever it is possible, that exercises be held to commemorate Bastile Day.

Joseph H. Gainer, Mayor of Providence, has ordered a mass meeting to be held at Keith's Theatre in Providence on Sunday evening. I ask all who can to attend this meeting so as to give public expression of our patriotism to our sister republic and ally.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the State to be affixed, this eleventh day of July in the year of Our Lord, one thousand nine hundred eighteen and of the Independence the one hundred forty-third.

R. LIVINGSTON BEECKMAN,
Governor.

By the Governor
J. FRED PARKER
Secretary of State.

Americanism: A Perennial Issue

To understand the implications of what Americanism might mean, it may be helpful to ponder a few not-so-hypothetical scenarios.

First, think of this: What if the country into which you recently immigrated declared war on your motherland? Which nation would you be more willing to die for? As America prepared to enter the Great War—World War I—the question was hardly rhetorical; the country would declare as the enemy the very relatives of some of its most recent immigrants. In times of tense political rivalry between nations, when passions are inflamed, loyalty can become a matter of personal as well as national security.

Or ask yourself this: As a foreign-born resident of the United States, a would-be U.S. citizen, would you proudly display the Stars and Stripes outside your home on the Fourth of July? Could you enthusiastically celebrate the independence of long-dead former English colonists from the rule of their long-dead British king? How soon after you become a citizen would you freely cease to commemorate the more familiar traditional holidays of your homeland? Would you use your American freedom to celebrate both sets of holidays, the old and the new?

Finally, consider this: How would you feel if your job, and thus your ability to put food on the table for your family, depended on your willingness to march down Main Street in a public parade as a representative of your company or your trade union? Group self-interest, intense partisanship, and demands for displays of loyalty can flourish not only in wartime but in times of peace as well.

A proclamation of French Independence Day, 1918. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8688).

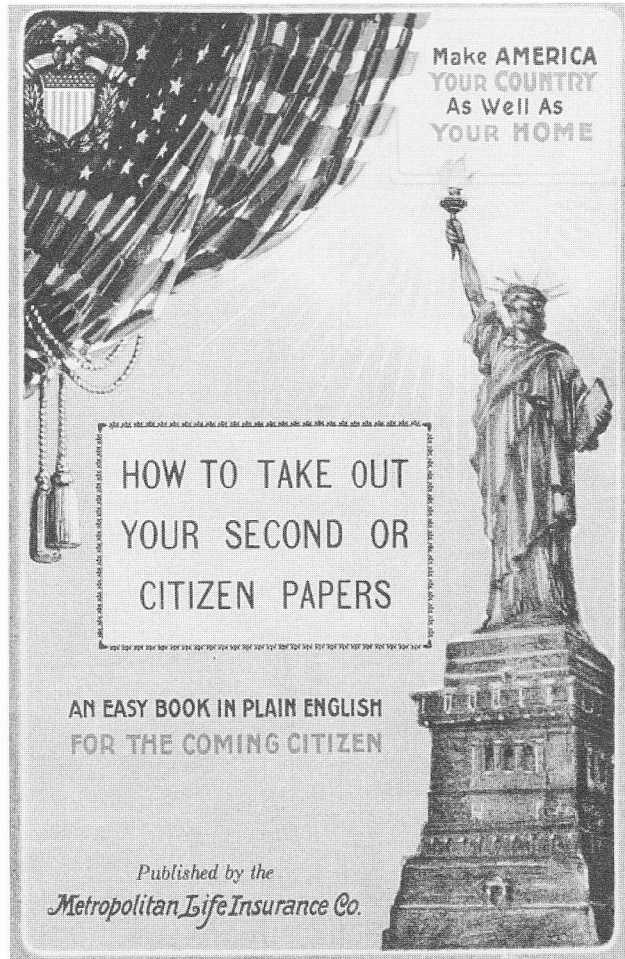
From time to time over the years the American public has been urged, via the nation's press, media, and advertising, to "Buy American." To many, spending hard-earned dollars only on American goods, and thereby supporting our national industries and local producers, has seemed the most patriotic thing they could do. To these citizens, "Buy American!"—the rallying cry of materialistic nativism—has seemed a clear and simple imperative. In fact, though, it is closely related to one far more complex, a precept that has been current since the generation after the signing of the Declaration of Independence: "*Be American!*"

For more than two hundred years Americans have seen immigrants as a direct threat to jobs, homes, space, land, and resources otherwise "belonging" to "real Americans." Yet, considering America's unparalleled three-hundred-year history of mass immigration from almost everywhere on the planet, this fear of immigrants is a peculiar anxiety. Who *are* the real Americans? Throughout U.S. history, statesmen, politicians, activists, entrepreneurs, scholars, educators, and historians have been defining and redefining Americanism—what it is to be an American, and what that identity entails. It is an issue that has been argued anew with each succeeding generation.

What *does* it mean to be an American, or to *become* an American? Is Americanism a national prerequisite, a political doctrine, a cultural identity, a personal opinion, or merely a consumer policy?

