

A Canadian in Lowell: Labour, Manhood and Independence in the Early Industrial Era, 1840-1849

Jack Little

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J.I. Little

Introduction

“And as man’s life is made up of days & hours, & his History of trifling incidents, so shall this Epistle be a thing of incidents; for were I with you I should relate the very same by word of mouth, why not in absence by deed of pen?”

SO WROTE DANIEL SPENCER GILMAN in Lowell to his younger brother on an Eastern Townships farm near the Vermont border in early July 1847. Gilman’s letters provide an interesting view of life in Lowell, Massachusetts during the 1840s, but, more importantly, they reflect the thoughts and experiences of a working man in the early industrial era. This perspective is remarkably rare in published works despite the large amount of historical research on labour history, including working-class culture. The reason is that for males in particular the focus of historians has been on the workplace, especially on the conflict with capital as skilled workers reacted to the threats posed by mechanization and the ruthless competition for markets. Studies of women wage workers, such as that by Thomas Dublin on Lowell itself, often provide a broader understanding of their everyday lives.¹ More recently, gender historians have begun to examine American manhood and masculinity in the Victorian era, but the focus to date has been heavily on the white middle class.²

¹Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860*, 2nd ed. (New York 1979). See also Thomas Dublin, *Transforming Women’s Work: New England Lives in the Industrial Revolution* (Ithaca 1994), chapter 3.

²This point is made in Clyde Griffen, “Reconstructing Masculinity from the Evangelical Revival to the Waning of Progressivism: A Speculative Synthesis,” in Mark C. Carnes and

As America's first industrial city, Lowell has attracted a good deal of attention from historians. They have suggested that the Boston-based companies which established the town's textile factories recruited young female workers from the villages and farms of the region not only to obtain a cheap labour force, but also because they shared the Jeffersonian fear of reproducing an industrial proletariat in the United States. The captains of industry implemented paternalistic policies to alleviate these fears by recreating communities in which factory labour would be a temporary stage of life, and corporate hierarchy and deference would be valued.³

Despite the large amount of time spent in the workplace, averaging nearly twelve hours a day, six days a week, for more than three hundred days a year, many of the early factory operatives did take advantage of the opportunities provided to "improve themselves" morally and intellectually. They attended night classes and Lyceum lectures on a wide variety of topics, joined the temperance society, and even wrote for their own journal, the *Lowell Offering*.⁴ While the young women worked at repetitive tasks in a noisy, humid, and dust-filled environment, they generally approached factory labour as a welcome transition between dependency on father and dependency on husband. In Thomas Bender's words, "the contrast with Manchester, England, apparently was so sharp that the New England mill girls were celebrated throughout Europe and America for their intelligence and virtue."⁵

But increasing competition and mechanization led to a deterioration in working and living conditions during the 1840s, just as the influx of impoverished families fleeing the Irish potato famine brought a ready supply of more easily exploitable labour. When the companies introduced faster machines, more machines per worker, lower piece rates, and premiums for more productive overseers, the operatives began to petition and march in protest. They focused their demands on the ten hour work day, but the more radical among them criticized the factory system itself in the labour newspaper, *The Voice of Industry*. With the failure of their campaign by mid-century, most American-born women simply abandoned the Lowell factories to a proletariat of refugees from the Irish famine. They, in turn,

Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago 1990), 185.

³In 1840 women in Lowell outnumbered men 6,430 to 2,077. Helena Wright, "Sarah G. Bagley: A Biographical Note," *Labor History*, 20 (1979), 398. For a comprehensive history of Lowell, see Arthur L. Eno, ed., *Cotton Was King: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts* (Lowell 1976). On the motivation of the factory owners, see Gary Kulik, Roger Parks, and Theodore Z. Penn, *The New England Mill Village, 1790-1860* (Cambridge 1982), xxxi; Robert F. Dalzell, *Enterprising Elite: The Boston Associates and the World They Made* (Cambridge, Mass. 1987), 115-29; and Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lexington 1975), 33-4, 110-11.

⁴Dublin, *Women at Work*, 59; Benita Eisler, ed., *The Lowell Offering: Writings by New England Mill Women (1840-1845)* (Philadelphia and New York 1977); and Shirley Marcholais, *The Worlds of Lucy Larcom, 1824-1893* (Athens 1989).

⁵Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision*, 40.

would be followed by successive waves of French Canadians, Poles, Greeks, and others.⁶

Partly because of their literacy, the American female operatives have been a popular subject for researchers wishing to gain insights into the early industrial experience. Historians of Lowell's "golden age" have found the young women's voices not only in the contemporary press and periodicals but in their diaries, memoirs, and letters, a number of which have been published.⁷ But largely missing from the picture are the male workers who constructed the canals, factories, rows of company boarding houses, and private dwellings of the managers and married workers, not to mention the men who worked in the "wadding and batting mills, machine shops, dye houses, screw-bolt factories, card factories, bobbin and shuttle factories, bedstead factories," and other Lowell industries.⁸ Recently, historians have begun to examine the marginalized Irish community which built much of Lowell's infrastructure, but the North American born male workers remain largely invisible.⁹

Read in the context of the rich studies now available on his female contemporaries in Lowell, the 39 surviving letters and two fragments written by Daniel Spencer Gilman to his Canadian family members between 1840 and 1849 provide useful insights into the meanings of class and gender in this crucial era of economic and social transition. Finally, from the Canadian perspective, Gilman's correspondence reveals that migration from Lower Canada to the New England mill towns began earlier than suggested by previous studies, largely because historians have focused on the more permanent family emigration of the French Canadians which

⁶On the post-Civil War period, see Mary H. Blewett, ed., *Surviving Hard Times: The Working People of Lowell* (Lowell 1982).

⁷Collections of Lowell letters that have been published include Nell Kull, ed., "'I Can Never Be Happy There in among So Many Mountains,' — The Letters of Sally Rice," *Vermont History*, 38 (1970), 49-57; Loriman Brigham, ed., "An Independent Voice: A Mill Girl from Vermont Speaks Her Mind," *Vermont History*, 41 (1973), 142-6; Allis Rosenberg Wolfe, "Letters of a Lowell Mill Girl and Friends: 1845-1846," *Labor History*, 17 (1976), 96-102; and Thomas Dublin, ed., *Farm to Factory: Women's Letters, 1830-1860*, 2nd ed. (New York 1993). See also Harriet Hanson Robinson, *Loom and Spindle; or Life Among the Early Mill Girls* (1898, reprinted Kailua, Hawaii 1976); and Mary Blewett, ed., *Caught Between Two Worlds: The Diary of a Lowell Mill Girl, Susan Brown of Epson, New Hampshire* (Lowell 1984).

⁸Joseph W. Lipchitz, "The Golden Age," in *Cotton Was King*, 95. On the evolution of the machine shops of Lowell, see George Sweet Gibb, *The Saco-Lowell Shops: Textile Machinery Building in New England, 1813-1949* (New York 1950).

⁹See Brian C. Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps: The Irish of Lowell, 1821-1861* (Urbana 1988); Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision*, 101, 106-7; and Sallie A. Marston, "Public Rituals and Community Power: St Patrick's Day Parades in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1841-1874," *Political Geography Quarterly*, 8 (1989), 255-70.

began in the later 1850s.¹⁰ While only 3.4 per cent of Lowell's population was Canadian born in 1850, it is clear that a much larger number of Canadians had sojourned in the city during the previous decade for Gilman refers to a steady flow of young men and women back and forth from his home area alone.¹¹

These letters also reveal how important kin and community ties were in the search for employment in the new environment, with Gilman's uncle and other entrepreneurs providing initial employment to young men from their Canadian homeland, just as older French Canadian settlers acted as informal "agents" in introducing newcomers to industrial life in Lewiston, Maine.¹² Finally, Gilman's letters demonstrate how effectively the communications network of the time kept rural Canadians in touch with the economic, social, cultural, and political developments in the cradle of American industrialization. In fact, Spencer Gilman's enthusiastic descriptions of the many colourful parades in Lowell, the beautiful young factory girls, and his rail trips to Boston and other cities were clearly a strong enticement to at least one of his brothers.

Social Background

Daniel Spencer Gilman, whom family memory recall as Spencer, was born the eldest of seven children in 1816 and grew up on a farm in Brome Township, in what was then the colony of Lower Canada.¹³ While the seigneuries of the St. Lawrence Valley and its major tributaries had remained largely French speaking after the British Conquest of 1763, American settlers were the first to enter the northern Appalachian territory that had acted as a buffer zone between the settlements of New England and New France. Surveyed into townships of roughly ten miles squared in the early 1790s, this region of freehold tenure became unofficially

¹⁰The French-Canadian exodus that began in the 1840s was largely directed to the mid-West and the rural communities of New England. Only when Irish immigration declined did the French Canadians move in large numbers to the factory towns of southern New England, but there were still only 266 French Canadians in Lowell in 1860. Ralph D. Vicerio, "Immigration of French Canadians to the United States, 1840-1900: A Geographical Analysis," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1968, 108-14, 129, 152-4, 157, 161-4, 173, 175, 177. See also Yolande Lavoie, "Les mouvements migratoires des Canadiens entre leur pays et les États-Unis aux XIXe et XXe siècles," in Hubert Charbonneau, ed., *La population du Québec: études rétrospectives* (Montréal 1973); and Bruno Ramirez, *On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860-1914* (Toronto 1991), chapter 5.

¹¹Dublin, *Women at Work*, 139. Lowell historians have assumed that these residents were mostly French Canadians. See, for example, Peter F. Blewett, "The New People: An Introduction to the Ethnic History of Lowell," in *Cotton Was King*, 191-3.

¹²Yves Frenette, "La genèse d'une communauté canadienne-française en Nouvelle-Angleterre: Lewiston, Maine, 1800-1910," PhD dissertation, Laval University, 1987, 155, 249.

¹³Marion L. Phelps, "Daniel S. Gilman and his Letters," *Eastern Townships Advertiser*, 26 August 1965, 3.

known as the Eastern Townships.¹⁴ Brome Township's first settlers arrived in the late 18th century, and the official census reports reveal that by 1844 the largely rural population had reached 1,771, climbing to 2,095 by 1851.¹⁵ Nearly all these inhabitants were of American origin.

Prior to moving to Brome in 1802 with his family from Canaan in south-central New Hampshire, Spencer Gilman's paternal grandfather had been an innkeeper and a soldier in the Revolutionary army.¹⁶ The family must have prospered in Lower Canada, for in 1811 Spencer's father, Moses, purchased a 100 acre farm for the considerable sum of £87 10s in cash.¹⁷ Spencer's mother, Patience Spencer, was also the daughter of a local pioneer.

Like many families in the Eastern Townships, the Gilmans maintained contact with their extensive network of American relations as late as the 1840s.¹⁸ As a northern extension of the New England settlement frontier, the region had remained socially and culturally isolated from the rest of Lower Canada. British influence manifested itself through the missionary efforts of the Church of England and the Wesleyan Methodists, but American teachers and text books continued to dominate the school system until the outbreak of the Rebellion of 1837. During the following decade, the process of modern state formation and railway construction began to integrate the Eastern Townships more effectively into the Province of Canada, but industrialization of the region had barely begun and the trains ran not only to Montréal and Québec but also to Portland and Boston.¹⁹ The desire for access to American markets, coupled with the fear of French Canadian political domination, caused a brief but fervent outburst of American annexationism in 1849-1850.²⁰ By

¹⁴For brief histories of the region's settlement, see J.I. Little, *Ethno-Cultural Transition and Regional Identity in the Eastern Townships of Quebec* (Ottawa 1989); and Bernard Epps, *The Eastern Townships Adventure* (Ayers Cliff, Que. 1992).

¹⁵Mrs C.M. Day, *History of the Eastern Townships* (Montréal 1869), 253-60.

¹⁶C. Thomas, *Contributions to the History of the Eastern Townships* (Montréal 1866), 245; Marion Phelps, "The Moses Gilman Family, Bondville," *Eastern Townships Advertiser*, 19 August 1965, 5; Brome County Historical Society (hereafter BCHS), Gilman File, Marion Phelps, "Moses Gilman Esq.," typescript. In one letter, Spencer mentions that his grandfather had owned a store in Canaan, and another refers to a hall with a dancing school.

¹⁷BCHS, Gilman File, indenture between Joseph Eldridge, Brome Township, and Moses Gilman, Brome Township, yeoman, North half of lot 15, range 7, Brome.

¹⁸See, for example, J.I. Little, ed., *The Child Letters: Public and Private Life in a Canadian Merchant-Politician's Family, 1841-1845* (Montréal and Kingston 1995).

¹⁹See J.I. Little, *State and Society in Transition: The Politics of Institutional Reform in the Eastern Townships, 1838-1852* (Kingston and Montréal 1997); and Jean-Pierre Kesteman, Peter Southam, and Diane Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons de l'Est* (Saint-Foy 1998), chapters 6 and 8.

²⁰J.I. Little, "The Brief Life of a Popular Protest Movement: The Annexation Crisis of 1849-50 in the Eastern Townships," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, New Series, 3 (1992), 35-49.

this time, however, Spencer Gilman and many like him had already moved to the United States.

Despite Gilman's rural Canadian background, his letters suggest that he felt quite at home in Lowell, a town of 21,000 where ten major firms employed 8,000 workers in 32 large mills when he arrived at the age of 24 in 1840.²¹ Lowell was still a four day trip from Brome by stage and train in 1843, but, like most of the female factory operatives, Gilman was able to enter an extended-kin network.²² He joined the household of an entrepreneurial uncle, and took a lively interest in American politics, writing letters to the local press critical of protective tariffs as well as company labour policy.²³

In contrast to the rapid industrialization and increases in real wages in the northeastern United States during the 1840s, these were difficult years for the Lower Canadian economy. Wheat rust was followed by potato blight, and the termination of British preferential tariffs for the important square timber and wheat trade.²⁴ But Gilman's motives for remaining in Lowell were not entirely materialistic. He made it clear as early as 1840 that he considered the wages to be low, and he clearly felt no compulsion to send money home to his family. The same was true of most female workers, but many of them were accumulating dowries for their marriages, which generally followed two or three years of wage labour.²⁵ Gilman had abandoned a farm in Brome, and he carefully avoided marital commitment throughout the decade. His letters suggest that he remained in Lowell as long as he did quite simply because he preferred living there to farming in the Eastern Townships, and he soon came to identify himself as a proud American.

Gilman did write faithfully, if infrequently, during his nine year residence in Lowell (with brief intervals in Suncook and Manchester, New Hampshire), and he visited his family several times. But he also criticized his cousins for falling victim to homesickness and abandoning secure jobs in Lowell, and when he finally left the economically depressed city in 1849, it was not to go home but to join many of his fellow workers in the gold rush to California.²⁶ His last letter describes his

²¹Dublin, *Farm to Factory*, 8; Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps*, 78.

²²Letter of 18 June 1843. Tamara Hareven has also described how French-Canadian employment in the Amoskeag textile mill of Manchester, NH was largely controlled by kin networks in the early 20th century. Tamara K. Hareven, "The Laborers of Manchester, New Hampshire, 1912-1922: The Role of Family and Ethnicity in Adjustment to Industrial Life," *Labor History*, 16 (1975), 249-65.

²³See *Vox Populi*, 3 March 1843 ("An Epistle from 'That Same Old Coon'"); and 10 March 1843 ("The Coon's Petition.") Gilman's family correspondence makes it clear that he was the author of these published letters.

²⁴See Fernand Ouellet, *Economic and Social History of Quebec, 1760-1850* (Ottawa 1980), chapters 15 and 16.

²⁵Dublin, *Women at Work*, 32-40; Bender, *Towards an Urban Vision*, 115.

²⁶Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps*, 102 states that because of the business recession of 1848 and the gold rush, Lowell's population declined by about 1,500. On the symptoms of urban decay at this time, see Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps*, 106-11.

gold-mining experience in detail, including how—alone and unarmed—he carried \$1,300 in diggings to safety in the town of Stockton. Family legend claims that Gilman remained in California, only to fall victim three or four years later to the typhus that had once nearly killed him in Lowell.²⁷

Gilman's letters provide a valuable record by an articulate and sharp-eyed observer of life in a burgeoning American textile town. On 1 March 1840, for example, he noted that a Universalist minister had addressed over a thousand listeners a night for three consecutive nights in opposition to William Miller's theory that the apocalypse would arrive shortly.²⁸ On 21 August 1842, in his often ironic style, he mentioned joining a club of "gentlemen" from the three companies "for mutual improvement by Debate, Declamation & the writing of Anonymous Communications." And, on 14 July 1844, he described "the grand display of beauty in shape of Factory Girls to the number of 1000 belonging to the Martha Washington Temperance Society who paraded our Streets in uniform wearing badges etc, their uniform was a white dress, lace cap, no bonnets but parasols & a silk girle or belt bearing the name Martha Washington."²⁹

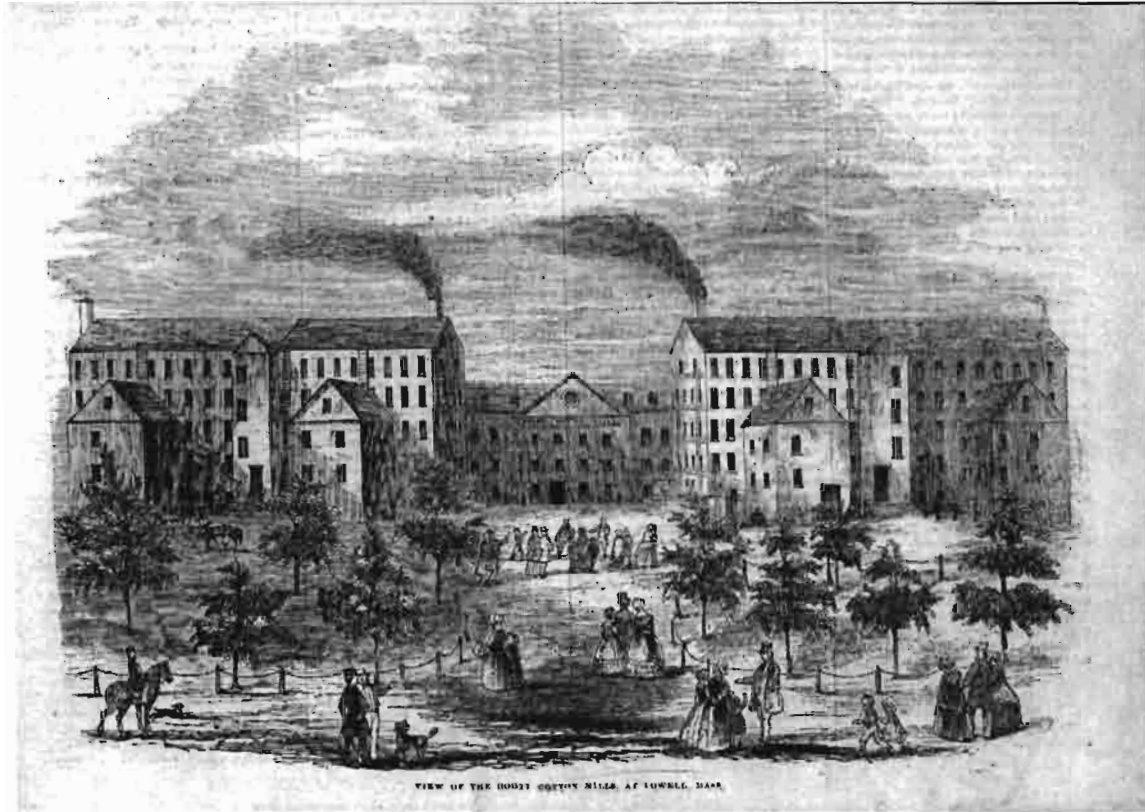
Though Gilman's letters are more descriptive than introspective, their main value lies as a window into the thoughts and aspirations of a young male worker in an early industrial town. Gilman's chief characteristic was his desire for independence, a trait more often associated with the western frontier than the eastern industrial environment, but which may nonetheless have characterized the large numbers of transient young men of the middle years of the 19th century identified by quantitative historians such as Michael Katz and David Gagan.³⁰ Gilman's letters help us to appreciate that these individuals were more than shadowy figures on a manuscript census page, or part of an undifferentiated mass in the workplace.

