



The Last Generation

WORK AND LIFE IN THE TEXTILE MILLS

OF LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS,

1910—1960

Mary H. Blewett

The University of Massachusetts Press

AMHERST

Contents

List of Illustrations xi

Acknowledgments xiii

Preface xv

Textile Industrialization in Lowell 3

The Production Process 9

THE WOMEN

Introduction 31

/ Learned Right Away

Valentine Chartrand / SPINNER 44

Pinching, Nicking, and Tucking to Make Both Ends Meet

Grace Burk / DRAWING-IN GIRL 55

It Wasn't Difficult to Learn But You Didn't Get Paid

Martha Doherty / SPINNER 64

My Father Just Didn't Bother Too Much with Me

Blanche Graham / SPINNER 70

You Had to Be on Your Toes, All the Time

Lucie Cordeau / WAPER 73

/ Knew My Job and I Knew My Place

Narcissa Fantini Hodges / WEAVER 81

/ Never Had a Job That I Sat Down

Mabel Delehanty Mangan / SPINNER 92

We Had to Take What Come

Diane Ouellette / TWISTER 99

/ Went There Just to See What It's Like

Dori Nelson / QUILLER 102

On Drawing-in, You Have to Be Dedicated

Leona Bacon Pray / DRAWING-IN GIRL 105

The Boys Used to Get Away with Murder!

Emma Skehan / COMBER 110

So the Help Got Cocky, We All Got Cocky

Yvonne Hoar / CLOTH ROOM WORKER 115

They Used to Say, If You Married a Mender, You Were Rich

Evelyn Winters / MENDER 126

I'm Not an Old Greek. I Don't Eat Bread and Oil!

Jean Rouses / SPINNER 132

THE MEN

Introduction 143

That's What They Used to Call Them: Mill Rats

Harry Dickenson / LOOM FIXER 158

You Had to Go to Work Early and Get Some Money

Charles Costello / MULE SPINNER 165

/ Started from the Bottom Like Everybody Else

Albert Parent / WEAVER, LOOM FIXER, SECOND HAND 172

Like We Say a Big Shot in the Mill

John Falante / LOOM FIXER 180

/ Learned It Myself as I Went Along

Albert Cote / LOOM FIXER 186

Rigging, That's the Heavy Work

Henry Pestana / WARP RIGGER 193

We Never Thought the Mills Would Close

Arthur Morrissette / LOOM FIXER 201

*Just Walking Up and Down, Trying to Keep Those Looms Going
All Day Long Is a Job*

Joseph Golas / WEAVER, SMASH-PIECER, FIXER 208

*They Used to Call Them Efficiency Men, and That Was
a Bad Name*

James Simpson / TIME-STUDY AND COST MAN 214

We All Worked in the Mill, and All in the Same Place

Raymond Gaillardetz / LOOM FIXER 222

How Would You Like to Make Five Cents an Hour More?

Sidney Muskovitz / DYE HOUSE WORKER, CARDER 230

/ Was Young and Strong and Fast and Earned Twenty-five Cents an Hour

Henry Paradis / LOOM FIXER 244

Never Screamed Before; Never Have Since

Nicholas Georgoulis / DYE HOUSE WORKER 255

/ Can Take It; I Can Stand the Grind

Del Chouinard / SLASHER 264

/ Won the Respect of All My Mill People

Fred Burt / PAYMASTER, PRODUCTION MANAGER, PERSONNEL MANAGER 274

Unions Were Few and Far Between

James Ellis / DYE HOUSE WORKER, UNION ORGANIZER 283

THE CHILDREN

Introduction 295

There Wasn't an Inch of His Body That Wasn't Black and Blue

Hubert Lafleur / AUTO MECHANIC 297

They Never Saw the Sun

Cornelia Spyropoulos Chiklis / SHOE STITCHER 301

I'd Think of My Mother in Those Wretched Mills

Ronald Bacon / SALESMAN 305

They Were Very, Very Hard on People in Those Days

Mary Rouses Karafelis / ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY 308

Glossary 319

Index 325