Each time a wave of immigrants has arrived on the shores of America, populating its countryside and cities with non-English-speaking families, clustering into nearly all-foreign communities and neighborhoods, holding curious fetes for saints and deities in streets and parks, and filling grocery stands with unfamiliar foodstuffs, there has come a renewed impulse to rethink the issue of Americanism. This reconsideration may involve not only politics but genealogy, race, language, religion, customs, and even comestibles as well. An important secondary theme throughout the exhibits in the Museum of Work & Culture is the transformation that immigrants undergo in "becoming American." To a significant extent this theme was derived from the work of Professor Gary Gerstle, the author of *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960*.

This book, like the museum, describes the lives of Woonsocket's nineteenth- and twentieth-century French Canadians and Franco-Belgians (or "France French," as they were called), including their interactions with textile mill foremen and owners, labor leaders and trade unions, civic authorities, and the Catholic Church, as well as their associations with each other and with different ethnic groups. In particular, Gerstle recounts the story of the French Canadians first as unskilled laborers (in all, about fifty thousand toiled at low-paying jobs in unimaginably grim factories), then as campaigners and activists in organized labor, and finally as community leaders and "Americans." A narrative of heroic persistence, it is the story of the workingman's encounter with the changing meanings of Americanism in real-life day-to-day existence.



Cover of a booklet published by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, circa 1925. Courtesy of Scott Molloy.

Gerstle's book traces the crisscrossing paths of Woonsocket's immigrant groups at work and at home, in church and at play, during strikes and in riots, all set against the background of national politics from the time of the Roosevelt administration and its New Deal down to the Reagan presidency and its trickle-down theory of wealth and work. For Gerstle, Americanism does not mean a social or economic system or ideology, like suchisms as Marxism or communism; he believes, rather, that the term is best suited to mean a type of flexible language—an adaptable set of words and phrases. Many groups in Woonsocket during the first half of the twentieth century—the government, industry, the church, and the unions—had considerable success in using the language of Americanism to suit their own political and social purposes.

Having examined the history of these groups, Gerstle concludes that *Americanism* has had varied meanings, depending on the time, the group, and the intended purpose, and that the meaning has reflected the group's vision of the nation, society, or itself. Gerstle describes four distinct "overlapping dimensions" of Americanism. The first dimension was *nationalist*: this meant a required loyalty to a certain set of "heroes," including the Pilgrims, the Founding Fathers, Washington, Lincoln, and others. The second dimension was *democratic*: this meant a required allegiance to the ideals for which these heroes fought, namely "democracy," "liberty," "rights," "independence," and "freedom." The third dimension was *progressive*: this affirmed that America was capitalist and committed to bringing the benefits of science, technology, abundance, and efficiency within the reach of all of its citizens (for profit, of course). The fourth dimension was *traditionalist*: this looked back nostalgically to "the good old days" of simple Yankee conservatism, patient self-reliance, and staunch virtue.

Gerstle observes that the progressive and traditionalist dimensions of Americanism were inherently contradictory, and that many "found it difficult if not impossible to embrace both"—that is, to be "modern" and at the same time steadfastly old-fashioned. But the author shows that by the 1930s the traditionalist and progressive dimensions proved complementary precisely because the same words and phrases of Americanism were shared by radicals and reformers, ethnic-minded workers, and defenders of the status quo. Although their interpretations of Americanism may have differed greatly, their political world views merged for the benefit of the working class.