²⁷Phelps, "The Moses Gilman Family," 5. Gilman was still alive in 1852, for his father referred to a letter received from him that year. BCHS, Whitwell File, Moses Gilman to Rev. Richard Whitwell, Brome, July 2, 1852. On the unhealthy living conditions in Lowell, see Lipchitz, "The Golden Age," 101-2.

²⁸There are many studies on Millerism. One of the most insightful is David L. Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850* (Chico, CA 1985).

²⁹On this society, see Ruth M. Alexander, "'We Are Engaged as a Band of Sisters': Class and Domesticity in the Washingtonian Temperance Movement, 1840-1850," *Journal of American History*, 75 (1988), 763-85.

³⁰See Michael Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, MA 1975); and David Gagan, *Hopeful Travelers: Families, Land and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West* (Toronto 1981).



“Boott Cotton Mills.” Courtesy of the *Lowell Historical Society*.

Class Identity

The concept of a working-class identity is a slippery one, and nowhere more so than in the North American context at the dawn of industrial capitalism. The young women and men who flocked from farms and villages to factory towns such as Lowell did not change their identities or values overnight, nor did they necessarily lose control over their means of production for the rest of their lives. As a Canadian-born male with a taste for learning and adventure, Spencer Gilman may not have been the typical Lowell labourer of the 1840s, but it is well known that many female operatives shared these same interests and ambitions. For a time during the mid-forties, radical class-based politics would provide Gilman and many of the young factory women with an ideology that reconciled the basic conflict they felt between modernity and tradition.³¹ But with the failure of this campaign, and his acquisition of woodworking skills, Gilman became more independent and restless, finally seizing eagerly on the promise of adventure and riches in California. Like the female operatives, Gilman was a transitional figure, never entirely at ease in Lowell but determined not to return to the restrictive life he had left behind.

Many of the male labourers of Lowell who were not Irish immigrants likely shared the social background of the female factory operatives and Spencer Gilman himself. At the time Spencer left for Lowell, his father, Moses, was a farmer of rather modest means. The senior Gilman reported to the 1842 census enumerator that he had improved thirty of his one hundred acres, and owned only six cattle, two horses, nine sheep, and three pigs. When Spencer's youngest sister married the son of an Anglican clergyman in 1852, the Reverend James Reid noted in his diary: "We drove up to Mr Gilman's, Martha's father, and there dined. They are plain farmer folks, and appear to have plenty. I like the looks of the mother very much, Squire Gilman himself is a great talker, and does not appear to have much of the pride of dress, but is a good sensible man."³²

Moses Gilman had purchased two farm lots in 1836 and 1837, presumably for his sons Spencer and Roswell, but this traditional method of paternal control failed to hold Spencer for very long. Roswell, in contrast, remained on his farm until his father died in 1864.³³ The Gilmans continued to operate Spencer's farm for him for a time after 1840, but they must have realized where his heart truly lay when they

³¹Gareth Stedman Jones has written of the Chartist movement that "It was not consciousness (or ideology) that produced politics, but politics that produced consciousness." *Language of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge, UK 1983), 19.

³²Montréal Diocesan Archives (Anglican), James Reid Diary, vol. 25, p. 4538, 30 Dec. 1852.

³³According to the 1861 census, Moses Gilman owned 200 acres, with 100 acres improved, and 30 cattle, 1 horse, 15 sheep, and 3 pigs. Property and livestock were valued at \$1,600. That same year Moses sold the farm to his son-in-law, Lester Ball, in return for \$350 to each of the other three surviving offspring and \$400 to a grandson when the latter reached the age of 21. BCHS, Gilman File, donation from Moses Gilman, Esq., to Lester Ball, 13 July 1861.

read the following in a letter of 8 February 1841: "Tell Father if he cannot conveniently store the Buckwheat to feed it out to the pigs. I have just purchased a work written by George Comb on the constitution of man which I think very interesting & instructive [...]"³⁴

As had many of the female operatives, Spencer Gilman taught school for a year or so, and he counselled his brother on 19 October 1844 as follows: "Write often & give free scope to thought & feeling let the subject be what it may. By doing so you train the mind to express itself in a free & easy manner, & also lay the foundation for a regular & systematic course of thinking & of reasoning."³⁵ Gilman also regularly sent home a variety of newspapers from Lowell, but he was no intellectual despite his wide-ranging curiosity, and he never expressed an interest in more formal education.

Gilman's background was not working-class, insofar as farmers owned their own means of production, and his letters reveal that several uncles were successful New England businessmen. But the fact remained that Spencer's own family was of very ordinary circumstances, and Reverend Reid accepted the marriage alliance with the Gilmans only because his son had decided to become a farmer himself: "A farmer's daughter in his own vicinity who knows well what kind of home he is bringing her to—who sees what she has to expect, & cannot naturally look for any thing different from, or much better than what she was used to, is more likely to [...] exert herself to make it a comfortable home."³⁶

Spencer began working in Lowell as a yard hand before serving off and on as a watchman for the Massachusetts Corporation. He also learned the mechanic's (carpenter's) trade from his contractor uncle, went into business briefly as a carter, and experimented in photography, going so far as to lecture and publish a manual on the subject. Such frequent changes in occupation were commonplace in mid-19th-century North American cities, making it impossible to establish rigid socio-economic categories. But even though Gilman did move from the ranks of the unskilled wage-earners to independent artisanship by the later 1840s, his roles as self-employed carter and photographer would hardly elevate him to the middle class.

Kin ties could nevertheless alleviate class distinctions. While in Lowell, Spencer Gilman lived most of the time in the respectable petit-bourgeois household of his uncle, Tristram Coffin Gilman, who was listed as a housewright, and later a carpenter, in the city directories of the 1840s. Spencer also used his spare cash to speculate in the shares of a local railway company, and took time off to visit the historic battlefield of Concord and to attend the theater in Boston. Taking a strong

³⁴Spencer had asked that the farm be sold, but his letters suggest that he received a monetary settlement from his father instead, and the land was still in his father's hands at the time of the sale to Lester Ball in 1861.

³⁵Phelps, "Moses Gilman."

³⁶Montréal Diocesan Archives (Anglican), James Reid Diary, vol. 25, p. 4531, 19 Dec. 1852.

interest in politics, Gilman expressed decided opinions on national leaders such as President John Tyler and Senator Daniel Webster, and he belonged to a debating club as well as attending lectures at the Lowell Institute.

But Gilman expressed little interest in religion at a time when, according to Mary Ryan, a middle-class identity was emerging from the religious revivalism fueled by “young men and women from farm, artisan, and shopkeeping families who were struggling to find a comfortable place for themselves within a changing social and economic structure.”³⁷ Instead, Gilman was attracted to the current “scientific” crazes of phrenology and “mesmerism.”³⁸ And while he was a faithful temperance supporter, going so far as to abstain from tea and coffee at one point, Gilman (like the majority in his cotton-dependent town) remained indifferent to the era’s other major social reform movement, the abolition of slavery.³⁹ Indeed, Gilman’s liberalism did not extend to “race” or ethnicity in general. Far from feeling a sense of solidarity with the Irish workers of Lowell, for example, he described their violent behaviour in debasingly stereotypical terms meant to amuse his family.

The writings of Lowell’s female factory operatives indicate that a number of them held similar prejudices, suggesting that a widespread resentment against the threat of Irish cheap labour, drunkenness, and violence may have helped to strengthen a common sense of identity and purpose among American-born male and female workers.⁴⁰ Gilman corresponds in many respects to Alan Dawley’s and Paul Faler’s definition of the “new person among the laboring classes of Europe and America [...] one who put his/her needs ahead of the demands of kin and community, who acknowledged no master but the self, and who located the virtues of self-control, self-denial, and self-improvement at the center of the moral universe.” Like their employers, these “modernists” shunned those things the “traditionalists” cherished — “the warm sociability of the drinking club, the ‘wasteful’ amusement of the circus and Jim Crow show, the easygoing work rhythm.”⁴¹

But the Dawley-Faler typology is not particularly helpful in Gilman’s case, for he also remained in certain respects a traditionalist, with his rather casual approach

³⁷Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge, MA 1981), 13.

³⁸An early form of hypnotism, mesmerism, also known as animal magnetism, was an offshoot of phrenology. See Roger Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, MA 1968).

³⁹Mary H. Blewett, “The Mills and the Multitudes: A Political History,” in *Cotton Was King*, 167-8; Arthur L. Eno, Jr., “Minds among the Spindles: A Cultural History,” in *Cotton Was King*, 247-8.

⁴⁰Dublin, *Women at Work*, 147-8, 162. The pro-labour *Voice of Industry* also attacked the Irish. See the 1846 excerpt in Kulik *et al.*, *The New England Mill Village*, 516-20. For an analysis, see Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps*, 94, 97, 106-11, 134-42.

⁴¹Alan Dawley and Paul Faler, “Workingclass Culture and Politics in the Industrial Revolution: Sources of Loyalism and Rebellion,” in Milton Cantor, ed., *American Workingclass Culture: Explorations in American Labor and Social History* (Westport 1979), 61, 63.

towards work and his ongoing attachment to a family-and-community network. Even allowing for his relative youth, Gilman had a less ambitious outlook on life than the stereotypical aspirant to middle-class status.⁴² While he warned his brother that no one should come to Lowell who was not willing to work hard, he saw labour as a necessary evil and admitted that he was enjoying himself more for having given up all thoughts of accumulating property: "My motto is live today & let the morrow take care of itself."⁴³ Gilman carefully noted the arrival of circuses in Lowell, and his attendance at the theater was no reflection of middle-class pretensions since it appealed to a broad social spectrum, blending Shakespearean drama, popular farces, and novelty acts.⁴⁴

Nor was Gilman's attitude towards the stage lectures that were part of the thriving self-improvement movement always a serious one. He wrote with tongue firmly in cheek on 14 July 1844:

We have every thing that can be thought of in shape of Concerts, Lectures, etc. We have Lectures to Gentlemen where Ladies & Children are not admitted. And Lectures to Ladies[,] Corset and Anticorset Lectures, Temperance Lecture [s,] Antislavery Lectures. Also Mnemonics, a bran [?] new Science. In short we have humbuggery in ten thousand forms, which we Yankee's (noted for Gullibility) eagerly swallow without once stopping to taste.

As Martin Hewett has argued for Saint John, New Brunswick, "science became just one element [...] developed in the 1830s and 1840s, during which time the traditional motifs of the rational recreation ideal were appropriated and diluted by a wide spectrum of entertainments."⁴⁵ In that town, at least, the carnivalesque demonstrations of phrenology and mesmerism were resisted by the conservative scientific establishment.⁴⁶

Gilman was therefore very much a part of the popular classes in Lowell, even if he was able to resist proletarianization to a considerable degree. Indeed, had he lived long enough, Gilman might possibly have become a successful artisan or entrepreneur in California. Rather than squandering the small fortune he made mining gold, he planned to work as a carpenter during his first winter in San

⁴² Contrast the attitude reflected in the letters of the Hollingworth family, who "[h]aving left Yorkshire in order to escape the English factory system, [...] try to turn the American factory system to their advantage." Thomas W. Leavitt, ed., *The Hollingworth Letters: Technical Change in the Textile Industry, 1826-1837* (Cambridge, MA 1969), xxv.

⁴³ Letter of 30 October 1842.

⁴⁴ See Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA 1988), 68; and Bruce Levine et al., *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society*, vol. 1 (New York 1989), 293-9.

⁴⁵ Martin Hewett, "Science as Spectacle: Popular Scientific Culture in Saint John, New Brunswick, 1830-1850," *Acadiensis*, 18 (1988), 114.

⁴⁶ Hewett, "Science as Spectacle," 110-13.

Francisco. But Gilman's upward mobility was probably not so uncommon in this age of opportunity, nor was there a necessary contradiction between his aspiration to respectability and his working-class status. As Peter Bailey has pointed out, workers could adopt "the rhetoric of progress and self-culture" while sustaining "an independent radical critique of capital and its values."⁴⁷

Having grown up on a farm adjacent to the estate of General Roswell Olcott, son of the former Lieutenant-Governor of Vermont and reputed owner of several slaves, Gilman could not avoid being aware of class distinctions even before he left Brome Township.⁴⁸ He was also strongly influenced by his experience in Lowell. Rather than joining the middle-class Rechabite temperance association to which his Uncle Tristram belonged, Gilman became a member of the more plebeian Washingtonians. According to Teresa Murphy, this anti-institutional organization influenced the labour movement by giving workingmen a new sense of moral authority.⁴⁹ In any case, Gilman did not remain a rigid teetotaler, for in 1849 he noted that while on board ship "A little Brandy, Gin, Wine, etc. not objectionable to a Temperance man."⁵⁰ Gilman also mocked his ambitious uncle's fruitless quest for a patronage post, and, after describing a local fire, commented that it had "done no harm merely burning down the stately mansion in which an aristocratic & arbitrary old lawyer resided."⁵¹ In another letter Gilman began as follows a humorous poem inspired by a lady's request to know his mother's maiden name:

Why ask my mother's Maiden name?
As though it were a thing of Fame.
As though proved titles grac'd her birth;
Which are at best of trivial worth.⁵²

Even Gilman's support for the elite-led Democrats was not inconsistent with a radical political stance, for the Whigs controlled the city of Lowell in the interests of the mill owners.⁵³ Furthermore, Sean Wilentz argues that the Democrats ap-

⁴⁷Peter Bailey, "'Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?' Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability," *Journal of Social History*, 12 (1989), 337.

⁴⁸Rev. Ernest M. Taylor, *History of Brome County, Quebec*, vol. 2 (Montréal 1937), 292-3; Phelps, "The Moses Gilman Family," 5.

⁴⁹Teresa Anne Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor: Religion, Reform, and Gender in Early New England* (Ithaca 1992), chapter 5 and 177-90. On the Rechabites, see Ian R. Tyrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport 1979), 209; and J.I. Little, "A Moral Engine of Such Incalculable Power: The Temperance Movement in the Eastern Townships, 1830-52," *Journal of Eastern Townships Studies*, 11 (1997), 22.

⁵⁰Letter of 6 May 1849.

⁵¹Letter of 16 February 1845.

⁵²Letter of 18 February 1844.

⁵³Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps*, 134; Blewett, "The Mills and the Multitudes," 167-8.

pealed, "in general, to those who felt cut off from or injured by the continuing transformation of market relations."⁵⁴ In 1843 Gilman referred to his workplace, the Massachusetts Yard, as Monkey Hollow because of the social-climbing ambitions of the Whig overseer and several fellow-watchmen. The watchmen's capture of a raccoon inspired Gilman to send satirical letters to a local Democrat newspaper using this symbol of the old Whig party as his pseudonym. One of these letters began:

The petitioner your humble prisoner respectfully represents, That in the year 1842, I was induced by false representations and perfidious promises of some of your species who assumed the name of coon, to leave the quiet and peaceful hills of the Granite State, to come to this city and live upon corporation patronage under the special contract of two dollars a day and roast beef.

That on [...] entering upon my official duties the persons I found there had every appearance of being coons and such of them as were kept in abject servitude retained for a long time that appearance, but the officers were possessed of a more restless disposition, and made frequent efforts to climb which gave them an ape-like appearance, but the more they attempted it the more they showed themselves up to be monkeys.⁵⁵

Gilman harboured a particular enmity for the "Great & Godlike" Daniel Webster, noting his "natural propensity to fawn upon, & cringe under those enjoying wealth & power."⁵⁶ Certainly not obsequious himself, Gilman was dismissed from his job as watchman in 1843 because he had publicly criticized the company for reducing wages and board allowance. Nor did Gilman share the Whig senator's well-known enthusiasm for the industrial revolution, at least as it was unfolding in Lowell, for in 1844 he joined his fellow workers, including the female factory operatives, in the agitation for shorter hours.⁵⁷

Gilman's surviving letters unfortunately do not detail his activities in the labour movement, but they do note his membership in the Mechanics' and Laborers' Association of Lowell, which he defined as a society "for the purpose of

⁵⁴Sean Wilentz, "The Rise of the American Working Class, 1776-1877: A Survey," in J. Carroll Moody and Alice Kessler-Harris, eds., *Perspectives of American Labor History: The Problems of Synthesis* (Dekalb, IL 1989), 105-6.

⁵⁵*Vox Populi*, 10 March 1843. See also 3 March 1843. Jones (*Languages of Class*, 102) argues that working-class radicals of 1830s-1840s Britain borrowed the political language of older republican movements rather than looking forward to socialist economies. As for the word "coon," the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that its racist application had emerged by this time, but there is no indication in Gilman's letters that he had this meaning in mind. The more standard definition appears to have been "a slick fellow."

⁵⁶Letter of 18 February 1844. See also 29 November 1846.

⁵⁷Levine et al., *Who Built America*, 222. On the ten-hours movement, see Norman Ware, *The Industrial Worker, 1840-1860* (Chicago 1964), chapter 8; and Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor*, chapters 6-8.

ameliorating the condition of the laboring portion of [the]Community, by reducing the hours of toil per day, & placing the laborer on an equal footing with the Capitalist. Believing that the present system & arrangement of Society is decidedly wrong & also believing that by the present system of labor, the producing classes of this Country are fast hastening to the wretched condition of the laboring classes of Europe."⁵⁸

Gilman also mentioned writing articles for the association's weekly newspaper, *The Operative*, and in October 1844 he attended the founding convention in Boston of the New England Workingmen's Association.⁵⁹ Two years later he marched in the 4 July parade with the reorganized and renamed Labor Reform League.⁶⁰ There is no evidence that Gilman supported Associationism (Fourierism) or National Land Reform, two utopian movements whose principles were part of the labour-reform platform, but his radical rhetoric certainly suggests a strong commitment to fundamental reform.⁶¹

Reflecting the orthodox Marxist position, Bruce Laurie remains critical of what he terms the Christian labourism propounded by the New England Workingmen's Association and the Female Labor Reform Association, with their promotion of the petition over the strike.⁶² Teresa Murphy argues, however, that labour reform's appropriation of the stereotypes and discourse of middle-class reformers during the 1840s "represented a challenge rather than a capitulation to middle-class control of community morals," particularly "the emerging bourgeois distinction between the amorality of the marketplace and moral universe of private behavior."⁶³ As for tactics, Murphy adds that petitioning was simply "a different form of self-assertion" than the strike, one "which more effectively accommodated the differences of the region as the struggle for a ten-hour day moved from conflict at the workplace to conflict within the community, and as women joined men in a broad coalition."⁶⁴

David Zonderman's perspective, which lies between these two extremes, is perhaps most helpful. He essentially agrees with Laurie that "by continuing to present petitions concerning the hours of labour instead of taking more direct action against the factory system," the workers "reaffirmed the basic structures of the

⁵⁸Letter of 19 October 1844.

⁵⁹Dublin, "Personal Perspective," 399. Unfortunately, it appears that only three issues of *The Operative* have survived, and there are no articles by Gilman in them.

⁶⁰On the Labor Reform League, see Frances H. Early, "A Reappraisal of the New England Labor Reform Movement of the 1840s: The Lowell Female Labor Reform Association and the New England Workingmen's Association," *Histoire-sociale / Social History*, 13 (1980), 49.

⁶¹These movements have long been criticized by labour historians as middle-class utopianism. See Early, "A Reappraisal," 34-5; and Levine *et al.*, *Who Built America*, 346-54.

⁶²Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York 1989), 94-5.

⁶³Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor*, 166.

