

Francis Cabot Lowell

1775–1817

Francis Cabot Lowell was a Massachusetts businessman and pioneer American cotton manufacturer. He was member of the wealthy Lowell family of Boston that settled in Cape Ann, Massachusetts, in 1639.

Lowell studied the textile industry when he visited Britain. He was impressed with the machinery he saw in the factories. He even tried to remember what he saw so he could draw the machines' designs later. Britain prohibited copies of the textile machine plans to be taken out of the country. In 1813 Lowell; his brother-in-law, Patrick Tracy Jackson; and Nathan Appleton started the Boston Manufacturing Company in Waltham, Massachusetts. This company was the first of its kind because the process of converting raw cotton to cloth was completed in one building. American inventor Paul Moody added to the company when he invented advanced spinning equipment and a power loom. These inventions were based on what Moody had seen in textile mills in Britain.

Lowell and his partners were also responsible for developing shareholding. He and his partners sold \$1,000 worth of shares of stock to the community.

In 1814 Lowell built a new mill along the Charles River in Waltham. Lowell was the first mill owner to hire women. He called them "mill girls." Most of the women were between the ages of 15 and 35 and from New England farming families. Lowell was able to save money by paying the women less than what he paid the men. He offered a variety of benefits for his workers and their families in addition to wages. The benefits included housing, religious programs, and educational opportunities.

When Lowell died in 1817, the company was still strong and earning its shareholders a substantial profit. In 1822, his business partners named their mill town, Lowell, in honor of Francis Lowell. His son, Francis Cabot Lowell Jr., followed his father's example and ran the mill.

Name: _____

Date: _____

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Discussion Questions:

1. Where did Francis Lowell go to study the textile industry?
2. What was the significance of the Boston Manufacturing Company?
3. Describe the women who worked in Lowell's textile mills.
4. Why did Lowell prefer women to work in his mills?
5. What kind of benefits did Lowell offer to his employees?