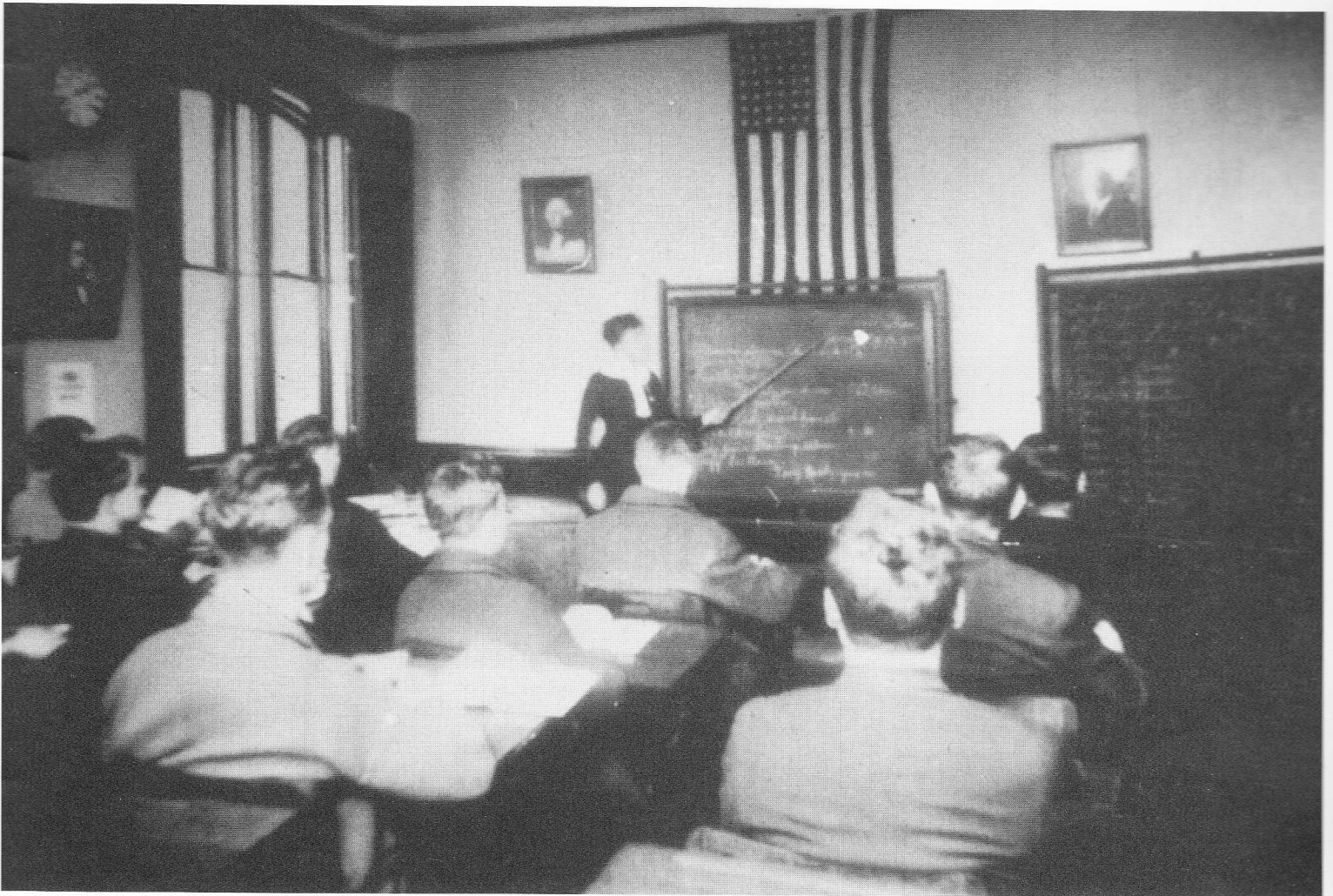
To the government of the United States, Americanism was nationalistic; especially during war years, it meant loyalty to the flag and an unflinching commitment to bear arms to defend national boundaries and ideals. To immigrants, likely accustomed to absolute rule, such demands may not have seemed strange, but that the American government also conferred on citizens the right to vote and otherwise participate in the political process may well have been the most remarkable new circumstance in their lives.

To industrial management during the early twentieth century, Americanism was progressive: it meant rapid cultural assimilation for every ethnic group in the form that best suited corporate efficiency and bottom-line revenues. In an

attempt to reduce labor turnover and increase productivity, in 1914 the Ford Motor Company in Detroit made English-language classes mandatory for its all-foreign work force. Employees who refused to participate, or who did not make a convincing effort to Americanize, were dismissed. Ford's program, or "Fordism," was considered hugely successful by industrialists at the time, and it became the model for a broad national patriotic campaign. Such programs (which often included corporate-sanctioned spying on workers) were considered the American way of doing business. The implication was clear: Be American or be fired.

To labor organizations since the early 1900s, Americanism was democratic. This usually meant that workers were first taught about their "rights" and then persuaded that they should have the power to scrutinize and improve hiring practices, wages, and, above all, working conditions. Beyond recruitment, the ultimate goal of these organizations was to gain an American standard of living for every worker, regardless of country of origin. Even in the era of the nation's most violent strikes and disastrous layoffs, unionism, with its emphasis on rights, was claimed to embody the spirit of Americanism, for (as the Declaration of Independence proclaimed) "all men are created equal" and "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." In forging from their diverse constituency "the common man"—that is, the American worker—the unions

An Americanization class for employees of the U.S. Rubber Company at the Alice Mill complex, Woonsocket, circa 1920. Courtesy of the Woonsocket High School Social Studies Department (MI36).



This document is not a passport. It is issued only for local use. It is valid

SEPTEMBER THIRTEENTH NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FORTY EIGHT
(Month) (Sept. 13, 1948) (Day) (Year)

AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE

Montreal, Canada, June 3, 1947
(Place and date)

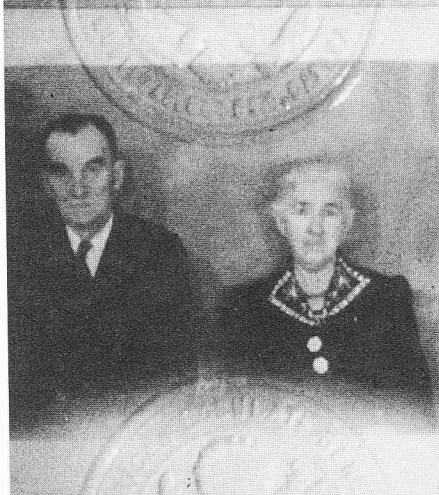
This is to CERTIFY, That Jean Baptiste BAILLARGEON

whose signature is subscribed hereto, is currently registered in this office as a citizen of the United States of America.