⁶⁴Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor*, 134.

industrial economy and American politics, whether they all intended to or not." Yet, he also argues that by demanding shorter working days workers aimed to gain more time "to attend to their health, families, education, religion, culture, and the duties of citizenship," as well as to provide themselves with the opportunity "to learn why it was necessary to redesign the factory system and the social structure" in order to preserve the shared republican heritage of equal rights. The question became one of workers' control, not by seizing the means of production, but by assuming the power to prevent overwork and exploitation.⁶⁵

In short, Gilman and the other Lowell activists of the early to mid-1840s were Jacksonians who emphasized the need "to preserve each worker's independence as a person."⁶⁶ But they also clearly believed there was a deep-rooted conflict in society between the producing and non-producing classes, and that government could and should curb the moral irresponsibility of the corporation. Otherwise, the degradation of labour would undermine all republican institutions as well as society itself.⁶⁷ Paradoxical as it might seem, Gilman's antipathy to abolitionism also reflected the current Jacksonian concern that this movement would divert attention from the vital economic questions of the day.⁶⁸

The defeat of Jacksonianism, like the defeat of the struggle for worker control in New England's textile towns, ended the idealistic faith in political reform and gave rise to the assumption that "workingmen's interests were primarily bound up with their position as economic agents, as 'laboring men'."⁶⁹ Women, who had never been seen as long-term workers, were clearly excluded. Fortunately for Gilman and many of the other rural-origin workers in Lowell and its neighbouring textile towns, when they faced the victory of the conservative political forces in Washington, and the onslaught of cheap immigrant labour in their workplaces, they were able to make an independent living elsewhere rather than accept lower wages and poorer working conditions. With the failure of the shorter hours movement and Gilman's break from dependency on the local corporations, his letters no longer referred to the evils of the industrial system. But he had also broken from the security of working for his uncle with its possibilities of a business partnership, and he now plied his trade in various localities until heading for the next frontier, a place where he would not have to join an established bourgeoisie in order to have a chance to become prosperous.

⁶⁵David Zonderman, *Aspirations and Anxieties: New England Workers and the Mechanized Factory System, 1815-1850* (New York 1992), 211, 244, 294.

⁶⁶Zonderman, *Aspirations*, 221.

⁶⁷Zonderman, *Aspirations*, 295.

⁶⁸See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston 1953), 335-6, 407, 424.

⁶⁹Keith McClelland makes this observation about England after the mid-19th century, but it applies equally well to the United States of that era. "Rational and Respectable Men: Gender, the Working Class, and Citizenship in Britain, 1850-1867," in Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose, eds., *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (Ithaca and London 1996), 286-7.

In the final analysis, the question of whether or not Spencer Gilman strictly belonged to the working-class is ahistorical because capitalist forms and class formations were in flux during his era, and social historians have now largely rejected what Sean Wilentz terms the essentialist concept of class consciousness. Wilentz argues that, rather than attempting to see how clearly the past approximated an ideal, historians should examine how class consciousness emerged as “workers and radicals elaborated a notion of labor as a form of personal property, in direct opposition to capitalist conceptions of wage labor as a market commodity.”⁷⁰ But Gilman clearly identified himself as a member of the producing classes, and his trajectory reminds us that labour unions, political parties, and social movements were not the only forms of resistance to class exploitation, particularly as long as the frontier remained open.⁷¹ It was no accident that Jacksonians regarded the western frontier as the best check against economic oppression.⁷² If Gilman’s attitudes toward society and his place in it seem somewhat contradictory in the eyes of modern readers, he himself appears to have had quite a clear and confident sense of his identity in the new world that was unfolding before him.

Gender Identity

While social and cultural historians have helped to construct the concept of class identity, they have more recently begun to deconstruct that of gender identity. But, despite repeated calls for a gendered analysis of class formation,⁷³ relatively little work has been done on the gender values and attitudes of the working-class male.⁷⁴

⁷⁰Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York 1984), 15-17.

⁷¹Bryan Palmer refers to the “divergent cultures” of the producing classes as opposed to a “clear and categorical class experience” in pre-1850 British North America. *Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980* (Toronto and Vancouver 1983), 20.

⁷²Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson*, 345-9.

⁷³Three examples of such calls are Joan Wallach Scott, “Language and Working-Class History,” in *Gender and the Politics of History* (revised ed., New York 1999), 53-67; Alice Kessler-Harris, “A New Agenda for American Labor History: A Gendered Analysis and the Question of Class,” in J. Carroll Moody and Alice Kessler-Harris, eds., *Perspectives of American Labor History: The Problems of Synthesis* (DeKalb, IL 1989), 217-34; and Steven Maynard, “Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Constitution of Masculinity in Working-Class History,” *Labour / Le Travail*, 23 (1989), 156-69.

⁷⁴Exceptions for the 19th century, which are largely focussed on the skilled artisan, include Keith McClelland, “Some Thoughts on Masculinity and the ‘Representative Artisan’ in Britain,” *Gender & History*, 1 (1989), 164-77; Catherine Hall, “The Tale of Samuel and Jemima: Gender and Working-Class Culture in Early-Nineteenth-Century England,” in Catherine Hall, *White, Male, and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, UK 1992), 124-50; Mary H. Blewett, “Deference and Defiance: Labor Politics and the Meanings of Masculinity in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century New England Textile

The path-breaking books on American manhood by Anthony Rotundo and Michael Kimmel focus on the middle class largely because it is easier to find letters, diaries, and memoirs, as well as recorded speeches and various kinds of advice literature, produced by and for this sector of society.⁷⁵

But given that the unmarried male workers who grew up in the close-knit rural and small-town communities of the north eastern United States and Canada were not only remarkably mobile geographically, but almost universally literate, it is rather difficult to believe that few of them followed the example of their female counterparts by writing letters home to their parental families and friends. The fact that Gilman's letters have been largely ignored by historians despite their long-time availability in a public archives suggests that historians themselves have been somewhat blinded by the stereotype of the inarticulate male worker.⁷⁶

While Spencer Gilman's letters certainly do not speak for an entire social stratum, they do provide one of the first opportunities to compare the outlook of a young working man with the findings of Rotundo and Kimmel for middle-class males at the same stage of life during the antebellum era. One might expect to find quite a different set of values, for John Tosh has cautioned against assuming that the working class shared "[t]he dominant code of Victorian manliness, with its emphasis on self-control, hard work and independence."⁷⁷ But, perhaps because of his rural background, Gilman followed these very principles to a considerable degree even while lacking much desire to join the ranks of the petite bourgeoisie. At this stage of his life the young Lowell worker had clearly not adopted the middle-class belief that a man's occupation "was an authentic expression of his individuality."⁷⁸ He nevertheless avoided factory work, which he claimed was too

Industry," *Gender & History*, 5 (1993), 398-415; Ava Baron, "Acquiring Manly Competence: The Demise of Apprenticeship and the Remasculinization of Printers' Work," in Carnes and Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood*; Deborah Stiles, "Martin Butler, Masculinity, and the North American Sole Leather Tanning Industry, 1871-1889," *Labour / Le Travail*, 42 (Fall 1988), 85-114; Valerie Burton, "The Myth of Bachelor Jack: Masculinity, Patriarchy, and Seafaring Labour," in Colin Howell and Richard J. Twomey, eds., *Jack Tar in History: Essays in the History of Maritime Life and Labour* (Fredericton 1991), 179-98; Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto 1990); and Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley 1995).

⁷⁵ Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Manhood from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York 1993); and Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York 1996). See also John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven 1999).

⁷⁶ Thomas Dublin has published two letters from this collection, but it is not mentioned in his book or any other studies dealing with Lowell. Thomas Dublin, "A Personal Perspective on the Ten Hour Movement in New England," *Labor History*, 24 (1983), 398-403.

⁷⁷ John Tosh, "What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-century Britain," *History Workshop Journal*, 38 (1994), 182-3.

⁷⁸ Tosh, "What Should Historians do," 186.

confining to suit him, but perhaps also because, in Zonderman's words, "it ran counter to the American mythology of manly, independent producer."⁷⁹ While the rhetoric of the first American workingmen's political parties equated all economic dependence on wages with emasculation, the work Gilman chose at least freed him from the dictates of a machine.⁸⁰

Gilman's gender-based experiences, including the channeling of his youthful energy into debating clubs and other self-improvement associations, were quite similar to those described by Rotundo, which suggests that there may have been a broadly-shared idea of what it meant to be a young man in mid-19th-century northern North America — at least for the majority who were of white skin, native birth, and English tongue.⁸¹ But the temperance, labour-reform, and educational societies in which Gilman participated all had their female counterparts in Lowell. Furthermore, in contrast to his uncle, Gilman avoided the fraternal lodges which, according to Tosh, embodied "men's privileged access to the public sphere, while simultaneously reinforcing women's confinement to household and neighbourhood."⁸² As an outspoken, independent minded worker, Gilman was presumably not in need of the psychic escape that the initiation ceremonies of such lodges are said to have offered from the restrictions and work discipline imposed by Victorian social conventions and structures.⁸³ Indeed, the psychological profile presented by the historians of male gender identity is rather problematic as far as Gilman is concerned.

Kimmel argues that during the antebellum era "[t]he Self-Made Man of American mythology was born anxious and insecure, uncoupled from the more stable anchors of landownership or workplace autonomy."⁸⁴ In a similar fashion, Rotundo refers to youth in the 19th-century as the stressful and uncertain phase of life between boyhood, with its lack of restraints, and manhood, with its many responsibilities. The youths' constant movement from place to place signified not only a search for employment and adventure, but also an uncertain sense of self.⁸⁵ Both authors suggest that marriage was a means to escape this uncertainty through finding "a haven in a heartless world."⁸⁶ Furthermore, until an unwed male reached his thirties, he continued to be considered a youth, without the respect and authority of married men of his age.⁸⁷ Gilman's repeated references to his lack of strong romantic attachments (though he was certainly attracted to young women), make

⁷⁹Zonderman, *Aspirations and Anxieties*, 293.

⁸⁰Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 31.

⁸¹Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 21, 63-71.

⁸²Tosh, "What Should Historians do," 186.

⁸³Mark C. Carnes, "Middle-Class Men and the Solace of Fraternal Ritual," in Carnes and Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood*, 52.

⁸⁴Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 9.

⁸⁵Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 55-6, 60.

⁸⁶Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 59; and Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 114-15.

⁸⁷Rotundo, *American Manhood*, chapter 3; Tosh, "What Should Historians do," 185.

it clear that he was very conscious of the social pressure to take a wife. At the age of thirty, in 1846, he remained in a semi-dependent, subordinate status as a boarder in the household of his uncle, who even neglected to pay him his wages.

Gilman appears to have finally become engaged, or possibly even married, by 1849,⁸⁸ but his living arrangements and resistance to romantic entanglement throughout much of the decade suggests that he was not particularly driven to “measure up” to what Rotundo and Kimmel perceive to be the prevailing notions of manhood. Though labourers generally married at a younger age than members of the middle class, the physical nature of their work presumably relieved them of anxiety about their manliness, as well as the need for the domestic refuge that bourgeois males sought from the rigors of the competitive workplace. To the not always grateful Gilman, his uncle’s home served as an adequate substitute, allowing him to cling longer than most workers to the freedom offered by his status as a “youth.”

Reflecting his independence, Gilman took a less censorious view of the theater than did the female operative who boasted in the *Lowell Offering* in 1841 that the town had remained free of such a demoralizing influence: “A number of years ago a theater was built, but public opinion indignantly opposed it. Its doors were very shortly closed; and recently it was pulled down to make way for shops of honorable (because useful) calling.”⁸⁹ Unfortunately, Gilman was too cautious in his letters to more than hint at adventures with the opposite sex, referring self-mockingly on one occasion to the “amours” of “the Deaconish D.S.G.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, while it was common for young men in the Victorian era to consort with prostitutes, and Gilman’s letters do contain sexual innuendoes, his rather prudish comments about the dress of certain young women he observed suggests that his behavior was somewhat restrained by the ideology of sexual self-control.⁹¹

Gilman clearly feared that emotional involvement would threaten his independence, for he wrote on 19 March 1848: “Sad affair truly for Moses to lose his woman thus cutting him down in his prime, but after all it is nothing to what it might have been for he might have lost his gizzard with her.” Four years earlier (19 October 1844) he had written that “once a person becomes entangled in the meshes of love, they are in precisely the same situation with the bird when under the fascinating power of the snake — rushing headlong — Shall I say to their own destruction? No — for Matrimony does not destroy, but merely awakens one to a sense of past folly.” Rather than misogyny, these passages reflect the romantic

⁸⁸In a letter from his brother, Moses, in Manchester, New Hampshire in 1849, there is an enigmatic reference to Spencer’s “better half,” and Spencer himself mentions returning to “Kate” in an undated fragment of a letter from California.

⁸⁹Cited in Kennigott, *The Record of a City*, 16.

⁹⁰Letter of 30 October 1842.

⁹¹Tosh, “What Should Historians do,” 182; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 121-7.

belief that marriage was not to be entered into lightly, for Gilman expressed shock at the prevalence of wife beating in Lowell.⁹²

Gilman's choice of metaphors nevertheless suggests a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards women, which must have been common enough during an era when, according to Rotundo, young middle-class men established their closest emotional bonds with a small number of their peers of the same gender. These relationships involved physical — but rarely sexual — intimacy.⁹³ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg found a similar dynamic with young middle-class women, as did Karen Hansen with unmarried working-class women, but Hansen also argues that working-class men did not establish mutual relationships of the same intensity.⁹⁴ Whether or not this was true of Gilman is impossible to say with certainty. He clearly fraternized with his fellow workers, but no male names appear on a regular basis in his family correspondence.

Furthermore, Gilman did socialize with young women at the evening lectures and in the labour movement. Although it was difficult and novel for cross-gender relationships to be exclusive, intimate, and yet non-romantic, unless between siblings, the only close Lowell friendship that can be identified in Gilman's letters is that with his cousin, Welthia Gilman.⁹⁵ Unfortunately for him, she returned to Brome after a relatively short period in Lowell. It is not surprising, therefore, that Gilman occasionally expressed a sense of loneliness in the relatively anonymous urban environment, or that he would hesitate to leave his uncle's somewhat tumultuous household with its assorted in-laws and growing number of ill-disciplined children. Despite his gregarious nature, Gilman may not have experienced the intimate friendships which, according to Rotundo, offered a chance for rehearsal of marriage by allowing youths "to test their feelings about adult intimacy in a setting where lifelong commitment was not at stake."⁹⁶

Alternately, Gilman may have chosen to write only about individuals whom his family were acquainted with, but, if he did have close long-term friendships in Lowell, they did not entirely replace his need to confide in his brothers Roswell and Moses in Brome. His closest bond was with Roswell, who was six years his junior, and to whom most of his letters were written until Roswell began "courting" in the fall of 1844. The fact that Spencer's contact with Roswell was effectively cut off after the latter married was typical of the male homosocial relationships described by Rotundo.⁹⁷ In fact, Spencer could not help but express a hint of

⁹²Letter of 5 July 1846; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 104, 112, 132, 164.

⁹³Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 7, 75-7, 80-4.

⁹⁴Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1 (1975), 1-29; and Karen V. Hansen, *A Very Social Time: Crafting Community in Antebellum New England* (Berkeley 1994), 75-6.

⁹⁵The kin tie is noted in Phelps, "Daniel S. Gilman," 3.

⁹⁶Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 86.

⁹⁷Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 87-90.

jealousy and betrayal after the wedding, writing to his next oldest brother, Moses, that "I suppose Roswell cannot be touched now with a ten foot pole but the novelty of the thing will wear off after awhile."⁹⁸ When a baby was born a few months later, Spencer wrote rather dismissively, "As for Roswell's boy I hardly know what to say, but suppose it happened kind of natural. Same as toadstools on a log."⁹⁹

Gilman's taste for independence and adventure may appear to foreshadow the male middle-class revolt against domesticity and the feminizing constraints of civilized society in the later 19th century,¹⁰⁰ but he embraced travel out of a sense of intellectual curiosity rather than masculine bravado. Even if he avoided marriage, Gilman shared in what women's historians have labeled the cult of domesticity, expressing particular admiration for aunts who demonstrated good homemaking abilities. But, at the same time, he was not entirely a traditionalist in his attitudes towards women, nor a die-hard supporter of separate gender spheres. In contrast to the labour press, Gilman did not question the right of women to work for wages; indeed, he expressed admiration for Sarah Bagley, the radical president of Lowell's Female Labour Reform Association who directly challenged the prescribed boundaries of the female sphere.¹⁰¹

Gilman neither partook in what Anna Clark calls the "bachelor journeyman culture of drinking rituals and combinations" nor "the aggressive celebration of physical strength" that John Tosh suggests was "an exclusive badge of masculinity" for the working-class male.¹⁰² Indeed, Gilman discussed his recurring illnesses at some length and carefully avoided jobs that he considered too strenuous or taxing. Like his brother Moses, who asked him to scout for a clerk's or tailor's job in Lowell (10 April 1848), Spencer Gilman left the farm to avoid hard labour, not to embrace it.

In short, Spencer Gilman appears to have been less dogmatic and rigid about gender roles and more secure in his male identity than he should have been by Tosh's definition, which claims that masculinity has long rested on the three foundations of work, home, and male association.¹⁰³ To Gilman, in his extended period of "youth," work was essentially a means of earning a necessary income,

⁹⁸Letter of 5 July 1846.

⁹⁹Letter of 29 November 1846.

¹⁰⁰Tosh, "What Should Historians do," 188-9; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 146, 176; Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 59-70.

¹⁰¹Bagley's crusade for working-women's rights may have been "wedded to more traditional concepts of female nurturing and morality," as Zonderman (*Aspirations*, 223) states, but Murphy (*Ten Hours' Labor*, 205-6) argues that to address mixed audiences, as Bagley did, "constituted a dramatic change in the language of the ten-hour-movement. The words and images might be the same, but the dramatic performance changed their meaning." On the attitude of the labour movement and of radical culture towards women's role, see Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor*, 193-7; Hall, "The Tale of Samuel and Jemima"; Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*; and Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*.

¹⁰²Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, 5-6; Tosh, "What Should Historians do," 186.

¹⁰³Tosh, "What Should Historians do," 192.

home was dominated by someone else, and associational life was not exclusively gender-based. Much of this would have changed with marriage, but it is difficult to believe that Gilman's basic value system would have undergone a fundamental alteration in his thirties. Nor was he necessarily atypical in these attitudes for at mid-century "manliness" had not yet developed into the more exaggerated sense of gender identity known as "masculinity."

Given the ready availability of correspondence by Lowell's female workers during the 1840s, we must ask how their outlook compares with that of Spencer Gilman, and what this suggests about the construction of gender identity at mid-century. There are many obvious similarities, including a strong interest in events and people at home, and a sense of loneliness in the new urban environment, though this varied considerably from person to person. One can, nevertheless, detect a more urgent interest in domestic details in the letters written by the Lowell women than in those of Gilman.¹⁰⁴ While certainly not disinclined to gossip about mutual acquaintances, Gilman also filled his letters with information about the economy, politics, scientific discoveries, and cultural life in general. Not confined by the regimentation of the factory or the curfew of the company boarding house, but, rather, changing occupations and touring nearby cities as the spirit moved him, Gilman had a broader view of the world than that expressed in the letters and diaries of the much more constrained female operatives.¹⁰⁵

While the horizons of the young female operatives whose letters survive may have remained necessarily limited (though the expectations of their audiences should be kept in mind), the fact remains that they were among the first American-born women to leave the confines of the domestic household, even if temporarily. They were therefore among the first to gain considerable independence from their fathers, as well as to develop a sense of sisterly solidarity against their male bosses. Furthermore, Gilman's veiled references to female friends remind us that there were enough male workers in Lowell to ensure that the young women's social activities were not entirely homosocial.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴This contrasts with Hansen's findings that the narratives of working people of both genders in antebellum New England focused on "the mundane routines of daily life," with "only minimally elaborate feelings, ideas, and opinions about the political world," though she does note that women "gossiped" more in their letters than did men. Hansen, *A Very Social Time*, 36, 134.