The following members of his family reside with him and are included in his registration

Name: Marie Belanger Date of birth: June 6, 1875 Place of birth: St. Agathe, Quebec
(Name) (Date of birth) (Place of birth)

Children: --- (Name) (Date of birth) (Place of birth)



PERSONAL DESCRIPTION

Place of birth: St. Theodore d'Acton, Quebec

Date of birth: April 20, 1881

Occupation: ---

Height: 5 feet, 7 1/2 inch

Hair: brown Eyes: brown

Distinguishing marks or features: mole over nose

[SEAL]
(Fee one dollar)

Judith H. Bell

vice consul of the United States of America

Jean Baptiste Baillargeon
(Signature of person registered)

To become an American citizen, an applicant for naturalization

1. must be a permanent resident of the United States who has resided there as a green-card holder (legal alien) for a minimum of five years and has been physically present in the country at least half that time;
2. must renounce his allegiance to his country of birth and pledge loyalty to the United States (some other countries allow dual citizenship);
3. must be able to speak, read, write, and understand simple words and phrases in the English language;
4. must pass a 100-question examination regarding the history and government of the United States;
5. must submit a completed fingerprint chart (for a Federal Bureau of Investigation criminal-record check), an application listing biographical information, photographs, and a check for ninety-five dollars to the local immigration service office.

If approved for citizenship, an applicant must attend a swearing-in ceremony before a federal judge.

A naturalized citizen is ineligible to become president of the United States.

were perhaps more successful than any other force in breaking down barriers between people who otherwise had little in common.

Unlike the government, industry, and organized labor, the Roman Catholic Church, including the French Canadian congregations in Woonsocket, found little that was appealing in any aspect of Americanism. Instead, the church saw Americanism as a direct threat to its authority over all matters, practical and spiritual. Americanism, it was feared, could only mean one thing, Anglo-Protestantism, and that would surely bring with it an unimaginable hostility toward Catholics and immigrants. To the faithful, strict religious observance and adherence to *la survivance*, preserving the traditions and the culture of the Quebecois habitant, was the proper philosophical and pragmatic response to progressive Americanism. When some church leaders embraced changes (such as the introduction of English-language curriculums in all-French parochial classrooms) that might lead to the loss of ethnic identity, the church's own devotees rioted in opposition.

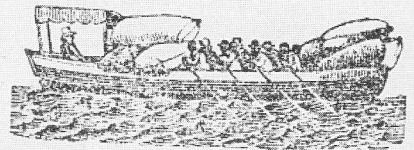
Gerstle's findings, like the exhibits in the Museum of Work & Culture, show how optimistic Woonsocket's ethnic communities felt about their future in America after the 1930s. With the power of union solidarity, as well as their own majority status in local unions, the city's ethnic workers—largely French Canadian immigrants—gained considerable control over their working conditions. Once the immigrants became American citizens, they also turned their collective energies to combating social discrimination, another issue of particular importance to their community. Consequently, the working class in Woonsocket enjoyed more economic, cultural, and political independence than ever before.

A look into the lives of immigrants and their second- and third-generation descendants in Woonsocket in the twentieth century, as those lives are represented at the Museum of Work & Culture, makes it apparent that Americanism, to any foreign-born, working-class individual or family, was simultaneously a matter of personal identity and a political condition required for economic survival. For these people, as for their counterparts across the nation, Americanism most likely stood simply for *hope*—hope for a better future. And hope, certainly, is what immigrants have been seeking on this continent at least as far back as the landing of the *Mayflower*.

Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960 by Gary Gerstle, was published by the Cambridge University Press in 1989. A review of the book—"The New Historians Recapture the Flag," by Michael Kazin—appeared in the *New York Times Book Review* on 2 July 1989. Dr. Gerstle is a Brown University alumnus. Formerly at Princeton University, he is currently a member of the history department at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.



Document certifying the American citizenship of Quebec natives Mr. and Mrs. Jean Baptiste Baillargeon, 1947. Courtesy of Albert Choquette.



THE Providence and Worcester Canal-Boat Company, have commenced running a daily line of boats from Providence to Worcester, and the intermediate places, leaving at 4 o'clock, P. M.

Rates of Freight from Providence.

	First Rate.	Second Rate.	
To Worcester,	14 cts.	12 1-2 cts	per 100 lbs.
Milbury,	13 "	12 "	do.
Wilkinsonville,	12 1-2 "	11 1-2 "	do.
Leland's Landing,	12 1-4 "	11 "	do.
Farnum's Mills,	12 "	10 1-2 "	do.
Holbrook's Mills,	11 1-2 "	10 "	do.
Uxbridge,	10 "	9 "	do.
Millville,	8 "	7 "	do.
Blackstone,	7 "	6 1-2 "	do.
Waterford,	6 3-4 "	6 "	do.
Woonsocket,	6 1-2 "	5 1-2 "	do.
Mansville,	5 "	4 1-2 "	do.
Albion Mills,	4 1-2 "	4 "	do.
Kelley's Mills,	4 "	3 1-2 "	do.

2d Rate Articles—Gypsum, Lumber, Lead, Pig Iron, Grind Stones, broken Castings, Bricks, Hay, Hoop Poles, Sand, Staves and Heading, Clay, Earth, Leached Ashes, Manure, Iron Ore and Shells.

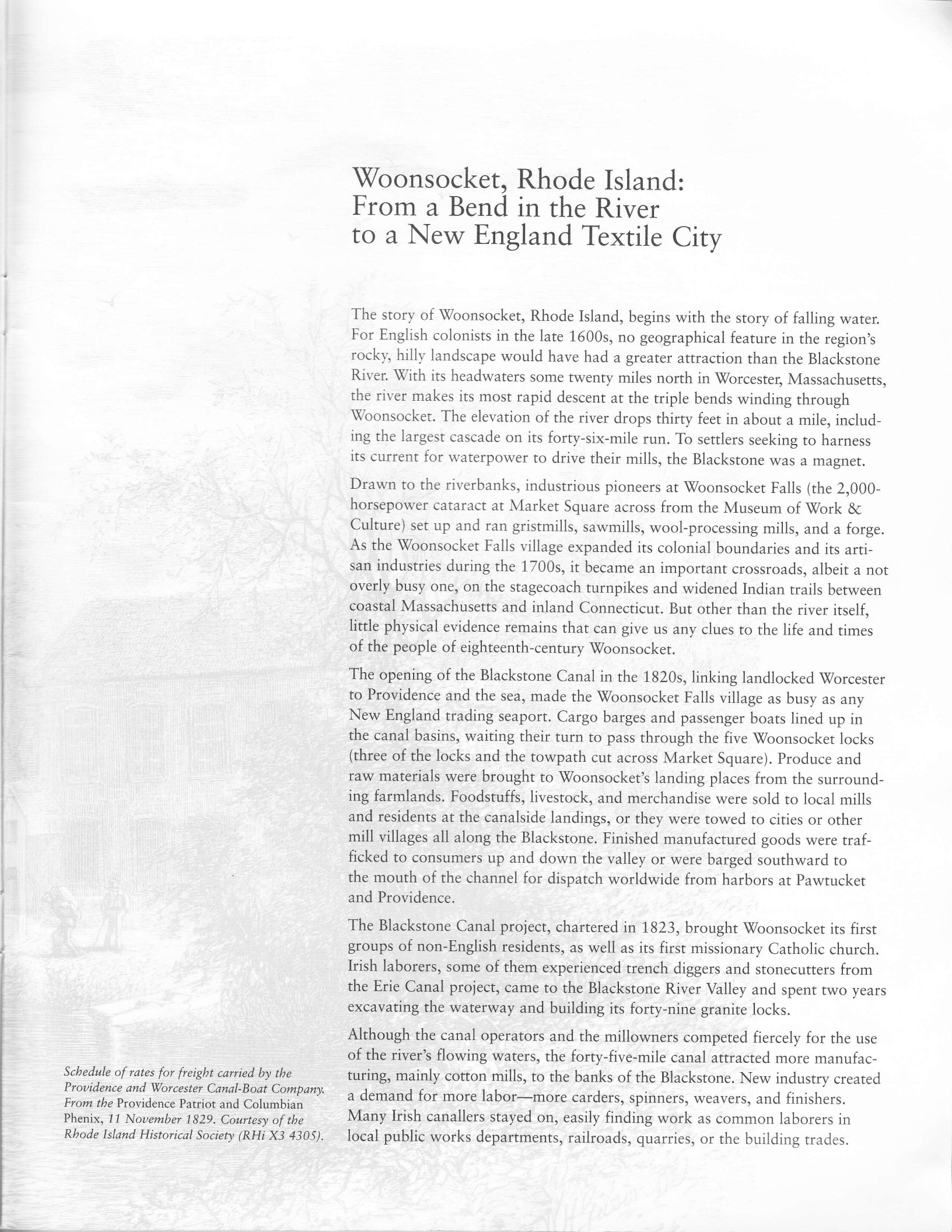
1st Rate Articles—All articles not specified above.

No package received on board a boat for less than 12 cents.

Passage to Worcester in the above boats, 75 cents.

Intermediate places, 2 cents per mile.

The Freight must be paid on all goods received on board the Company's boats on delivery, sept. 5.



Woonsocket, Rhode Island: From a Bend in the River to a New England Textile City

The story of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, begins with the story of falling water. For English colonists in the late 1600s, no geographical feature in the region's rocky, hilly landscape would have had a greater attraction than the Blackstone River. With its headwaters some twenty miles north in Worcester, Massachusetts, the river makes its most rapid descent at the triple bends winding through Woonsocket. The elevation of the river drops thirty feet in about a mile, including the largest cascade on its forty-six-mile run. To settlers seeking to harness its current for waterpower to drive their mills, the Blackstone was a magnet.