¹⁰⁵For a useful brief discussion on the complex topic of sexual difference in labour history, see Ava Baron, "Gender and Labor History: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future," in Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca 1991), 21-7.

¹⁰⁶Kathy Peiss claims that "a cultural preoccupation with the emotional and sexual bonds between men and women" did not develop until the early decades of the 20th century. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia 1986), 7.

As does Spencer Gilman, these women unfortunately fade from the picture once their years as Lowell workers have ended, but their options would clearly have been more circumscribed than those of their male counterparts. Dublin has discovered that few of the female operatives returned home to marry farm boys,¹⁰⁷ but their opportunities for occupational mobility were very limited, and one can only wonder if the strengthening cult of domesticity allowed their role as wives to change significantly from that of their mothers. Life in Lowell had nevertheless broken a pattern by permanently removing most of these young women from their tight-knit rural communities, just as it presumably did for many young male workers such as Spencer Gilman and his two brothers. Moses would join Spencer briefly in Lowell in 1849 before following him to the gold fields and an early death in California, while Roswell finally moved to Worcester, Massachusetts in 1864.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

Just as the small number of working women who edited the *Lowell Offering* and led the ten-hours' movement can hardly be seen as "typical" of their gender, so Spencer Gilman's intellectual alertness and strongly independent outlook may have set him apart from most young working men in Lowell, though he was not a locally prominent figure. The degree to which Gilman's *mentalité* typified that of the young working-class men of mid-19th-century America will not be known until we begin to understand more about the private spheres of their lives. Certainly, there is a marked contrast in behaviour between Gilman and the brawling and boastful William Otter, the Maryland plasterer and innkeeper who published his autobiography in 1835. The two men may have shared a sense of adventure and independence, an antipathy to the Irish, a lack of sympathy for Black slaves, an indifference to religion, a commitment to Jacksonian political values, and even a love of pranks, but Gilman would only have been repulsed by the sadistic pleasure "Big Bill" took in beating other men senseless and torturing animals.

Although Otter and his "jolly fellows" were far from being marginal figures in their community, Richard Stott suggests that Otter's outrageous behavior, and his decision to publish his memoirs as a series of anecdotes, may have reflected a conscious reaction against the developing middle-class notions of morality and respectability.¹⁰⁹ But these so-called middle-class notions were not new to the rural population who still constituted the great majority in North America. In any case,

¹⁰⁷Dublin, *Women at Work*, 50-4.

¹⁰⁸Moses first visited Lowell in 1845. While he wrote to his family from Manchester in May 1849, he is listed as an employee of the Merrimack Company in Lowell's 1849 directory (Dublin, "A Personal Perspective," 401), and Spencer addressed a letter to him in Lowell in December of the same year. Family legend states that he died in a mine in California. Phelps, "The Moses Gilman Family," 5; and personal interview with Marion Phelps.

¹⁰⁹Richard B. Stott, "Commentary," in William Otter, *History of My Own Times*, Richard B. Stott, ed. (Ithaca 1995), 210, 215.

Gilman's letters fly in the face of the Genoveses' ill-considered charge that a cultural approach to the history of working men and women leads to the impression that they "miraculously create an 'autonomous culture' and resist successfully and totally the values and aspirations of the bourgeoisie."¹¹⁰ Gilman's class values were influenced not only by his experience as a wage worker, but also by his rural background and the middle-class influences which surrounded him. It is unlikely, therefore, that his decision to join the California gold rush can simply be construed as a cultural statement rejecting "Victorian ideology," as Stott has suggested for his counterparts.¹¹¹

While this paper has treated the concepts of class and gender separately, they were inextricably linked in what was clearly the basic defining characteristic of Gilman's ideology or self-identity — his commitment to independence both as a wage earner and as a man. This commitment drew him away from the confines of his rural home to what was then a major industrial center; it attracted him to Jacksonian political culture; it led to frequent changes in livelihood; and it explains his interest in popular scientific culture, his hostility to at least the more sensational forms of religion, his involvement with the labour movement, his resistance to marriage, and, finally, his trip to the California gold fields.

One might construe such restlessness as a reflection of psychological insecurity, a sense of anxiety about social status and masculinity, but Gilman emerges from his correspondence as a remarkably self-confident young man, persisting in the gold fields, for example, after his partners quit in discouragement. Perhaps the reason he was not more "anxious" than the stereotypical male of the Victorian era was that he did not engage in "feminizing" white-collar work, or submit for long to one boss, but Tosh, Rotundo, and Kimmel may also have been too quick to generalize about such psychological characteristics, rather than heeding the warning against reification of gender identities made by many other gender historians.¹¹²

The wit, intelligence, and liberalism that emerge from Spencer Gilman's letters were distinctive personal traits, ones not confined to a particular class, gender, or time period. In most respects, however, Gilman was an ordinary man caught up in the historical currents of his time, as he drifted, like so many others, from farm to city, from job to job, and from the eastern factory towns to the western frontier. There was nothing about his life to prevent him from remaining another unknown worker had his personal letters not fortuitously been preserved by his family and their descendants. This correspondence provides further evidence that New England workers, in Zonderman's words, "were not an inarticulate mass, understandable only through analysis in the aggregate, but thoughtful individuals with

¹¹⁰Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York 1983), 197.

¹¹¹Stott, "Commentary," 219.

¹¹²See, for example, Baron, "Gender and Labor," 36-7; and Joy Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," in Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, ed., *Gender and History in Canada* (Toronto 1996), 18-20.

their own insights into the early industrial system and the transformation of their working lives.”¹¹³

Finally, it should be noted that, just as other historians might have chosen to focus on different aspects of Gilman’s letters, much of my interpretation of his private life, and even his gender and class identity, is necessarily speculative.¹¹⁴ As far as his attitude towards women and sexuality is concerned, Gilman’s correspondence was constructed for a particular audience — his parental family — and he was clearly aware that even the letters he asked his brothers not to circulate might fall into the hands of his parents or sisters. Gilman may therefore not have been quite as morally “virtuous” as these letters suggest. And because of gaps in the correspondence we do not even know if his journey to California was motivated by a desire to escape marital entanglement or to establish a comfortable nest egg for a recently-established or anticipated family.

As for class consciousness, the letters again may hide as much as they reveal, for radical politics may not have been a topic Gilman could easily discuss with the various members of his farming family. However, they probably did share the same Jacksonian values, for there is no hint in his letters of parental or sibling disapproval. Certainly, Gilman was candid enough to reveal a growing disenchantment with industrial capitalism, and he was quite frank about the limited success of his various endeavors to make a living.

While Gilman’s correspondence may have helped assuage a sense of guilt for “abandoning” his parents, they still had reason to resent his influence on their remaining sons. The modern world described in these letters clearly aroused the dissatisfaction Moses and Roswell felt within the comfortable but narrow confines of rural Brome Township. This process of youthful unrest and emigration was repeated in many families throughout the region, for increasing numbers of people from the Eastern Townships and rural New England would follow the same path to urban and frontier America.¹¹⁵

While they have not paid enough attention to the impact of rural cultural values on the formation of the working-class identity in North America, an identity which challenged the view that people’s worth could be measured largely by what they accumulated,¹¹⁶ historians have also tended to present too static a view of rural culture. Demographic and economic forces can be measured, but they were not the

¹¹³Zonderman, *Aspirations and Anxieties*, 4.

¹¹⁴Influenced by post-structuralism, most gender historians not only stress the mutability of gender identities, but the socially constructed nature of our understanding of the past. For a recent discussion, see Parr, “Gender and History.”

¹¹⁵On this theme, see Little, *Ethno-Cultural Transition*, 22-27; Harold Fisher Wilson, *The Hill-Country of New England: Its Social and Economic History, 1790-1930* (New York 1936); and J.I. Little, “Popular Voices in Print: The Local Correspondents of an Extended Scots-Canadian Community, 1894,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30 (1995), 134-55.

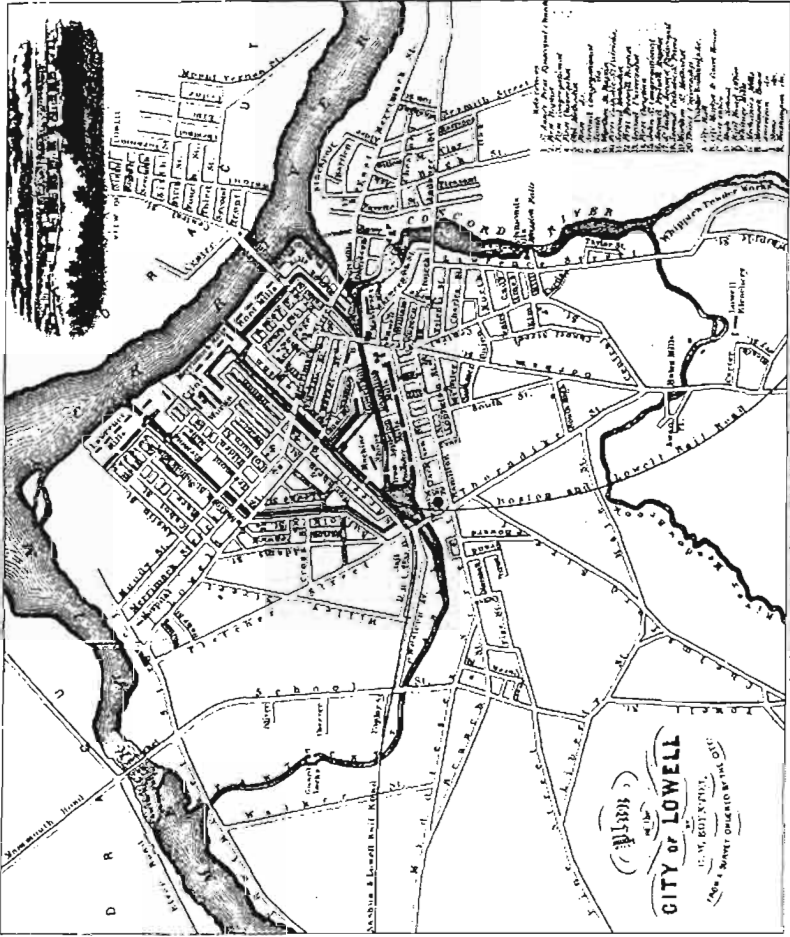
¹¹⁶On this point, see Zonderman, *Aspirations and Anxieties*, 263, 287; and Stiles, “Martin Butler.”

only ones behind the migration from the rural communities, for migrants have always been motivated by hope as well as despair. As Bruno Ramirez concluded in his study of French-Canadian migration to Woonsocket, Rhode Island, "migration was not something one was passively pushed into but a process involving the evaluation of one's own resources and [...] a decision based on a variety of strategic considerations."¹¹⁷

Spencer Gilman's experience reveals how important the urban pull factors could be for a young man with a sense of independence and a longing to experience life in a wider world. His path also suggests how difficult it could be for migrants to turn back to the old life after excitement had been followed by disillusionment in the crowded and regimented new urban centers with their sharply fluctuating economies. While Gilman was a perceptive observer of a wide range of life in an early manufacturing community, his letters are particularly valuable for the insights they provide into the impact of industrial capitalism on the general outlook of one of the many workers who had joined the trek from rural to urban North America.

I wish to express my gratitude to Marion Phelps, curator of the Brome County Historical Society, for bringing her great-uncle's letters to my attention. I am also grateful for the research funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and to Tom Dublin, Michael Fellman, Joy Parr, Chris Dummit and Bryan Palmer for their helpful comments and suggestions.

¹¹⁷Ramirez, *On the Move*, 47.



Lowell in 1845. Source: Rev. Henry A. Miles, *Lowell, As It Was, And As It Is* (Lowell: Nathaniel L. Dayton, Merrill and Heywood, 1846).

Document

The Gilman letters were transcribed by Scott Perchall, whom I wish to thank for his close attention to detail, and are published with the kind permission of the Brome County Historical Society. They were deposited there by Mary Dean (wife of Walter Griffiths) of Jonesville, Vermont. Mrs Griffiths was the granddaughter of Daniel Spencer Gilman's sister, Mary Ann, who inherited the family homestead with her husband, Lester Ball. Spencer, who was the oldest child (b. 1816), frequently refers to his siblings in the following letters; they were Mary Ann (b. 1818), Roswell (b. 1822), Moses D. (b. 1824/26), Patience (b. 1827), Martha (b. 1832), and Thaddeus (b. 1834). That the collection is not complete is revealed by the independent discovery of letter no. 6, from which the foregoing birth dates were calculated, and by a reference in that letter to an earlier one which has not been located.

Space restrictions have made it necessary to remove over half the material from the Gilman letters for this publication [indicated by (...)], resulting in a somewhat unbalanced impression of their main themes. Readers should keep in mind that most of the references to family and acquaintances have been edited out, as have many references to politics, the economy and the weather. Also heavily edited are Gilman's discussions of health, phrenology, lectures at the Mechanics' Institute, and details on the expansion of the Lowell factories.

To facilitate the reading of these letters, I have made the following minor editorial changes:

1. Square brackets indicate that letters from words or words themselves are illegible or missing due to tears in the paper or ink blots.
2. Punctuation has not been altered except to add periods at the end of sentences in place of commas, and to add commas sparingly. Dashes intended to be terminal marks have been converted to periods, and superfluous dashes removed.
3. Capitalization has been preserved as in the manuscript except that all sentences begin with capital letters.
4. Apostrophes have been added for the possessive.
5. Finally, because these often randomly constructed letters are rarely broken into discernable paragraphs, I have imposed my own paragraph structure.

17
 Friends & relations, generally. Lowell, June 15th 1853

you have doubtless anticipated having from me, this
 is the only manner I have to offer. After leaving Brome nothing expressed worth mentioning,
 I then reached Georgetown about midnight, took supper at Christy's house, who very
 kindly volunteered his services in procuring a carriage to convey me to the stage. If you will
 wait Georgetown be sure to packings desired to after leaving Georgetown & making taking
 a pleasant ride by moon light, we suddenly found our horse was grazing in a wall
 to be on his side or right foot. This was a pretty pickle, but there was no alternative but to
 off load & clear the carriage from the load. After about half an hour took in the the
 help of neighbours we got our horse firm, made some repairs & arrived in the stage
 about twelve o'clock about morning after breakfast at hotel in company with a
 gentleman from New York State who kept company with me to Lowell. Liked
 two young ones from the stage, one of whom was going to Berlin the other to
 this spot, Baltimore. The third day fell in company with two gentlemen one
 of whom was going to Philadelphia to act as agent for Fairbank & a platform
 table, the other friend was quite unacquainted with the far famed the Stearns
 of Hardwick. Said he was very difficult in power, made great pretensions to skill
 quite unacquainted & much obliged to assist him, took different roads
 from usual & put up for the night at Plymouth, the next day through
 by Thompson's, we were to be Concord where we took care, for Lowell
 since my arrival I have commenced the job & began business, having
 four horses of good horse; Harrow & tongue, the latter of which I obtain
 on credit. This is the most other kind of business requiring tools or
 procurements to obtain a good run of custom. There is a great deal of work
 of the kind to be done such as mowing, Reaping, Merchandise &c.

A portion of one of Daniel Spencer Gilman's letters (letter 15 below). Credit: Brome County Historical Society.

1. Lowell Jan^y 16th, 1840

Respected Parents I received your letter of the third December and now having a good opportunity of answering it I shall improve it as Mr. MacDonald and John Boright are here from Canada and expect soon to return. We are enjoying excellent health although it has been quite sickly here owing to the Typhus fever. The Smallpox is quite prevalent in Boston and adjacent villages but I hear there has no case as yet occurred in Lowell I am living with Uncle Coffin and shall probably remain with him till the Spring. (...)

The[re]¹ are quite a number of Canadians here among the rest Roswell Winchester Son of Moses Winchester and Luther Longley who is peddling about here. A nephew of Margaret Cotton's is here at work for Uncle. I beli[ev]e I have got as fine a little Aunt [as] any person could ask for, her father mother Sister and Brot[her] live here. Uncle has ha[d] the misfortune of losing a son [sin]ce I have been here. (...)

The population of Lowell is not far from twenty thousand. They have thirteen Houses for Public worship viz. one Episcopal, two Congregational, two Calvinist Baptist, two Methodist, one Free Will Baptist, one Unitarian and one Catholic. There are a great many Irish here who are zealous Catholics, men women and children will get drunk fight and the like then go to Church and have their sins all pardoned. They will also at the death of a friend get drunk and howl over the body in a manner truly terrifying.² Lowell is truly a City of Girls and Spindles, to see the Streets at meal time is truly astonishing. I expect every day to fall in love head and ears with some of the fair Ladies of Lowell. I think you will say Spencer beware. No need of caution. (...)

Your Obt Son D.S. Gilman

2. Lowell March 1st 1840

Ever Dear Parents. (...) I have been informed through the kindness of Miss Ellen Soles³ that a young Lady intends starting for Brome on Tuesday next and that she would take charge of any Letters or Papers which I might choose to send therefore I improve this chance of writing you hoping ere you receive this you will all be enjoying your usual good health and Spirits. When I shall return to Brome I cannot say as I have engaged myself to Uncle for one month or ten as I choose. My wages

¹There is a tear along the vertical fold of this letter, making it necessary to guess at some of the missing words and letters.

²The Irish, who had provided much of the labour for Lowell's infrastructure, lived segregated in a shantytown variously called Paddy Camp Lands, New Dublin, or the Acre. From only 2.3 per cent of the Hamilton Company workforce in 1836, they increased to 29.4 per cent in 1850, and 46.9 per cent in 1860. Peter F. Blewett, "The New People: An Introduction to the Ethnic History of Lowell," in Eno, *Cotton Was King*, 190-1; Dublin, *Women at Work*, 26, 139. See also Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps*.

³The Soles family were neighbours of the Gilmans on Tibbits Hill. "Moses Gilman, Esq."

are not large but as I am here and enjoy myself very well I think I shall stay some time.

When Peter MacDonald of Dunham was here in January I let him have 16 Dollars in Montreal Bank Notes to exchange in expectation of his returning to Lowell in a short time, but as he has not returned I shall enclose an order for you to get it unless he intends to return here soon. If he does you need not present the order, he lives near Churchville. My farm I shall leave in your care Wishing you to manage it as you think advisable.

There is a great many People here who believe that the World is coming to an end in 1843 as preached by Mr. Miller.⁴ To confute this Mr. Thomas an Universalist minister of this City delivered two Lectures which I have heard and intend to hear the third this Evening and by paying 12 ½ Cts at the door I can obtain a Copy which I shall send you. The lectures were delivered at the City Hall which will seat about one thousand Persons and hundreds were obliged to go away being unable to obtain admittance.⁵

I sent you a short time since the Boston Notion which I hope arrived safe. Business is quite dull yet. There has been a few cases of Small Pox here but I do not fear it as I have been vaccinated by the City Authorities which operated well and made me quite sick for one day.⁶ It seems I am not forgotten by our good friend Miss Olcott. Please give my respects to her and Mr. Olcott.⁷ I have not tasted of any Liquor since I have been here excepting Cider nor do I intend to what time I remain here. There is some chance of my getting employment on the New Corporation but it is most to much of a confined life to suit me.⁸ What few leisure

⁴On Millerism, see Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets*.

⁵The "improvement circle" that the Reverend Able Thomas had organized for his parishioners in 1839 had resulted in the birth of the *Lowell Offering*, the famous periodical published by local female operatives. Nancy Zaroulis, "Daughters of Freemen: The Female Operatives and the Beginning of the Labor Movement," in Eno, *Cotton Was King*, 113-14.

⁶Despite the fact that vaccination was available, smallpox would kill 41 people in Lowell in 1849. Lipchitz, "The Golden Age," 102.