Drawn to the riverbanks, industrious pioneers at Woonsocket Falls (the 2,000-horsepower cataract at Market Square across from the Museum of Work & Culture) set up and ran gristmills, sawmills, wool-processing mills, and a forge. As the Woonsocket Falls village expanded its colonial boundaries and its artisan industries during the 1700s, it became an important crossroads, albeit a not overly busy one, on the stagecoach turnpikes and widened Indian trails between coastal Massachusetts and inland Connecticut. But other than the river itself, little physical evidence remains that can give us any clues to the life and times of the people of eighteenth-century Woonsocket.

The opening of the Blackstone Canal in the 1820s, linking landlocked Worcester to Providence and the sea, made the Woonsocket Falls village as busy as any New England trading seaport. Cargo barges and passenger boats lined up in the canal basins, waiting their turn to pass through the five Woonsocket locks (three of the locks and the towpath cut across Market Square). Produce and raw materials were brought to Woonsocket's landing places from the surrounding farmlands. Foodstuffs, livestock, and merchandise were sold to local mills and residents at the canalside landings, or they were towed to cities or other mill villages all along the Blackstone. Finished manufactured goods were trafficked to consumers up and down the valley or were barged southward to the mouth of the channel for dispatch worldwide from harbors at Pawtucket and Providence.

The Blackstone Canal project, chartered in 1823, brought Woonsocket its first groups of non-English residents, as well as its first missionary Catholic church. Irish laborers, some of them experienced trench diggers and stonecutters from the Erie Canal project, came to the Blackstone River Valley and spent two years excavating the waterway and building its forty-nine granite locks.

Although the canal operators and the millowners competed fiercely for the use of the river's flowing waters, the forty-five-mile canal attracted more manufacturing, mainly cotton mills, to the banks of the Blackstone. New industry created a demand for more labor—more carders, spinners, weavers, and finishers. Many Irish canallers stayed on, easily finding work as common laborers in local public works departments, railroads, quarries, or the building trades.

Schedule of rates for freight carried by the Providence and Worcester Canal-Boat Company. From the Providence Patriot and Columbian Phenix, 11 November 1829. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 4305).

Some sought indoor employment in the textile mills, which was hardly less menial and low-paying than ditch digging.

In 1847 the Providence & Worcester Railroad (which still operates nightly freight trains) began its run on forty-three miles of track between the two cities, with Woonsocket about midway on the route. The future usefulness and profitability of the new canal were doomed as soon as the idea for the rail line was conceived, but the outlook for Woonsocket's economy was never brighter. As before, the improvement in the capacity to transport raw materials and finished goods up and down the Blackstone River Valley, now coupled with the technological

upgrade to steam-powered mills, propelled more industrial growth. A still greater demand for labor drew even more immigrant workers to Woonsocket. With twenty mills in operation by the 1840s (the Bernon Mill alone produced more than two million yards of cotton goods a year), the six neighboring Woonsocket-area mill villages were already, in fact, a nineteenth-century New England "textile city," even without a unifying city government. (Jenckesville, Social, and Woonsocket Falls organized as the town of Woonsocket in 1867; Globe, Bernon, and Hamlet were annexed four years later. A city charter for the six villages was approved by the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1888.)

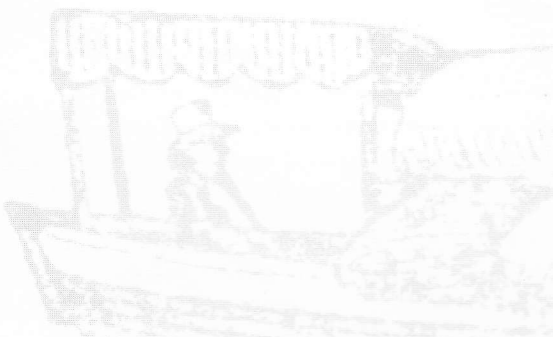
Like most of the North, Woonsocket flourished during a post-Civil War economic boom. European businessmen, offered tax incentives by the city, found Woonsocket an especially inviting place to

build new mills. Local industries diversified and began high-volume production of woolen goods and rubber products. (Uniroyal, formerly U.S. Rubber, had its origins partly in Woonsocket as the Woonsocket Rubber Company, which started by making rubber rollers for clothes wringers. Formed as a partnership among members of the Cook family of Woonsocket and Joseph Banigan, an Irish immigrant, the company began its operations in the 1860s in Market Square, two doors from where the Museum of Work & Culture is now located. After specializing in rubber boots and shoes and later expanding and moving to Fairmont Street, in 1889 it was the largest rubber-goods factory in the world.) While workers throughout the country clashed with management over the number of hours in a workday and the pennies per hour that constituted a fair wage, as well as their "labor rights," their citizenship status, and occasionally the use of their free time, Woonsocket grew rich—rich in the appearance of its busy downtown business district (complete with an Opera House), rich in its ethnic diversity as still more immigrant groups arrived, and rich in importance as an American textile-manufacturing center.

By 1920 Woonsocket was a "Little Canada." With three out of four of the city's inhabitants having come from Quebec province, there was little incentive to Americanize; French, spoken at home, in church, and at work, was the language of Woonsocket. But immigrants from many other countries had arrived too, enticed by the potential for easy employment in the huge Woonsocket mills.



Sadwin Brothers Dry Goods Store, Woonsocket, circa 1920. Courtesy of Dan Sadwin.



St. Charles Church, Woonsocket, R. I.



St. Charles Church, Woonsocket, circa 1920. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi X3 8709).

Perhaps because they already spoke English, the Irish who came to Woonsocket in the early 1800s blended into New England village life more easily than later immigrant groups did. More Irish came to Woonsocket as a result of Ireland's potato famine in the mid-1800s. In 1862 the Irish Catholic parishioners of St. Charles Parish built St. Charles Borromeo Church—Woonsocket's first stone-built Catholic church—on North Main Street. Before establishing separate parishes, French Canadians went to Mass (said in Latin at the time) with the Irish.

More Irish had come to the valley, along with Poles, Lithuanians, Rumanians, Swedes, Syrians, Lebanese, Ukrainians, Italians, Russian Jews, and (slightly later) black Americans, making Woonsocket one of the state's most culturally diverse municipalities before World War I. But the city's ethnic divisions remained clear, with each group forming its own "city within the city" through its churches, its neighborhoods, its social clubs, and its benevolent organizations. Eight out of ten Woonsocket residents spoke a foreign language. Yet despite inevitable interethnic frictions, all labored together, side by side, in the mills.

Woonsocket's twentieth-century economy was severely jolted by a general collapse of the cotton industries throughout New England, when northern manufacturers shifted investment capital to the cheap-labor southern states. The city's unionized workers, by this time the highest-paid operatives in the American textile industry, forced wages high enough for millowners to claim that payroll costs were making local textile prices noncompetitive in the world marketplace. The decline of the local textile industry, already under way in the 1920s, accelerated in the late 1930s during the Great Depression, when half of the city's textile workers permanently lost their jobs. Although some of the city's industries—its woolen mills, rubber-goods factories, and machinery shops—held onto a share of their earlier gains, more mills closed after World War II. In time Woonsocket's industrial base was no longer able to sustain the local work force. A comparable collapse followed in the business district and, correspondingly, in the need for new commercial and residential construction. Rather than expanding, Woonsocket began to shrink under the wrecking ball by the 1960s.

Although some of its grand commercial blocks and immense mill complexes have been demolished, Woonsocket has kept its unique character—architecturally and, to a notable extent, socially—as a New England textile city built by working-class immigrants on the road to becoming Americans. With its three- and four-story storefronts, Main Street off Market Square still has the look and feel of the traditional Main Streets of late nineteenth-century American cities. In all, seventeen sites on a short section of Main Street, plus the remains of a water raceway used for powering mills, have been classified as historically significant and worthy of rehabilitation. Although not many new immigrants have settled in Woonsocket in the last half century, although the all-French daily newspaper *La Tribune* is no longer published, and although the local radio no longer broadcasts daily in French, it is quite possible to walk a block or two downtown and hear a lyrical conversation in third- or fourth-generation Quebecois dialect. There are still the French Canadian bakeries and the aromas of spicy meat pies and warm cinnamon buns, the rows of triple-decker apartment houses, the noisy and colorful international street festivals, the more serious and somber incense-scented church pageantries, the roar of water rushing over the falls during spring floods, and the names of the streets leading into downtown—Social, Bernon, and Hamlet, the names of the once-great mills. These are the clues to the legacy of Woonsocket's important role in the manufacturing and cultural history of the Blackstone River Valley.





Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor

The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor is a special kind of national park. Stretching from the headwaters of the Blackstone River in Worcester, Massachusetts, to the Narragansett Bay in Providence, Rhode Island, it is a partnership park covering almost 400,000 acres in twenty-four cities and towns. It is a place where people live, work, and play—a living landscape. It is supported by networks of partnerships among state and federal governments, local jurisdictions, historical societies, environmental organizations, businesses, sports groups, and even private landowners. The work is coordinated by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, which was established by Congress to preserve and promote the natural, historic, and cultural resources of the area.

For most of the public, the Heritage Corridor is personified by the National Park Service rangers who interpret the many stories of the Blackstone Valley, the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. These rangers can be seen leading walking tours through the corridor's historic villages and trails, visiting classrooms, or appearing on television as part of the *Along the Blackstone* series. But important work is also done by the Heritage Corridor Commission, which is involved in such activities as community and land-use planning, heritage tourism, downtown revitalization, river restoration, recreation development along the river, interpretation, and environmental education.

The Heritage Corridor is proud to be a partner in the development of the Woonsocket Museum of Work & Culture. This museum tells an important part of the story of the Blackstone River, "the hardest working river in America." The museum also serves as part of a chain of visitor centers throughout the Blackstone Valley, including River Bend Farm in Uxbridge, Massachusetts; Willard House and Clock Museum in Grafton, Massachusetts; and Roger Williams National Memorial in Providence. New centers are to be opened in Worcester, in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and at the Kelly House in Lincoln, Rhode Island.