⁷Gen. Roswell Olcott, who was a close neighbor of the Gilmans, was the son of Peter Olcott, Lieutenant-Governor of Vermont. He would die in June 1841. His wife, Lydia, who had died in 1835, was the daughter of Rev. Nathaniel Sherman of East Windsor, Connecticut, whose brother, Roger, had helped to draft the Declaration of Independence. Gen. Olcott took refuge on his brother's land in Brome after he failed to build the turnpike road he had contracted for in Vermont. His daughter, Lydia, appears to have inherited the estate, for Moses Gilman acted as her agent during the 1850s. She is probably the Aunt Lydia referred to rather irreverently several times in Spencer's correspondence. Rev. Ernest M. Taylor, *History of Brome County, Quebec*, vol. 2 (Montreal 1937), 292-3; Marion Phelps, "The Moses Gilman Family, Bondville," *Eastern Townships Advertiser*, 19 August 1965, 5; BCHS, Whitwell File, Moses Gilman to Rev. R. Whitwell, Brome, 31 December 1856; 24 February 1857; Moses Gilman to Mrs Whitwell, Brome, 11 February 1858.

⁸Apparently refers to the Massachusetts Cotton Mills, then being completed.

moments I have are employed in studying Phrenology as I have about become a convert to the Science.⁹ Uncle's time is fully employed in overseeing his business so that he has little or no time to work himself. I have not time to write any more and subscribe myself your Dutiful Son

Daniel S. Gilman

3. Lowell July 5th 1840

[To parents]. (...) In my last Letter I informed you I was with Uncle Coffin. I have been to work as a yard hand ever since the fifth of March on the Massachusetts Corporation, a new manufacturing Company who have got one Factory in operation and are building three more, one of which will start the first of September. When the four Factories all get in operation they will employ about 1600 Operatives. The wages I receive is about twenty two dollars per Month and Board myself. I pay for Board two dollars per week. On every factory they have two or three Watchmen, and I think there is some possibility of my obtaining such a chance which if I do I shall be able to clear twenty four dollars and thirty four cents per Month, or a dollar & ten cents for every twelve hours watch.

I came here at quite the wrong season of the year, but still I do not regret my leaving Brome although I should be very glad to see you all. Some Days I have to work pretty hard and other Days I have quite easy times. My health is excellent and I weigh nearly ten pounds more than I did Last Summer. As yesterday was a great day with us perhaps you would like to know how I employed myself. I worked all day while thousands were idle and at evening attended a Concert of Musick.

(...) Doubtless you have read of the great Temperance Reformation in Ireland;¹⁰ its effects have reached Lowell, for a man has been here from Ireland and has Lectured on the subject and in one fortnight's time one thousand Irish signed the cold water pledge.¹¹ The Census of Lowell has lately been taken which gives a

⁹Phrenology attempted to understand human characteristics, or faculties, by interpreting the shape and bumps of the skull. It reached its greatest popularity during the early 1800s through the writings and lectures of the Austrian physician, Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828). "Phrenology," *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia* (1993); Peter Van den Bossche, *The History of Phrenology*, on-line book, <http://www.vab.ac.be/ond/etec/cit/phreno/intro.htm> (13 June 1998).

¹⁰After Father Theobald Matthew began the Irish temperance movement in Cork in 1838, it quickly assumed national importance. It is estimated that between 1839 and 1844 Theobald administered some five million pledges and the revenue from drink fell from £1,435,000 to £352,000. "Matthew, Rev. Theobald," in D.J. Hicky and J.E. Doherty, eds., *A Dictionary of Irish History since 1800* (Dublin 1980), 359-60.

¹¹The *Lowell Courier* reported on 16 June 1840 that 501 people had taken the pledge from the hands of Rev. James T. McDermott, "the much esteemed Catholic clergyman of this city." And more than 150 had to wait until the following Sunday because not enough pledges had been printed. The *Courier* added on 20 June that the prominent licensed trader, Hugh Commiskey, had removed the liquor barrels from his store.

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population of about twenty one thousand, two thirds of whom are females. Write us often as convenient and let me know the news of Canada. (...)

Yours &c.

D.S. Gilman

The Horse that Macdonald left was not worth a dollar.

4. Lowell Sept 23rd 1840

Dear Brother [Roswell]. (...) I wrote you on the fifth of July which Letter doubtless you have recd. I wrote you then there was some chance of my obtaining a Watchman's situation which chance I have since obtained, and had watched three weeks when I was taken Sick with a Slow Fever and have now been sick for three weeks, part of the time under the care of a Physician, but through the mercies of a kind Providence I am now recovering, and was allowed Yesterday to walk out. I shall go on to watch again as soon as able and shall try to make a winter's job of it if my health will permit. The work is very hard and wearing to the constitution therefore I do not know if shall be able to follow the business, which if I am not will cause me to leave Lowell and possibly to return home. The wages I receive is not so much as I expected but still is pretty fair, being six dollars & sixty Cents per week or twenty dollars Per Month after board is paid. But yet it costs everything to live here be as prudent as you may.

I should be very glad to see you all, but as I cannot you must write Soon and let me know how you do and prosper, what for Crops you have raised and all the news which you think will prove interesting. All I have to write about Uncle and Aunt is that they are well & that Uncle is one of the most active of Politicians Being up to his ears in political affairs. (...) Please give my best wishes to friends & write me soon.

Yours Sincerely

D.S. Gilman

5. Lowell Feb^Y 8th 1841

[To Roswell]. (...) It seems that Phrenology was not well recd by you but I do not think strange of it. As for understanding the Science perfectly I never shall, for to understand Phrenology you must first understand Physiology & both require a great deal of practice study & observation. I am not quite bald headed yet but my hair is very thin having lost considerable last fall. I have also lost one of my teeth likewise I have got three dollars worth of gold in my teeth. I should like to know whether you & the children attend School this winter, if not tell them to learn all they can at home. You do not enjoy the privileges of Schooling that the Youth of this City do. Any person can fit himself for College here by simply furnishing his own books & boarding himself.

I shall now give you a fact in support of my favorite Science which came under my observation. Mr. Fowler of Clinton Hall, New York is now Lecturing in this City.¹² After one of his lectures he was blindfolded in presence of some fifteen hundred Spectators. A man was then introduced for examination. This Mr. Thomas a man well known in Philadelphia, New York Boston & this City as an able writer & logician having held controversies with the most able & learned ministers of the day.¹³ & it was universally acknowledged that his character was given as accurate as if he knew the man & had been acquainted with him for years. (...)

March 1st. (...) And now a few words in regard to the Ladies, my acquaintance with them is rather limited but I have nevertheless become acquainted with a few whom I consider very intelligent and respectable. The Lowell Girls also:

Have charms to woo a Saint*
 From allegiance to his God
 Charms that fancy cannot paint
 Ever beckoning Cupids nod
 *False if not natural

But still I remain untrammelled. P.S. if there is any young Lady in Brome who is unmarried please tell her from me if she will wait till I return I will meet her half way & make proposals. I hope you do not make my nonsense public, neither need you make the contents of all this Letter known to Father & Mother.

Yours &c. D.S. Gilman

6. Lowell Sunday April [25th] 1841¹⁴

Dear Parents once more I write to let you know my welfare. My health has been very good the past winter & still remains so, which is owing perhaps to early rising as it is most seven months since I have missed a day of rising every night at twelve o'clock. At noon my day's work is done & I can then retire to my bed-room to sleep or to our sitting room to read the news of the day, or any where else I please. I have now a much better overseer than I had last summer & fall. I have also seven brother watchmen as mates to drive dull care away. (...) I have not been five miles out of

¹²Orson Squire Fowler, born in 1809, graduated from Amherst College in 1834 and moved to New York City where he became devoted to phrenology. In 1837 he and his brother, Lorenzo, published *Phrenology Proved, Illustrated and Applied*, which ran through thirty editions. In 1840 the Fowler brothers began publishing the *Phrenological Almanac*, and in 1842 they assumed publication of the *American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany*, which had been founded in 1838. Everett S. Brown, "Fowler, Orson Squire," *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 3 (New York 1959), 565-6.

¹³Clearly a reference to Reverend Able Thomas, noted above.

¹⁴This letter survives in the BCHS archives as a typescript with the following information appended: date indistinguishable, but probably 25 April 1841, and postmarked at Stanstead, L.C. 29 April 1841. It was transcribed in November 1988 by John R. Burbank of St Albans, Vermont after being found in the New Testament of his great-grandfather, Caspar Dean, who was married to the daughter of Spencer's sister, Mary Ann Ball.

Lowell since I first came here, but I think I must pay Boston a visit this summer. A report got in circulation here last fall that I was a trader (a runaway one doubtless) who formerly kept a store in Canada which gratified my vanity much. I have also had a fellow apply to me for work, in consequence of which I was favored with two more visits from him on the same business, in the last of which he made various inquiries as to how much cloth I made, where I sold it, what I got per yard & the like, to all of which I gave satisfactory answers. If you would like a weekly newspaper or anything of the kind please let me know & I can furnish you with almost any description.

I should be glad to have you see that my place pays the Road tax this season which is the most I expect of it. Tell Patience if she has leisure I should be glad to have her knit me some good woolen socks against my return & I will pay her to her satisfaction. I may possibly come home in June & make you a visit, but I think it is a chance if I return till next fall or winter, at any rate you need not expect me till you see me. Does Martha & Thaddeus grow any or are they so mischievous they can't grow. Miller is here lecturing upon the end of the world which he says will positively take place in 1843. If so you may as well quit work & enjoy your property as you best can, but I believe he has not so many disciples now as formerly, most of whom I believe are silly deluded old women & girls. Uncle & Lady are well. Give my best respects to friends & acquaintances.

Ever your obt son

D.S. Gilman

7. Lowell Aug 6th 1841

[To Roswell]. (...) I have not done any work since the 4th of June owing to a Typhus Fever.¹⁵ I was sick one week at my Boarding house; after which (at my request) I was conveyed to the Lowell Hospital¹⁶ where I remained seven weeks & three days one whole week of which time (I am informed) I did not close my eyes to sleep; being insane & not knowing one single thing that transpired.¹⁷ My life was

¹⁵Deaths from cholera, typhoid, and typhus were commonplace in Lowell, largely due to polluted drinking water. Lipchitz, "The Golden Age," 101-2; Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps*, 106-8.

¹⁶The *Lowell Directory* for 1840 (p. 17) states that in 1839 all the city's principal corporations joined forces to establish the Lowell Hospital Association which purchased the mansion of the late lamented mayor. The 1845 *Lowell Directory* adds that the association charged \$4 per week for men and \$3 for women: "If the patients are able, they are to pay the Superintendent; if not able, the corporations from which they go are responsible, and the patients are then responsible to the corporations."

¹⁷Gilman is recorded in the hospital records as having been admitted on 11 June 1841 with a fever and released on 24 July 1841, making his stay one week and two days shorter than he claims here. He was identified as a watchman, his surety was the Massachusetts Company, and the total cost was \$24.57. Center for Lowell History, University of Massachusetts, Lowell, Lowell Corporation Hospital Register, 1840-1887, Daniel Gilman, sequence no. 142 and removal no. 152, 1841. My thanks to Tom Dublin for this reference.

despaired of by my attending Physician & by others who were called in, in fact the Nurse at one time stood by my bedside, with watch in hand to know the precise time I should expire. This is not all, after being taken sick, I was seized with a lameness in my left hip, which was feared would terminate in the Spinal complaint. But I now think I shall disappoint them all for I can hobble about the house considerable well with the aid of a cane, my hip I think mends nearly as fast as I gain in general Strength.

You wrote me that Father had plenty of bread, meat, &c, which I am very glad to hear as I intend recruiting myself upon some of it (if I can obtain the consent of my Overseer, which I think I can) as soon as I get able to journey which I think will be in a fortnight's time or less. I wish you to write me as soon as you receive this, so that I can obtain it before I start for home. If there are any small Articles which you or any of the family would like to have me get, please mention them, & I will endeavor to obtain them if I can carry them with safety among your Loyal Queensmen. Would not Patience like a gold necklace, if I could obtain one cheap. (...)

Hoping for the general welfare of you all I remain your Brother

D.S. Gilman

Please give Mother much joy for me on the account of the house being painted.

D.S.G.

Lowell Octr 31st / 41

[To Roswell]. After a pleasant journey I am once more in the City of Spindles among the Spinsters and have carried one Load of these for the Massachusetts Co. not considering it prudent to carry more at present, therefore I concluded to learn the Photogenic art and have got the theory tolerable correct and shall learn something of the practical part this week when I shall probably leave for Nashua or Manchester N.H., and perhaps visit Brome before Spring. (...)

I remain Yours &c

D.S. Gilman

9. Lowell Feby 22d 1842

[To Roswell]. (...) I recd your Letter of the 27th Decr in which you ask concerning the Daguerrean Art. As for the profit in Tom's business, there is none, in regard to the Labour it is light. I shall send you a treatise on the Art by Gilman and France allowing you to judge for yourself. (...) We have published one thousand of these pamphlets in which we have pretty fully divulged the Art which Boston photographers ask twenty five dollars for. This is playing Morgan with them, but I shall not meet his fate, as I was not sworn to secrecy.¹⁸ If I thought you Bromeites could

¹⁸William Morgan of Batavia, N. Y. was a stone mason who published a book that exposed the secrets of Masonry. In 1826 he was abducted by a group of unidentified men and never seen again. His disappearance marked the beginnings of anti-Masonry in the United States.

raise money enough to pay for a Lecture I might be induced to take my Apparatus and visit you giving a Lecture on the Art which would make your eyes water, but as it is I think I shall sell out soon. What business I shall next get into is more than I can tell. I should however prefer some light employment as my lameness troubles me a little. Uncle advises me to get into a druggist Store but this I am unable to do, as I should not receive much wages for the first year.

I have visited Andover and stopped there a fortnight as a Professor of Photography visiting the Students in the Theological Seminary. This place you will recollect is the seat of Philips Academy. So goes the world. This is kind of a holiday, being the anniversary of Washington's birth. The Washingtonian total Abstinence Drunkards¹⁹ have a grand celebration at the City Hall this afternoon and a supper at night. Uncle goes the whole figure being an Officer in the Society.²⁰ This Society is very popular here, having a reading room &c with the great reformed Hawkins to lecture for them.²¹

The City Guards parade in uniform this afternoon and have a great ball in the evening. Uncle is a member of this company and of course will attend. Aunt is hard at work fixing silks and lace. The Millerites are also doing a stiff business. One of the sect, Fish by name has gone to Canada, he is a thorough going nonresistant, rap him on the head and prove him.²² Cousin Gardner and Lady have been here, she is a very intelligent well educated familiar sociable easy Woman. As to her qualifications in regard to household duties I cannot say. She is very anxious to visit Canada with Uncle but her husband rather declines being rather ashamed of his connections or something else. If she visits you, you cannot fail of being interested with her, for acquainted with you she will be, in short she is such a wife as I should

Richard Hofstader, William Miller, and Daniel Aaron, *The American Republic*, vol. 1 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1959), 408-9.

¹⁹The Washingtonian temperance movement originated in Baltimore in 1840 among reformed alcoholics of the lower-middle and working classes. Ian R. Tyrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport, Conn., 1979), 159-60.

²⁰By July 1844 Uncle Tristram was a member of the more middle-class Rechabites (see letter 18).

²¹A journeyman hatmaker whose first business venture had failed during the depression of 1837-40, John W. Hawkins led the Baltimore Washingtonians. He agreed at a meeting with the New York Temperance Society in 1841 to spread the temperance message for the American Temperance Union through the Washingtonian societies. John J. Rumbarger, *Profits, Power, and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrialization of America, 1800-1930* (Albany 1989), 26.

²²This is a possible reference to the leading Millerite preacher, Charles Fitch, who was also an abolitionist and convert to "Oberlin perfection," but my research on Millerism uncovered no record of a visit by him to the Eastern Townships. See George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise and Oshawa 1993), 105-17.

like were I with thousands. As for Aunt I cannot say you will get acquainted with her, but I should advise you to put your best foot forward, and look out for the fashions.

One of your Bromeites was hauled up before the Police Court the other day for passing counterfeit money and is now immured for six months in the house of correction. Horace Huntley is his name. (...)

No sleighing here this winter, the weather appearing more like spring than winter. If you will come down here I will make you acquainted with Miss Phillis. I went into a boarding house this morning to hire a pedlar, was introduced to a Lady. Can't say whether she is a Phillis a Minerva or what.²³ Rather a lascivious dress with her swan neck bare to her, you must not touch me. In short, I suppose she was a good girl, only the dupe of fashion. The fashion for ladies walking dress is a short Cloak gathered in the back with a hood attached to the upper part which is allowed to hang down the back and very much resembles a Frenchman's Capot. On their heads they wear Ellsler hoods or kiss me if you dare, these have ears attached to them resembling hounds ears. More Anon. (...)

March 3d (...) Please tell father to dispose of my land if he has an opportunity, as I would willingly exchange it for a Lowell farm. I shall expect to see you here in about a year if your Polly does not keep you, at home

Yours D.S Gilman

10. Lowell July 28 '42

Dear Parents Brothers & Sisters

By this you will be informed that I am again a watchman, where I formerly was, but how long I shall be one is uncertain, at any rate I think I shall leave next fall if not before. I have had serious thoughts of passing the winter in a more Southern Latitude. Of what I determine upon you shall be duly informed. My health is quite good, although I have had rather an ill turn for a few days past, which with the present hot weather has made me quite poor in flesh. Am almost entirely rid of my lameness.

Had a pleasant ride to Concord in this State the other day. Crops looked finely. Had not time to visit the battle grounds, went into grave yard. Some of the Stones bore date 1693. Also in front of the Court House, saw a venerable elm tree to which, as I was informed, Criminals were formerly tied to be whipped. Intend visiting Boston, Bunker Hill, Mount Auburn &c the next month. I hardly know what to write you for news excepting the hue & cry of hard times, Tariff and Anti Tariff. The manufacturing Companies have large quantities of goods on hand which they are unable to dispose of; their Store Houses are filled with their Goods. Some of which were manufactured 6 or 8 months ago. The Lowell Co. with but one mill

²³In Roman mythology Minerva was the goddess of wisdom, or arts and crafts, and of war. Gilman may have linked the name Phillis with Pallas, Minerva's father whom she killed when he tried to rape her. "Minerva," *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia* (1993).

Have goods to the value of three hundred thousand dollars on hand. It is said there has been a great revival of religion in this place the past Spring, of the truth of this I cannot say; as I am no judge of such matters. Yet can safely say the waters have been sadly troubled in sight of where I now am. Every Sabbath for a long time I have seen 100 immerse in a day.

(...) Last Saturday Eve attended a Lecture on Mesmerism or Animal Magnetism.²⁴ I shall not give my opinion in regard to it, but merely state some things which I witnessed allowing you to judge for yourselves. First a Lady Stranger was put to sleep in the space of three or four minutes. A Sceptic in regard to clairvoyance, viz Mr Bartlett of this City was put in communication with her, he willed her to go to his house not in person but merely by seeing a distance of a quarter of a mile or more, he acknowledged she described the rooms correctly the manner in which he had arranged the chairs, Tables, Sofa's, mirror &c, previous to leaving home. Also the pictures in the room, how attired whether male or female. All of this she could not possibly have any previous knowledge of. A Lady very much out of health was then placed in Communication with her. She described her complaint very accurately, entering into all the particulars which I shall not relate. The different Faculties of the Mind were then excited as laid down by Phrenologists, Such as Mirth when she instantly broke forth into a hearty Laugh. Combativeness was next excited when she instantly rose & drew up her Chair for fight, and so of the other faculties. (...)

I did think of giving you a piece of romance from real life in which I have been one of the principal actors did time & space permit. Not for the old folks but for the young who like to laugh is it suited,²⁵ [...] you have got more now than I think you will ever be able to decipher. Miss ___ wishes to have you understand that her eyes are not grey by any means & is quite anxious to see you [to] convince you to the contrary. (...)

Yours in haste

D.S. Gilman

11. Mass- Cotton mill No. 1, Sunday morn Augt 21st "/42

[To Roswell]. H. Huntley who has been incarcerated for the last six months in the House of Correction intends starting for home tomorrow, providing he can obtain the one thing needful in journeying. Therefore considering it a good opportunity to write you a few lines, I shall embrace it, though I cannot give you anything of importance. I intend furnishing Huntley with money enough to take him home, if he cannot otherwise obtain it. Whatever Sum he may receive, I shall inform you of, & Mr Huntley will undoubtedly be willing to pay the Amount into Father's

²⁴Mesmerism, or animal science, was an early form of hypnotism and an offshoot of phrenology. For its development, see Roger Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, MA 1968), 3-81.

²⁵Despite the salutation, this letter is clearly written to Roswell, to whom it is addressed.

hands. Perhaps you may think me unwise in doing so; but as he has been sick most of the time & is so at present, besides being young & among Strangers I cannot but pity him. 'Tis nothing more than I should wish some one to do for me or you, were we in the same situation.

(...) If you should like to visit Lowell I think that I could get you into employment were you here about the first of cold weather & I should apply in Season, but of this I am not sure as I did not think it worth while to inquire before I knew whether you would come this fall or not. If you should think of coming, write one soon, so that I can make application for you, I have become a member of one of the five Companies of this City.

There is now forming a club of gentlemen mostly from the Boot & Mass__ Cor.__ for mutual improvement by Debate Declamation & the writing of Anonymous Communications. This I have also about concluded to join as I think it will prove very beneficial if properly conducted. I send you a paper or two, likewise an Almanack for 1843 So that you may be informed of what will take place after the ignition & destruction of our earth. But previous to the reading of it however I would advise you to get well hoop'd to prevent bursting with Laughter as there are many ludicrous figures in it which I suppose are typical of some of the scenes to be acted next year. I have recd a letter from a fair correspondent in Canada since I recd yours, but of her whereabouts I do not see fit to inform you at present. I shall not ask you to give my love to the fair damsels of Brome, first because I suppose there is none at present & secondly I have enough to attract & employ me here. Pray inform me of the welfare of Aunt Lydia in your next,

Yours truly__ D.S. Gilman

12. Lowell Octr 30 "/42

Dear Brother

(...) I still act the watchman or at least have till Thursday last, when I left on an excursion of pleasure to the Emporium of New England viz Boston. Took the cars early in the morning in company with a friend & arriv'd in Boston in time for Breakfast. After which went down to the wharves to visit the shipping, the masts of which appeared like a dense forest of trees stripped of all their branches. Next visited the new Custom house which will when finished far surpass anything of the kind in Boston or perhaps in New England. It is built of granite & its sculptured pillars are well worth seeing. They are composed of solid blocks of at least twenty five feet in height & five or six feet diameter which are beautifully grooved on every side. Next visited the Market House & from the appearance, I came to the conclusion that there was quite a number of persons who possess'd & gratified their faculty of Alimentiveness in the good City of Boston. Next visited Faneuil Hall Familiarly known as the Cradle of Liberty. This possesses nothing worthy of note, save the portraits of some of America's noblest son's, who once made its walls ring

with their eloquence in asserting their rights as freemen, & that all men are born free & equal.

After some pleasurable sensations in musing upon the past, left to visit Bunker Hill & the Monument, Not carreing about climbing the spiral staircase to its summit which consists of 292 steps, we took the steam car & arriv'd at its summit in about two minutes a height of 220 feet, had a fine view of the City, Harbour & surrounding Country. By the way there is only an aperture of about two feet square on each side, the top being cover'd by a cap piece, which causes much dissatisfaction among the numerous visitors. Next visited the Navy Yard with the dry dock which is a fine work of Art. Also Boarded the old Vermont, Virginia &c not by force of arms but in a peacable manner, also visited the rope walks &c. After spending some time here, we at length took leave of Uncle Sam's men, who by the way are of all ages & sizes.

At night we went to - startle not - the National Theatre & having heard much of them, I was determined to see & judge for myself. So took a ticket for the third tier where nameless characters resort, & I assure you in sincerity & truth my heart sicken'd at the sight, & I wished for once I had the power of the Almighty, to snatch them from their career of infamy & once more restore them to their original purity & innocence, as for the plays they were good & the Scenery was rich & splendid.²⁶

Next day visited the State House where the first thing that struck our view was a statue of Washington. After entering our names we had leave to go up to the Cupola where we enjoyed a fine view of the City. After examining many things of minor importance we took the Steamboat and cross'd the ferry to East Boston & there saw an Animal I never saw in Canada, what do you think it was? Methinks you will guess it was a Lion an Elephant or ___ But stop it was neither, It was a ___ Bear yes a black bear.

At night went to the Tremont Theatre where was acted the Tragedy of Richard the Third. Also an Ellsler dance²⁷ by the charming little Mary Ann Lee in which she showed her legs to pretty good advantage, & I could not fail to perceive that the higher she kicked the more loudly she was applauded. But lest you should gain an idea that she kicked to a height which would be termed immodest in Brome, I will just say that it is my candid conviction that she did not throw her feet higher

²⁶The National Theatre advertized the first and second boxes at 50¢, the third boxes at 37 ½¢, the pit at 25¢, and the gallery at 12 ½¢. The entertainment for 27 October was "the Splendid Drama, in five acts, of NORMAN LESLIE ... To be followed by the admired Drama of THE FLOATING BEACON!" *Boston Post*, 27 October 1842.

²⁷Fanny Ellsler was one of the greatest ballerinas of the romantic era, being noted for her passion and dramatic flair. The Austrian-born Ellsler went to the United States in 1840, creating a sensation, especially in Washington D.C. "Ellsler, Fanny," *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia* (1993); Jack Anderson, *Dance* (New York 1974), 49-52.

than her head during the whole evening.²⁸ Next day returned home & today attended Church to atone for past misdeeds.

As far as regards myself in Lowell, Saturday Eve I generally attend a debating Club of which I am a member, & if you ever think of me on a Wednesday Eve, you may imagine I am at the Lowell Institute²⁹ listening to some distinguished Speaker in Company with Miss S.W; but enough of this, were none to see this but yourself I should be tempted to give you a short history of some of my Amours, which I should think would cause you to laugh & wonder that the Deaconish D.S.G should be so wild, but enough of this. First we have had the Hon. George Bancroft of Boston to Lecture for us,³⁰ next the Revd John Pierpont of Boston the Poet.³¹ Next the Revd Mr Burt of Salem, also the Hon Levi Woodbury of Newburyport.³²

(...) I enjoy myself tolerably well having resigne[d] all thoughts of accumulating property. My Motto is live today & let the morrow take care of itself. Yesterday visited my old residence the Hospital where I enjoyed myself very well for an hour. Not having time to write more I shall now close, by wishing you all health & prosperity.

²⁸In the *Boston Post* of 27 October 1842 the Tremont Theatre advertized "Miss Mary Ann Lee in Two Dances!", but rather than Richard III the play it promised was "The Yankee in Spain."

²⁹The *Lowell Directory* for 1840 (p. 35) states that the Lowell Lyceum, whose president was Rev. Amos Blanchard, and vice-president, Rev. Theodore Edson, offered "[a] course of about twenty-five lectures [...] upon a great variety of subjects." These took place at city hall every Wednesday evening, from October to April, and admission was \$1 for "gentlemen" and 50¢ for "ladies." By 1849 (p. 253) no clergy are listed on the board of the Lowell Institute. See also Blewett, *Caught Between Two Worlds*, 24.

³⁰Bancroft had studied philosophy under Hegel in Germany, then moved to Paris and Italy, socializing with Lafayette, Washington Irving, and Lord Byron, before returning to Harvard in 1822 to teach Greek. During the 1830s he began his ten-volume *History of the United States* (completed in 1874), and in 1837 he was appointed by President Van Buren as collector at the Port of Boston. He would become secretary of the United States Navy in 1845. M.A. DeWolfe Howe, "Bancroft, George," *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 1, 564-70.

³¹Highly regarded as a poet, Pierpont became a reformer who campaigned against imprisonment for debt, abolition of the state militia, abolition of slavery, and temperance. He was also an enthusiastic supporter of phrenology, and would be ousted from his Unitarian pulpit in 1845. George Henry Genzmer, "Pierpont, John," *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 8, 586-7.

³²Levi Woodbury was a New Hampshire lawyer and politician who served as secretary of the United States Navy from 1831 to 1834, and secretary of the treasury under Jackson from 1834 to 1837, and again under Van Buren from 1837 to 1840. Elected to the Senate as a Democrat in 1841, Woodbury became an associate judge of the United States Supreme Court in 1845. William E. Smith, "Woodbury, Levi," *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 10, 488-9.

I should be happy to see you all but since I cannot I should consider it a favor if you would write me once in a dog's age.

P.S. I let Horace Huntley have five dollars. Have you recd the Letter & papers I sent by him?

Yours D.S. Gilman

13. Feb^Y 20th "/43

[To Roswell]. 'Time is money' so said the sage philosopher, & so I find it to be, at least with me. Having a pretty good situation considering the times, & for certain reasons which I shall not mention, it being uncertain how long I shall retain it. I have made up my mind not to visit you at present, for were I to do so, it would at the least calculation make some thirty five or forty dollars difference in my situation. I may be out of employment in a week, & I may not in a year; But when this is the case, I can return at my leisure, & will remember the necklace for Martha.

You say that Millerism is all the rage with you.³³ 'Tis the same here. Not long since a man in an adjoining town, prophesied the destruction of all terrestrial things on a certain day not yet arrived, & also preceding this event, there was to be a mighty Earthquake throughout the whole world. Immediately three of our credulous citizens paid him a visit to learn the truth of the matter, & report says they found him drunk. At length the great day of the Earthquake arrived, & the result was, one old fool came near losing his eye-sight by looking steadfastly at the Sun, through a piece of smoked glass, to see the first appearing of the Messiah. Likewise the Pastor of a certain Church in this City with some of his flock, made the happy discovery that the Second Advent was to take place the 15th Inst. The day arrived and brought with it a severe snowstorm, the Merrimack flowed on in its wonted channel, the deafening hum of Machinery went on as usual & nothing seemed to indicate the approaching dissolution of Nature. (...)

In regard to your thinking I care but little for home, I reply that it would afford me the greatest pleasure

"To visit again the scenes of my Childhood

Where oft I have wandered, in the deep tangled wild-wood,"

& to commune [...] more with friends & relatives & pass a happy winter evening beneath the Paternal roof. In regard to bewitching fair one, & silken ties I am entirely ignorant, so help me Obadiah, for I find nothing of the kind in real life, although I will allow there are many fair damsels in Lowell & were I so disposed I should scarcely know how to make a selection. Permit me then in conclusion, to say, that I think your imagination is running wonton in such matters, leading captive your better reason & seducing you into a world of visionary romance, which has no existence but in the heads of beings who write from the impulse given by a diseased mind.

³³See Denis Fortin, "'The World Turned Upside Down': Millerism in the Eastern Townships, 1835-1845," *Journal of Eastern Townships Studies*, 11 (1997), 39-60.

A heavy load off my Stomach. (...)

D.S. Gilman

14. March 12th "43

[To Roswell]. (...) I am informed that a very brilliant Comet is seen every clear evening in the west from 6 to 7 O Clock, but I am generally asleep at that time, therefore have not seen it. Intend to take a peep at his honor this evening. It is said to be now fast receding both from the Sun & Earth, & is calculated to be about 96,000,000 of miles from the Earth & possessing a tail some 100,000,000 miles in length, so that if by any freak it should whisk its tail toward Mother Earth, a fine opportunity would offer for the Millerites to grasp it & thus go Heavenward unless so many got hold as to pull its nucleus or head from its orbit.³⁴ The latest story of a Millerite, is, that in a town not far distant an individual dressed in his robe ascended an Apple tree for the purpose of flying to Heaven; but by some mishap instead of alighting there, he came in contact with the frozen earth & a broken neck was the consequence. (...)

D.S. Gilman

15. Lowell June 18th "43

Friends and Relatives, one & all

You have doubtless anticipated hearing from me ere this, & so I intended when I left you. But having nothing of particular importance to write is the only excuse I have to offer. After leaving Brome nothing occurred worth mentioning till we reached Georgeville about Sundown. Took Supper at Friend Bigelow's,³⁵ who very kindly volunteered his services in procuring a Carriage to convey me to Stanstead. If you ever Friends and Relatives, one & all visit Georgeville be sure & patronize Friend B. After leaving Georgeville & anticipating a pleasant ride by moonlight, we suddenly found our horse in a quag-mire unable to extricate a single foot. This was a pretty pickle, but there was no alternative but to off coat & clear the Carriage from the beast. After about half an hour's work with the help of neighbors we got on terra firma, made some repairs & arrived in Stanstead about twelve O'Clock,

(...) Since my arrival I have commenced the Job-waggon Business, having purchased a good Horse, Harness and Waggon, the latter of which I obtain on credit. This is like most other kinds of business requiring time & perseverance to obtain a good run of custom. There is a great deal of work of this kind to be done — such as moving Furniture, Merchandize &c. It is a business for some one as long as Lowell remains a City. There is also quite a number at present engaged in the business, but at this I am not discouraged for I can support one at the business, I

³⁴According to David Rowe, the 1843 comet "produced great excitement among Millerites and non-Millerites alike." Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets*, 60-1.

³⁵Levi Bigelow operated an inn in Georgeville, L.C. on Lake Memphremagog.

think, as long as others support Families. If I cannot the property is good & will carry me to Canada or somewhere else. (...)

Monday 19th, the President & Suite visited this City which made it a greater day here than has been realized since the visit of General Jackson. The President is as plain a looking man as you can well conceive having a long thin face with large hawk bill nose, his two sons very much resemble him. Secretary Porter,³⁶ Spencer,³⁷ & other distinguished characters bore him company. Post Master General Wickliffe³⁸ & daughters, & Miss Porter's did not visit us, neither did the United States Attorney General Mr Legare who died very suddenly in Boston, & hastened the President's return to Washington.³⁹ The Oration at Bunker Hill was delivered by Daniel Webster. This morning Aunt L. gave birth to a large & healthy daughter, both are doing well.

22d (...) My new business I think is rather improving & I think will still improve as one job serves as an introduction to another & gives me reason to hope that by steady & persevering industry I shall be able to stay in Lowell till it suits my convenience to leave in spite of the few malicious individuals who have vainly endeavor'd to crush me. My acquaintances appeared right glad to see me return among them once more & seemed to wish me all success. My health is excellent & I feel quite different from what I did when a watchman. Neither would I be a Watchman now if I could. My hair is fast falling off & I have ceased all endeavors to prolong its stay. (...)

D.S.G.

³⁶James Madison Porter, Pennsylvania jurist and politician, was appointed temporary secretary of war by President Tyler in 1843. D.L.M., "Porter, James Madison," *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 8, 94-5.

³⁷John Caulfield Spencer, the New York State lawyer and politician who became secretary of war in 1841, then secretary of the treasury in 1843. Ray W. Irwin, "Spencer, John Caulfield," *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 9, 449-50.

³⁸Charles Anderson Wickliffe was a Kentucky lawyer and politician who served as the United States postmaster-general from 1841 to 1845. Robert Spencer Cotterill, "Wickliffe, Charles Anderson," *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 10, 182-3.

³⁹Hugh Swinton Legaré was a South Carolina lawyer, plantation owner, and politician who was appointed United States attorney-general in 1841, then secretary of state on an interim basis when Daniel Webster resigned. He died on 20 June 1843, after becoming ill at Bunker Hill where President Tyler was unveiling a monument. J.G. de R. Hamilton, "Legaré, Hugh Swinton," *American Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 6, 144-5.

16. Lowell Nov 11th /43

Respected Friends

(...) Since I last wrote you I have visited Lynn which lies on the [sea]-board, twenty five miles from Lowell. The place where so many Sons of Crispin⁴⁰ have congregated for the purpose of making Shoes. Somewhat disappointed in the appearance of the place. The buildings did not present that neat & thrifty appearance which I anticipated & I am told that ever since 1837 Lynn has rather retrograded in population & Wealth, very many of the Manufacturers becoming bankrupt. At the present time however the shoe business is good, perhaps never better, & Lynn has once more rec'd a fresh impetus. I was told that they averaged a shoe every minute.

Having transacted our business at the above named place we started for home when we met with an occurrence which threatened to be somewhat serious. My horse suddenly became dull & at length threw himself down. Apparently in great distress. We stripped the harness from him as quick as possible, he commenced rolling in the same manner that the horse of Mr Boright did. At length got him on his legs & kept him so by racing him up & down Street whip in hand. Gave him a bottle of Gin and Molasses which helped him & drove home without any further trouble with the exception of his being somewhat desirous of stopping at every Inn for the purpose of Liquoring up. Found it necessary to make him sign the Temperance Pledge the very next day.

(...) The People of Lowell who attend the Institute were addressed last Wednesday Eve by that Prince of Lecturers, Dr Smith of Boston.⁴¹ Subject, The Geological, Civil, Social, & Religious Condition of Upper and Lower Canada, together with its early history, illustrated by drawings of the City of Quebec. Pointed out the place where Dr Heller made his escape & related a thousand facts & incidents of interest, which I cannot particularize. The Dr said that the People of the United States ought to become better acquainted with their Canadian Neighbors as they were destined to become an independent people ere many years elaps'd. He said that Great Britain told the Canadians She would board & clothe them if they would remain quiet, but the Canadians like wayward & ungovernable children kept kicking & kicking, till at length they would kick themselves into independence. (...)

D.S. Gilman

17. Lowell Feby 18th /44

[To Roswell] (...) I think it is since I last wrote you that I had the pleasure of seeing the man who is familiarly known in these parts by the name of the Great & Godlike Daniel (Alias Daniel Webster) who was engaged as counsel by the President of one of our banking institutions. Said President being arraign'd on a charge of embez-

⁴⁰Crispin was the patron saint of shoemakers. American and Canadian shoemakers would later establish a union known as the Knights of St. Crispin. Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrialism, 1867-1892* (Toronto 1980), 40-52.

⁴¹A reference to J.B.C. Smith, mentioned in letter 14.

zlement. While looking at the person of the Godlike & listening to the thunder of his Eloquence, a thousand emotions crowded upon my mind something like the following. Here is a man, who by his own exertions & perseverance has arisen to his present station. A man who was deputed by a great & powerful people, to meet the minister selected by one of the most powerful Nations of Earth for the purpose of forming a treaty relative to territorial possessions.⁴² The man to whose will it was left to say whether there should be peace, or whether there should be war. The man who was so highly honour'd as to be allowed the privilege of taking the hand of Saucy Vic (Beg pardon Queen Victoria). The man who recd while in England thousands of dollars merely for giving his opinion in a certain case. This man who ere this might have been President of the Union had he been a true democrat. The man who is distrusted by all parties. Whom all acknowledge great & powerful yet few care to trust, from his natural propensity to fawn upon, & cringe under those enjoying wealth & power. The man who knows not the worth of money, who would as quick give fifty dollars as five for a slight service perform'd. The man who is dependent upon friends for support, & the man who is Parent to two or three illegitimate children whom he supports &c. Such were my reflection[s].

(...) The Temperance folks are wide awake having meetings every Sunday Eve in the Town Hall which is crowded & appears to be a place of general resort, for there you find the reformer & the reform'd. The Soap-lock rowdy, & the Street night Walker mingled together in Strange confusion. The Temperance people are also doing a large business in the way of prosecutions against rum sellers. The Millerites are also wide awake in Sanguine in the belief of the destruction of all Sublunary things about the first of next April. One of the Sect has been laboring with me of late for the purpose of making me a convert to the faith. They say that the year 1843 has not expired according to Jewish reckoning. The Jewish Year commencing about the first of April. (...)

D.S.G.