We are always on the lookout for additional partnerships that will help us in our mission to preserve and develop the Blackstone Valley as a special place for learning about our nation's history. If you would like to learn more about the Heritage Corridor, please stop by our office, which is just up Main Street from the museum.

BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR
One Depot Square
Woonsocket, Rhode Island 02895
(401) 762-0250

Acknowledgments

Some museums begin with a private collector's donation of historical objects or a connoisseur's contribution of fine works of art. Others begin without a single artifact; instead, they spring from a community's need to tell its story and mark its place in history. The concept for the Museum of Work & Culture emerged after Woonsocket's centennial celebrations in the late 1980s, when citizens of Woonsocket began searching for a suitable way to preserve and share their history and cultural heritage.

The seedling idea was well nurtured throughout the community. Efforts were undertaken to acquire grants and other funding, a suitable site, historical artifacts and documents, and various kinds of expertise. The project was brought to fruition with the help of unwavering encouragement and generous support from many sources.

The Museum of Work & Culture and its *La Survivance* exhibit were made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Matching funds, as well as leadership and consultation, were supplied by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission.

Additional funds were raised by the Woonsocket Industrial Development Corporation, Fleet Bank, Citizens Bank, the Rhode Island Foundation, CVS, other members of the Woonsocket business community, and organized labor.

Location of the museum site, site development plans, and renovation of the museum building were carried out with the cooperation and assistance of the mayor's office of the City of Woonsocket, Mayor Susan Menard, planning and development director Joel D. Mathews, city planner Nora Walsh Loughnane, former mayor Charles Baldelli, former mayor Francis Lanctot, and former city planning director N. David Bouley.

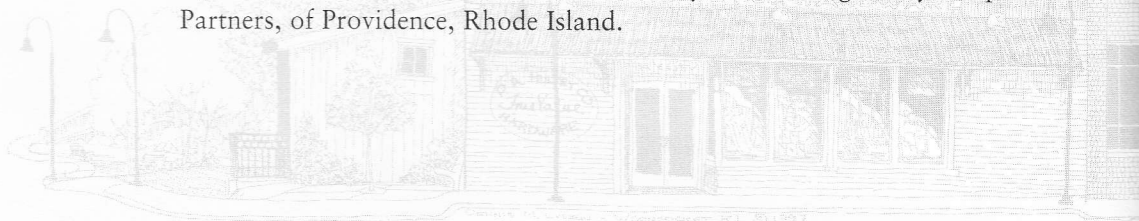
Grant applications and assistance with project development were supervised by Albert T. Klyberg, director of the Rhode Island Historical Society, and the society's staff and volunteers. Dan Romani, the society's director of education and public programs, served as the museum project coordinator.

Exhibit design and construction and other creative assistance were provided by Christopher Chadbourne and Associates, of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Special appreciation is due to museum consultant Dr. Robert Macieski.

Creative assistance and project support were also provided by Bill Ruggieri, Raymond H. Bacon, Marcel P. Fortin, and the late Martin P. Crowley.

The museum greatly benefited, too, from the scholarly work and counsel of Dr. Gary Gerstle, Dr. Gary Kulik, Dr. Scott Molloy, and Dr. Claire Quintal.

This publication was prepared in collaboration with publications director Marta V. Martínez, copy editor Hilliard Beller, and graphics curator Allison Cywin of the Rhode Island Historical Society. It was designed by Chapman and Partners, of Providence, Rhode Island.



The Museum Building

The Museum of Work & Culture and Woonsocket Visitors Center is in a former textile mill building. Beginning in 1915 the building housed the Barnai Worsted Company, founded by W. J. Barnett and William Naismith. Barnai Worsted manufactured woolen goods for hard-wearing military garments as well as for men's fine-fashion clothing. For a time the company also occupied a second building on Market Square, a five-story structure that was later demolished to build the Thundermist hydroelectric power station just below the falls.

By 1924 the original Barnai partners were bankrupt. Sylva Lareau, of French Canadian descent, reorganized the corporation and assumed ownership by 1929. The Barnai name was retained, and Naismith stayed with the company under the new management. Later the business was run by Lareau's sons. Joining the parade of New England textile producers heading to cheap-labor locations in the South, the Barnai Company relocated its operations in South Carolina in the late 1960s.

The site was purchased in 1968 by the Lincoln Textile Company, under Robert Henault. Lincoln Textile manufactured fabrics for women's wear at another Woonsocket mill (which has since burned down); the museum building was the company's dye house, with about thirty-five workers employed there. Eventually operations became unprofitable, in part because of strictly enforced environmental laws regulating parts of the textile-manufacturing process that affected the Blackstone River Valley's water resources. Lincoln Textile closed its doors at the end of 1990.

Rehabilitation of the property for the Museum of Work & Culture was begun in 1996. Indicative of changing times throughout the Blackstone Valley, fewer and fewer industrial structures are being demolished; instead, mill buildings are now being creatively adapted for commercial, residential, or, in this case, cultural reuse.



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Cover

The St. Jean-Baptiste Day parade in Woonsocket,
1906. RHIS Collection (RH: X3 4397).



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