18. Lowell July 14, 1844

Friends one & all

(...) I quit the teaming business last fall, having an opportunity of selling horse. The wagon I still keep it being good property to let. Further for the last eight months have been in Uncle's employ learning the trade. Like it much & shall probably stay till it is completed, or at least till I quit. I thought it necessary that there should be one mechanic in the family, if for nothing else but to build a house for Roswell &

⁴²A reference to the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842 which settled the long-standing dispute over the boundary between Maine and New Brunswick. Under the terms of the agreement the United States received about 7,000 of 12,000 disputed square miles. The treaty also defined the U.S.-Canadian boundary between Lake Superior and the Lake of the Woods. "Webster-Ashburton Treaty," *The New Grolier Encyclopedia* (1993).

Dinah in the woods. I also enjoy excellent health & have thus far stood the hot season without an ill day.

In regard to Uncle, his down East land is not yet sold. His land & buildings in Lowell he has given up to the one of whom he bought, upon what terms I know not. He is punctual in attendance upon the meetings of Odd Fellows, The Encampment & The Rechabites, of all three Societies he is a member. Saw his regalia or uniform last Eve "a gay affair. Cost 16 dollars. Has been for the most time since last fall building a small mill or house in which to weave Carpeting, employs at the present time six men. (...)

Yours Ever D.S.G.

19. Saturday Eve. Oct 19th—44

Dear Friends

As I have never been governed in my Worldly pursuits by any end or aim; so in like manner I commenced this letter without order or arrangement, writing from the impulse of the moment, upon subjects in which I am most interested. To commence. You must know that some few of the laborers & Mechanics of Lowell a few months since organized a Society for the purpose of ameliorating the condition of the laboring portion of Community, by reducing the hours of toil per day, & placing the laborer on an equal footing with the Capitalist.⁴³ Believing that the present system & arrangement of Society is decidedly wrong & also believing that by the present system of labor, the producing classes of this Country are fast hastening to the wretched condition of the laboring classes of Europe, This Society hold weekly meetings for the purpose of discussing & gaining light on the Subject. They have also started a paper which advocates their Cause, & now number some two or three thousand members. To this Society I belong & having written several articles for said paper I may send them you, if you should have a desire to know their contents. This Society with others of a like Nature, which have lately sprung into existence in various parts of New England, held a general convention in Boston last Wednesday & Thursday. Myself being one of the delegates from Lowell. Had a grand meeting, the proceedings of which you will find in the news-paper, which I send you.

One word about Politics. The Whig Party of this City have got a large flag stretched across one of our streets bearing the names of their favorite Candidates. The Democratic Party not to be outdone employed Uncle C. to obtain a large hickory tree surmounted with a flag staff, making the whole length upwards of 100 ft. This was also raised in the street with great ceremony & a flag 30 or 40 ft square appended to it. The heavy gale of last night stripped them in tatters which I believe has had a tendency to cool the fever of some of our Politicians. To be serious the prospects of the Whig Party look dubious & are daily growing more. Polk I think

⁴³This is a reference to the Mechanics' and Laborers' Association of Lowell. See Dublin, *Women at Work*, 116-19.

without doubt will be our next President.⁴⁴ Uncle has made several bets upon the elections. Uncle has hired a shop with Water Power where I can now learn something of working by Machinery.

The Millerites are now going it with a perfect looseness. I attended their meetings last Sabbath, house filled to overflowing with saints believing in the final consummation of all things on Tuesday next. There were also present licentious characters of both sexes without number. The Miller meetings appear to be the general depot & grand centre of attraction for these characters.

Have not heard from you since the return of Mr Streeter, was much pleased with the contents of letter; also with its Spirited & ready diction. Write often & give free scope to thought & feeling let the subject be what it may. By so doing you train the mind to express itself in a free & easy manner, & also lay the foundation for a regular & systematic course of thinking & of reasoning. (...)

Uncle has disposed of all his right & title to real estate in L. & his great air Castle & soap bubble has vanished. He is now pulling on a new string — 'tis to obtain a fat allowance of the Government pap, by obtaining an office in the Boston Custom House. Provided Polk becomes President.

Yours Ever D.S.G

20. Lowell Feb^Y 16th 1845

[To Moses, Jr.]. (...) Immediately after reading your letter I went to work with a circular saw, when by accident it caught my hand I almost by a miracle escaped without its loss. It is now nearly well. This accident you may say arose from the perturbation of mind arising from the knowledge that R. was about to be married & I was yet single but believe me this was not the case, nor would it have been had I heard at the same time of the like determination with the calm & tranquil Patience, or the hasty & impetuous Martha, or even with the sly roguish yet well meaning Thaddeus. The Honey moon I suppose is now over with R. yet he cannot fully appreciate the joys of wedded life or fully feel its kindred sorrows till he has been a married man for years. May the latter be light in comparison with the former. (...)

21. Lowell Sunday June 1st "/45

[To Moses, Jr.]. Your letter of the 25th Ult was recd on Thursday last by the hand of Cousins who arrived here without Accident. Much pleased to see them, think probable that Uncle will employ both Uriah & Church but cannot say positively—if not we shall endeavor to obtain situations for them elsewhere. Saw Harrison Streeter yesterday. A steady young man & doing well. S. Eldredge is also here at work for Uncle who likes him much as a workman, he receives a dollar per day & found tools; so you perceive we have at present quite a Colony of Canadians.

⁴⁴James K. Polk was the Tennessee lawyer and Democratic politician who became President of the United States on an expansionist platform in 1845. "Polk, James Knox," *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia* (1993).

Your Aunt Louise is at present in interesting circumstances (Alias), A la Victoria.⁴⁵ Uncle has not recd that government Office which he anticipated, probably will not — truly republics are ungrateful, his down east land speculation also proves a failure by the Sheriff's neglecting to have a certain notice publish'd in a certain paper three times, it being published but twice. The only course to pursue now is to alight on the Sheriff for neglect of duty.

Am pleas'd to hear you intend to pay us a visit. Shall give you my opinion candidly, if you do not intend to settle down in Canada at least for the present the sooner you leave the better, if you anticipate stopping in L & making it a home should advise you by all means to learn some good trade. Lowell is a poor place for a common day laborer yet not so poor I think at the present time as Brome, for business of all kinds is very brisk, probably never more so. Yet if there should be a reaction in business caus'd by overtrade & Speculation, which there doubtless will the man with a good trade stands a far superior chance to one without, therefore if you intend to come to L do not delay till fall, but come immediately & you will be far more likely to obtain employment. Shall expect you as soon as the first of July. Please bring what money may be my due & endeavor to exchange it up near the line as the rate of discount will be far less than here. If you should wish for funds use the money as your own. Need not delay on account of fine fixens. Enough to be had cheap here. A frost here night before last. (...)

Should be pleas[e]d to see you all, but distance intervenes.

D.S.G.

22. Lowell. Augt 22d 1845

Canadian Friends,

As cheating & knavers of every description seems to be the order of the day I shall fall in with the Current & cheat Uncle Sam of five cents postage by sending this by Uriah who has finished his trade & starts forthwith for Brome. Poor Child since Welthia left he drooped & pined away, all his leisure moments have been spent in the back yard seated on the vinegar barrel. Eldridge likewise leaves us, rather unwise I think as he had let himself for five months at twenty dollars per month & board. Tell Aunt A. to take Uriah & do him up carefully in clothes & place him in a drawer till he obtains more backbone, Alias, pluck. I believe the Citizens of Lowell have offered to see all Canadians home at half price providing they will give bonds never to appear here again. (...)

I shall not write much at this time, as my hand is very unsteady & I anticipate the pleasure of sending you another line by Church, who I think will soon follow in the footsteps of his predecessors,

Love to all

D.S. Gilman

⁴⁵A reference to her pregnancy.

23. Lowell Sunday Eve Sep 20 1845

Canadian Friends,

(...) Tell Uriah that Carpenters are a cash article here at the present time, thirty being advertised for in the Lowell papers who would be hired by the day month or year. Red headed McMaster has left us, no one remaining but friend Church who by the way is at times rather discontented. Last Wednesday was a great day here, with the military, it being muster day, twenty three companies paraded our streets with weaving plume & glistening steel presenting altogether quite a warlike appearance. Guess Mexico would quickly knock under could she have once seen our valiant & warless heroes.⁴⁶

Oct. 4 (...) About five hundred dollars of counterfeit money on Nashua Bank was passed off on our Shop keepers one afternoon & evening of last week, mostly by girls. Surprise at length being excited, it was traced to the fountain head, one Hanson Seavers on Middle Street, a man of some property & a noted Abolitionist & infidel, the money came from Canada. A burglary was committed by a young fellow from Canada a few nights since who took a valuable gold watch & some other articles, the rogue was caught in Boston & brought back to take up his residence with Uncle Fisher.

Had almost forgot to notice the pleasure I recd from the information of Roswell's being a Washingtonian.⁴⁷ Tell him to still continue so. "Touch not, taste not, handle not the accursed thing, let this be our motto & we are safe, furthermore let it never be said that temperate Sire had intemperate Sons. Speaking of temperance reminds me that I have not tasted of tea or coffee since Moses left us, to dispense with its use I find no cross at all. (...) Church recd a letter from Canada last night particulars unknown, ask Wealtha for me if she now knows what yarrow is.⁴⁸ All well — enough said. Yours &c.

D.S. Gilman

⁴⁶War broke out between Mexico and the United States in 1846, after part of Texas, New Mexico, and California were annexed by the Americans. For details, see James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York 1989), 48-77.

⁴⁷The Sherbrooke Total Abstinence Society, established in 1845, followed Washingtonian principles, and extended its operations into the hinterland townships, including Brome. J.I. Little, "A Moral Engine of Such Incalculable Power: The Temperance Movement in the Eastern Townships, 1830-52," *Journal of Eastern Townships Studies*, 11(1997), 17-19.

⁴⁸The following letter refers to Welthia's anger with Spencer, suggesting that she was insulted by this question. Achillea millefolium, or yarrow, is an herb commonly thought of as an astringent to staunch mild bleeding, but Youngken's *Textbook of Pharmacognosy* (1921) lists it an "aromatic bitter, diaphoretic and emmenagogue." An emmenagogue is a medicine that induces or hastens the menstrual flow, in other words, an abortifacient. Nelson Coon, *Using Plants for Healing* (New York 1963), 62; *The Heritage Illustrated Dictionary of the English Language* (New York 1973).

24. Sunday Eve Nov 16th 1845

Brother M; (...) T.C. has got a job of building a three story mill 64 ft by 32 at Merrimack NH 6 or 8 miles above Nashua. Church has been there about a fortnight. He talks of leaving us soon thinking he can earn more some where else. To close I cannot refrain from giving you a Specimen of Uncle's manner of governing his children. At supper this evening Elizabeth by design or accident threw her tin plate on the floor & the following was the language which he used "God damn your little pluck to hell what in damnation do you mean." (...)

Yours truly D.S.G. written in haste

25. Lowell Sunday Eve. March 15th /46

[To Moses, Jr.]. (...) I am sorry Cousin W ___ has taken offense, I think I must send her a three legged stool to dispel her anger. The war panic with us has pretty much subsided. As for protracted meetings & excitement I believe we have none & we are as cool as a Cucumber in July. (...)

The Magnetic Telegraph is now in operation between this City & Boston, the Office is on Merrimac Street & is operated by a Miss Bagley, formerly one of our factory girls & a sworn foe to the factory system in its present State.⁴⁹ This winter she headed a petition of some four or five thousand names praying our legislature to reduce the hours of labor in our factories to ten per day.⁵⁰ She is also President of the Female Labor Reform Society of this City. This Society has purchased a printing press & type, there is a Paper printed on this press which advocates the rights of the Laborer & circulates about 2000 copies per week.⁵¹ This Society are to have a course of six Lectures on Labor to be delivered at the City Hall by some of our most distinguished men. First Lecture next Wednesday Eve. What will be the final result of this movement time alone will determine. I shall attend these Lectures. (...)

26. Lowell July 5th 1846

[To Moses, Jr.]. I have delayed this long in answering your letter for the purpose of coming to a conclusion whether it was best to send this by Uncle Sam's conveyance or to have the "warm weather fever" & bring it myself; as I have had some symptoms of it; they have however now disappeared & so has June the most trying month (to me) of the year. So you will see this bit of paper instead of me. Yesterday was the Glorious fourth & was duly observed & celebrated by firing of cannon, ringing of bells &c while our Citizens of a smaller growth contented themselves with firing crackers. There were several processions formed among which

⁴⁹See Helena G. Wright, "Sarah G. Bagley: A Biographical Note," *Labor History*, 20 (1979), 398-413.

⁵⁰Gilman's name is on this petition. Dublin, "A Personal Perspective," 403, n. 14.

⁵¹This is a reference to the *Voice of Industry*, which Sarah Bagley briefly edited. See Zaroulis, "Daughters of Freemen," 119-23.

was the Sabbath School, Young Men's Temperance & Labor Reform Societies,⁵² the latter of which I joined & marched over the upper Bridge into Dracutt to the Grove where you, Orrilla & myself went one Sunday morning, a pleasant time, good music, Good Speakers & plenty of good things for the stomach, but I came near forgetting to mention that a very few of our Citizens went to Boston to see the fire works, just enough to fill every coal car the Company could raise & as many times as they could run them. (...)

A great change has taken place in the appearance of the City since you were here. I see that the new canal progresses rather slowly, it is a tremendous undertaking. We have had all sorts of exhibitions here this spring together with Turners Circ[us]. Another Circus company is to be here next week⁵³ & after that a Caravan of wild animals. A miniature Artist or two have been hauled up before our police Court for taking Dagu[er]reotype Miniatures of a male & female in a state of nudity & in various positions & offering them for sale. A man was hauled up the other day for whipping his wife, watching his opportunity he jumped out of one of the Court Room windows on to the sidewalk broke both legs & otherwise injured him so that he finally jumped out of the world. The Labor Reform Association hold meetings every Sunday for the purpose of discussing Moral Subjects, such as the rights of labor, freedom of the public Lands to actual Settlers &c. I am quite a constant attendant at there meetings & like them much.

I shall endeavor to send you a copy of each weekly paper publish[ed] in the City with their terms so that you can choose for yourself. I take one paper viz, Voice of Industry. (...)

Your Brother D.S.G.

27. Lowell July 31st 1846

[To Moses, Jr.]. (...) In regard to newspapers I have sent you a specimen number of the Voice, a paper as radical as any Gilman can desire, & which, if read with care & attention will suggest many many new & important ideas relative to the present organization of Society. If you should conclude to take it, you can have it by merely paying postage. I have also sent you the Vox, which is chiefly confined to local news, of its merits you can judge as well as I. Terms two dollars per annum.

⁵²On the Labor Reform League, see Frances H. Early, "A Reappraisal of the New England Labor Reform Association of the 1840s: The Lowell Female Labor Reform Association and the New England Workingmen's Association," *Histoire sociale / Social History*, 13 (1980), 49.

⁵³The only circus advertized in the *Lowell Courier* during July was Welch and Mann's Mammoth International Circus. It was to arrive on July 13 and remain four days. The ad emphasized the opening parade which would include "a most MAGNIFICENT BAND CHARIOT, (drawn by 12 cream colored horses) with 12 talented musicians, playing some of the most popular airs, marches, etc., selected from the most celebrated composers, followed by a grand retinue of carriages, waggons, teams, etc., numbering over 150 persons, horses, and etc."

The Journal which I have sent is quite a readable paper & when I have said this, I have said all I can say in its favor as it is the Corporation Organ of this City advocating the rights of monopolised wealth as paramount to the rights of Labor or of the laboring class of people. As chairman of a committee in our Legislature, the editor reported it as inexpedient to legislate in regard to reducing the hours of toil in our manufacturing establishmen[ts]. In a word he is the tool of Boston & Lowell Capitalists.⁵⁴ The terms I believe are \$2. The Patriot is \$1.50. This is a party paper advocating party views & party measures, the organ of the so called Democratic party of the City, it is quite liberal in many of its views & is a pretty decent paper. I might also send you the Niagara a scurrilous sheet & also one or two other papers not worth the postage with which I shall not trouble you. When you write me your preference I will endeavor to have it sent. (...)

Yours D.S.G.

28. Lowell Novr 29th 1846

[To Moses, Jr.] (...) I hardly know what to write in the way of news, which will prove interesting. (...) I had the pleasure of seeing & hearing a Lecture given by one of America's most gifted Sons, I refer to Genl Cass of Michigan, A soldier Statesman, & Scholar. In my estimation he is a greater man by far than the Godlike Daniel Webster. The Subject of his discourse was the Progress of Society. A subject well calculated to display his knowledge of the past & of the present. I think he will be the Democratic Candidate for the next Presidency.⁵⁵ (...)

Yours truly D.S.G.

29. Lowell Sunday eve March 21st 1847

Dear Brother

It being a rainy, drizzling, gloomy evening I have concluded to write you a line, not because I have any thing particular to say, but because I in common with the mass of mankind wish to retain a place in the memory if not in the affections of relatives & acquaintance. (...) By the way what do you think I have lived on this winter. I will tell you for you can't guess, 'tis Buckwheat flapjacks & molasses with the exception of Sundays when we have bean porridge. O what a dish to set before a king.

⁵⁴The reference is to William Schouler. For information on his political career, see Zaroulis, "Daughters of Freemen," 120, 123, 125; and Arthur L. Eno, Jr, "The Civil War: Patriotism vs. King Cotton," in Eno, *Cotton Was King*, 130.

⁵⁵Lewis Cass, born in 1782, was an Ohio lawyer who rose to the rank of brigadier general during the War of 1812, and served as governor of Michigan Territory from 1813 to 1831, when Jackson named him Secretary of War. He was minister in France from 1836 to 1842, and U.S. senator from Michigan from 1845 to 1857. A strong supporter of territorial expansion, he narrowly lost the president election to the Whig, Zachary Taylor, in 1848. "Cass, Lewis," *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia* (1993).

Lowell as a City is increasing in wealth & business rapidly. The New City which we visited when you were here & which is call'd Lawrence is said to contain three or four thousand inhabitants. So much for the effects of wealth. A fellow who calls himself Spencer Misner is here & claims to be a relative of mine by right of his Uncle's dog having once run across my grandfather's goose pasture, the truth of which I know not (...)

One word of prophecy & I close. You may expect another young Cousin some time if not before, gracious me what Gilmans. This is intended for your eye only.

Yours as ever DSG

30. Lowell, July 6th 1847

Dear Brother

(...) Last Wednesday was quite a Holiday here. President Polk & suite paid us a visit. Mills stopped, Bells rung, Cannon boomed, Military were out. So were Girls & all hands had a time. Miranda Gilman is stopping here now, been here a fortnight, how much longer uncertain. Little Tom Thumb has been here creating quite a sensation by showing his little body & also his little Horses & Carriage presented him by your good Queen Victoria.⁵⁶

Darius Ball has left here & I have it from pretty good authority that he lunched his landlady out of one month's Board. I h[ave o]btained the back Nos of the Journal which I shall sen[d] you soon & also those to come as soon as issued. I have also selected a few Cards for Patience, but being an Old Bachelor I have not perhaps made for her a good selection. I have also got them marked which she did not order. Part of them I enclose & the remainder I reserve for the present, therefore I calculate (in Yankee parlance) to address my next to her & also calculate my letter is about filled up. So for the present

Adieu D.S.G

31. Suncook Village N.H., Sepr 5th 1847

Dear Father,

On the east side of Merrimack river about eight miles below Concord & ten above Manchester or about forty miles from Lowell a small stream of water empties into the Merrimack called Suncook. About half a mile from its mouth is a small establishment for the Manufacture of Cotton Cloth which having recently changed hands is now being enlarged by the Addition of another mill, store house, Boarding Houses, &c. By this establishment I am now employed & if I give Satisfaction & am suited myself shall probably remain here 3 or 4 months, after that if business should be dull I may possibly make you a winter's visit providing you have plenty

⁵⁶General Tom Thumb was the stage name of the midget, Charles Sherwood Stratton, born in Connecticut in 1838, and discovered by the showman, P.T. Barnum, in 1842. Growing to 40 inches at maturity, Tom Thumb toured extensively in the United States and abroad. "Tom Thumb (entertainer)," *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia* (1993).



MERRIMACK MILLS AND BOARDING HOUSES.

LOWELL.

V. T. Mitchell del.

“Merrimack Mills and Boarding Houses. Engraving by O. Pelton.” Courtesy of the *Lowell Historical Society*.

of good potatoes & will not exact much work of me. I could have had work with Uncle but I thought it advisable to leave for a time at least, in order to effect a settlement with him; this I have obtained although I have not as yet recd payment, I have however got the promise of it this month & think without doubt I shall get it, as I have made arrangements to invest it in railroad Stock. This railroad has but just commenced Operations & is to connect the new City of Lawrence below Lowell with the city of Manchester N.H. thence to pass up through this place & intersect with the Portsmouth & Concord Railroad.⁵⁷ This road it is thought will yield a fair per Centage & Stock can be disposed of at any time without loss to the holder. Titcomb Hunt is one of the directors, was at Manchester last Sunday. Aunt Anna & all in good health.

Left Lowell about a fortnight ago. It is very sickly there more so than ever before known, so say physicians. The prevailing complaint is dysentery which may aptly be termed American Cholera. The deaths are from 60 to 80 per week. It is estimated that from 1000 to 1500 Girls have left the City & gone home to stay till the sickness abates. I almost forgot to mention that there is a Glass Manufactory here which I shall have the curiosity to visit as soon as it comes cooler weather so that they can commence Operations. The Factories are on Pembroke side of the river but I board on the opposite side in Allenstown on high pleasant ground where I can look across the Merrimack into the town of Bow & see the steam horses pass on the iron track almost into Concord. (...)

Yours truly D.S.G.

32. Manchester Novr 24th 1847

Dear Parents

When I last wrote you I was residing at the pleasant little village of Suncook, with a fair prospect of remaining there some time, but the Company for some cause unknown to me saw fit to stop their works after I had been there about a month. Consequently all hands were discharged. At this place I had \$1.19 per day paying out of it two dollars per week for board. About half an hour after my discharge & while packing my tools, a young man came to me saying he wished to hire a man to help finish his house which was situated about three miles from Suncook. After taking a trip to Lowell I went to this place & worked thirty eight days receiving my board & \$38.00. The family consisted of this young man, his brother, Mother, & Aunt who was doing housework. The young men were good, jovial, free hearted fellows, but the Mother had the name far & near of being an ugly old skinflint, keeping hired help on short allowance & poor at that. From what I could learn there was more truth than poetry in the above, however as luck would have it I got on the right side of the Old Lady & fared first rate. If there was a chance to back-bite a neighbor or cheat them in a trade she was the one to do it, but when Sunday came she was punctual at meeting with a face as long as your arm & one would suppose

⁵⁷Referred to in letter 35 as the Manchester and Lawrence Railroad.

she was Innocence itself. While at this place I was very often reminded of home, for here I churned, husked corn & pared apples besides occasionally drinking new cider. The Old house we lived in was used as a Garrison in the time of the War & the chimney would receive four feet wood with all ease.

I finished work at this place one week ago last Monday, when I took the Cars & went to Concord. (...) Thursday went to Pembroke, Friday returned to Manchester, Saturday went to work at \$1.25 per day with the encouragement of having work for two months. (...) I am boarding at a place where are two or three girls from Potton.⁵⁸ Among the rest a Gilman girl, her father being a nephew of old Dr Gilman. So I consider [her] a kind of ninety ninth Cousin. I am much obliged to you for your generous offer yet do not consider it a sufficient inducement to return home as I am now situated, yet there is time enough two months hence. (...)

D.S. Gilman

33. Lowell March 19th 1848

[Addressed to Moses, Sr.]. (...) Since I last wrote you I have been at work for Uncle but shall not probably do so much longer as Spring business will soon start, when I shall seek employment elsewhere. I have been three weeks in the City of Roxbury adjoining Boston, setting up Carpet Looms. From the room in which I worked I had a fine view of the City of Notions. The Athens of America. The City of Three Hills. (...)

Hoping you have all got well of your coughs, colds & Stomach aches I subscribe myself D.S.G. or the

Absent One

34. Lowell April 16th 1848

[To Moses, Jr.]. Your favor of the 5th Inst. I did not receive till last eve, therefore embrace the first opportunity of replying. I have not found you a Situation for I have made no effort to do so having come to the conclusion that most people wish to first see, & then purchase; likewise a situation I might fancy, you would not. You ask my opinion &c, which I will endeavor to give. In the first place if you wish to get into a dry goods in Lowell I think it quite probable you might do so but I also think your wages would be rather small & I furthermore think that a Clerkship in a Lowell rag shop is not a very promising situation in the way of advancement in salary, for about nine out of ten of our Dry Goods Dealers fall through the bottom every three years. However I may be mistaken. In a grocery store I think you might obtain employment & pretty fair wages, but the work is quite laborious. A retail Hardware Store would be a very good situation if you could obtain it. A place in an Auction & Commission House would be a pretty good chance & I think were you here to watch your opportunity you might in time get such a chance, perhaps you might get a situation in a restorator if you liked. And now to sum up the whole.

⁵⁸Potton Township touches the south-east corner of Brome Township.

Dry Goods light work small pay, yet pay quite as good as you would get in any Country Store. You must also wear fine cloth which would have a tendency to reduce your profits. Grocery hard work & fair pay after you got little used to it. Hardware chance slim. Auction good but a situation does not offer every day.

A man was wanted the other day to drive a Beer Wagg[on] at \$18 per Month. Work pretty hard & the place is now supplied. A peddler's situation without doubt you might obtain. You say that work does not agree with your disposition. If this is the case & you are determined not to work at any rate you had better remain where you are for if you should fail in getting a situation here to your liking, it would cost you far more to live here than in the Country. But if you are disposed to work I think you can get employment without working for any Old Fox.⁵⁹ And now if you seriously think of coming this way I will give you a few words of advice (although advice uncalled for is said to stink). If you come, come with the determination to stay & if you cannot do as you would do as you can. Get acquainted with the place & its people, which will serve to introduce you to some business more adapted to your taste than the one you are or may be employed at.

I have said nothing of Boston & other places for I know but little of them. I was at Manchester last week & partially engaged to go to work there this summer for the man I worked for last fall. If I go I shall probably go next week & if you conclude to come perhaps you might as well stop & see Cousin Titcomb who lives on Lowell Street, & if I am there I will try & get leave of absence & I will do the best I can for you in the way of employment, unless you should think it best to become a genteel Loafer; in that case I should be at a loss how to proceed. If I could know what time you would come I would endeavor to meet you. (...)

Yours ever D.S. Gilman

One thing more which I like to have forgotten but which is of no less importance on that account. I.E. a line of recommend. This to you may seem of slight importance but if you should wish to try your luck in Boston you would find if far otherwise. A line from Pettes & Sweet certifying to your trustworthiness & honesty might prove valuable & can do no harm.⁶⁰ For a Merchant it is highly necessary that his Clerks should be men in whom he can place implicit trust & confidence

⁵⁹It appears that this individual, who lived in Dracut (on the North side of the Merrimack) and is referred to several times as Old Fox (see letters 23, 24, and 27), was a Brome native who hired young men from that area. In 1844 the *Lowell Directory* (178) listed Horatio Fox of Dracut as owning a "furnishing store," but in 1845 (176) and 1847 (227) he is listed as a carpenter.

⁶⁰Jeremiah C. Pettes was a carpenter and joiner, as well as teacher, who opened a store with his brother Nathaniel in Brome Corner in 1848. Taylor, *History of Brome* vol. 2, 65.

35. Lowell April 30th 1848

[To Moses, Jr.]. When I last wrote you I thought I should go to Manchester to work. Was there last Monday & the man I thought of working for concluded he had help enough already, so I went on up to Suncook & learned that the Building overseer was then in search of help, but was going to hire work men so very cheap I did not wait his return. Returned directly to Lowell & let myself short metre to a man who has a great deal of work to do the present season. Had I gone out of town & let myself Uncle C. would have thought nothing of it, but to work for a Neighbor of his in preference to him has a tendency to make him feel somewhat sore, & will perhaps induce him to pay me up, at least he says he will the present week. Time will show. I still board with him & perhaps shall continue to unless turned away till accounts are squared. (...)

Yours truly D.S.G.

36. Lowell 19th Novr 1848

Dear Friends

You have doubtless observed that after a storm succeeds a calm. This is just the case we are at present in. Anxious Office Seeking politicians have for the past few months raised quite a breeze & thrown great quantities of dust in the eyes of the great Mass of the people for the purpose of blinding them & then lead them by the nose just as they pleased. The Whig Party it seems have kicked up the biggest dust & made the greatest pretensions of love & regard for the "Dear People" & thus have succeeded in electing Taylor & Fillmore to the two highest offices in the gift of the People. Now the elections are over we are enjoying a calm & people begin to look around in vain for the cause of the impending ruin with which they were threatened.

I said we were enjoying a calm but in saying so I did not mean the good people of Lowell for they are far from calm. In the first place the Manufacturing Companies have seen fit in their wisdom to reduce the wages of their female Operatives about twenty five per cent: this has made them extremely wrathly & they have been holding indignation meetings passing resolves & pledging themselves not to work on reduced pay. Tomorrow the reduction is to commence & I think the amount of it will be that the best help will leave for their respective homes, such as have money enough to carry them there & such as have no homes & no money (& they are many) will stay here from necessity & work on reduced pay. I notice in this week's paper an unusual number of marriage publishments. This I account for on the ground of the reduction of wages.

Another cause of excitement here is the death of a young man a few days ago from Hydraphobia.⁶¹ Since which time several dogs have run mad & now a general slaughter of cats & dogs has commenced. If poor Tray happens to show his teeth, or trot faster than common, or carry his tail in an unusual manner 'tis enough he is a doomed victim & Death is his portion. Poor Pussy she fares no better. I was

⁶¹Hydrophobia is rabies.

somewhat amused yesterday when going to my dinner I met a lot of boys marching up street as large as life armed with Clubs. One had a wheelbarrow with a lot of dead cats in it. Another had a tin horn which he was blowing quite lustily. In explanation I will say that our Fish Pedlers carry a horn which they blow occasionally to attract purchasers. (...)

You have doubtless heard ere this of the result of our Small Pox. None of us had it, although some of us had the symptoms rather severely including myself. Cousin Titcomb wants I should go to Manchester this winter & engage with him in the purchase of a wood Lot for the purpose of cutting wood for market. He thinks it a profitable business if rightly managed & wishes me to take hold & superintend the cutting of it. Could I get what money T.C. is now owing me I would look into the matter a little, but as the case now stands I think it does not look very promising in regard to my receiving a speedy Paymt. (...)

I am still at work on the large mill & my employer thinks he shall have work for me most of the winter. Since I commenced work for him I have recd \$80 & at least \$120 is now due which I can have by asking for it. T.C. is about engaging in a churn Speculation, it is a novel invention in Butter making & if it does half as well as it has the name of doing it will prove a grand article to the dairy woman. But I have doubts in regard to the practical part of the story. I shall probably see one in operation ere long & if it eclipses Friend Sweet's Horse rake I will let you know. The Book I intended sending I thought I could obtain easily, but come to look round there was none to be had. It was the life of General Taylor including the late Mexican War. (...)

Yours D.S.G.

37. [omitted]

38. Bark Oxford Feb 23rd 1849. Latitude 1700 42' South

Dear Parents

Little did I think one twelve month ago when I last saw you, that at this time I should be ploughing the broad Atlantic thousands of miles from native Land, beneath a burning sun, but so it is & the principal, I may say the sole cause is the love of Gold which has prompted me to this tedious journey. You will doubtless call it a visionary & Quixotic Expedition. Be it so a few months will determine. One third of our journey is nearly completed, & as soon as I reach this distant land I shall endeavor to report progress, according to the best of knowledge & abilities. If prospered I shall make my calculations to visit the scenes of my childhood in about two years. To Brother & Sisters I say forget not your far off Brother. We expect to reach Rio-Janeiro about the 27th Inst & shall probably double the Cape & be in the Pacific Ocean ere you receive this.

27th Feb. Did not sleep on Deck last night, as a heavy dew was falling, a circumstance which never happens a great distance from land. Got up this morn &

found the air soft, fresh & balmy. Something I never appreciated before owing to my always possessed of such breezes. On looking round was much surprised to see very high mountains so near the sea. They remind me strongly of some of New Hampshire scenery, yet suppose they are still at a great distance. We are perfectly becalmed & it is doubtful if we get into port tonight. I shall have this all ready to seal before I land at Rio-Janeiro as what little time we stop there (probably two days) I shall wish to devote to other purposes than writing. After I get on shore I shall endeavor to enclose some kind of a leaf or spear of grass just to let you know that I am safely landed on Terra Firma in a South American City containing 150,000 inhabitants. In my next which will probably be from San Francisco I may give a slight description of my first visit to a Brazilian City. All in good health and excellent spirits.

Yours Ever D.S. Gilman

A little bird of the Sparrow kind came on board some 20 miles out, in endeavoring to capture him he lost a few feathers one of which I send to Martha to place in her Cabinet of Curiosities.

28th, Before Breakfast are just going into the Harbor, if Breeze continues favorable we shall probably drop anchor before 12, forty eight days from Boston.

March 1st did not get up to the entrance of the Harbor, where there is a Fort, till after sun-down last night, when the Breeze died away and we anchored. Soon after a squall came up and we got under way again & soon got safe into Harbor. It being against the rules of the Port for a ship to go in after sundown, Signal lights were burned which were answered further up the Harbor. Had it not been for the squall we should probably have had a gun fired after us, but as it was they let us pass it. A Bark came alongside this morn, asked a few questions, & off again. Next some of Uncle Sam's men came alongside inquiring for Dispatches &c stating that 5 or 6 Yankee California vessels were in Port. One came in last night about the time we did & another this morn. None of which have beat the Old Oxford except the Pilot Boat Anonyma of Boston 34 days out. The Bark Maria which sailed the day before us has not arrived. Health & Custom House Officers are expected on Board soon.

I have feasted my eyes on the scenery around me & found it a treat I assure you. The scenery is grand beyond description. I wish you were here with me Moses just to see this place if nothing more. Such steep mountains looking as if they were cut down with a knife. Coming boldly down to the shore, green Herbage growing on them with here & there a Cocoa-nut Tree. Convents, Churches, Rum-Boats & everything strange to my untutored eyes, seen in the distance. Novelty, Novelty is stamped on everything around me. You may believe me when I say that I am as much elated as a boy going to a Circus. All hands are talking about going ashore, but I don't believe we shall get on shore to day. No Wharves here and we are lying off some 3 or 4 miles from the Town. It rains & no Officers yet to be seen. As it

rains and here we are, have half a mind to seal this up before I go on shore & write more of our reception in my next.

39. San Francisco, California Novr 30th, 1849

Dear Brother

As the mail steamer for the States leaves tomorrow, I shall devote this Day in giving you an Account of my going to see the Elephant, as Gold digging is termed here. Well then we arrived at this place Tuesday Aug. 21, Got across the Bay & came to Anchor for the night. The vessel being crowded with Passengers we were Obligated to lodge on Deck Heads & Points with Mexican, Chilean, Sandwich Islander, Negro &c. A Perfect Amalgamation. Sunday, wind light & at night anchored near Benicia. A place where Government is building considerable. Monday forenoon reached the mouth of San Joaquin River, Pronounced San Waukeen, 60 miles from San Francisco. Here Col. Stevenson has laid out an embryo City, called New York. This night we anchored on the San Joaquin but no sleep for us, having as much as we could do to hold on to the rigging to prevent the Mosquitoes from carrying us off bodily. Mosquitoes at home ought not to be mentioned the same day with these. The Banks of this river are low & rushes meet the eye as far as you can see. Next night reached Stockton the head of Navigation 100 miles from New York. Much jealousy & disaffection having crept into our Company, it here met the fate of all California Companies viz., Broke up. Carlton here left us & returned to San Francisco. The remainder of us agreed to go on to the Mines & live in one tent, but be two distinct parties in Business. So after Paying our fares to this place (\$15 each besides freight) The Treasurer divided the balance of money on hand equally among us, & Evans, Morse & Andrews were of my Company. & Tilton, Helly, Gray & Roby of the other. At Stockton we made some purchases of Provisions & hired a train of pack mules to take our goods to Murphy's New Diggins, head of Angel Creek, 75 miles from Stockton, giving the muleteer 15 dollars per Hundred lbs.

Saturday Sep 1st, left Stockton & travelled about 10 miles over a level road where we halted for the night on account of feed for the mules, rolled ourselves in our Blankets & slept in the open air as no dew ever falls here in Summer. Next Day marched about 15 miles through the same level flat Country. Next day ditto and arrived at the Double Springs (so called). Here the country begins to rise into Hills. Next day made our way over quite a rough road & the 5th reached our destination 75 miles North East of Stockton among the Hills. This Part of the Country has every appearance of having once been terribly convulsed & torn to pieces by Earthquakes & the Surface every where is covered with a red barren volcanic Earth. At this place we found about 150 men at work in what was once the Bed of a river but now scarce worthy the name of a Brook, indeed where most of them worked it was perfectly dry.

Friday the 7th commenced digging for Gold, found none. Saturday ditto, Monday found a little, being the 4th Hole we had dug (or rather I for I found that

I had to do most of the digging). Tuesday found this hole to be pretty rich. Saturday morning my Party got sick of Gold Digging & were bound to go directly back to San Francisco, weighed our week's work & found it amounted to \$270.40. Gave my quarter of Gold about \$67 for the goods & Chattels of my Partners & they left the mines & I was left in a Partnership of one, & so I still remain. The Day my Partners left which was on a Saturday I dug \$12, Monday \$13, Tues. 00, Wedn \$16, Thursd 22, Frid \$63, Sat. \$154, Mon 68, T. 16, W. 48, T. 93, F 00, S. 34, Monday Oct 1st 48, 2d 12, 3d 111, 4th 20, 5th 80, 6th 64, 7th Sunday, 8th 00, 9th 86. At night had a slight shower of rain, the first of the season. 10th 123. 11th 50. The ensuing week I only averaged about \$6 per Day when my hole got exhausted & I was not fortunate enough to meet with another.

About this time begun to think of making preparations for winter. Resolved to go to Stockton & purchase my winter's Stock of Provisions, but heavy & unexpected rains came on making the roads unpassable for Teams, & flour which had been selling in the mines for 25 Cts per pound suddenly went up to 75 Cts. Pork raised from 50 Cts to 100 per lb. Other Articles in the same ratio. This was too much for me, so after living about two months on the purchase made of my Partners I sold the balance for over \$130. Reserving the Tent of which I own one half. Besides this I had commenced Building a Log House 9 by 13 ft inside, this I sold for \$50 & the 16th of this month left the Diggins on foot & alone with no arms to defend myself with but my natural ones. Loaded down with a knapsack of Provisions, Frying Pan, Tin-Pail, Cup knife &c., besides my Blankets. All of this made quite a load, but when fatigued I stopped made a fire then a cup of Tea & lodged by the side of a Log or under a tree wherever night overtook me. Arrived in safety at Stockton on the morning of the 19th where I stopped one week waiting for Tilton & Roby who I expected would bring the Tent as soon as the travelling improved. But last Monday they arrived without it. As the weather is now Pleasant it will probably be forwarded the first opportunity & they are now stopping at Stockton to receive it. On their arrival there I started for this place & reached here in 2 ½ Days.

Since I left the Diggins one fortnight ago I have lodged out of Doors. But the nights are getting most too cool & frosty for comfort. If my Tent does not arrive soon I must purchase another. I have not had a sick Day since I arrived in the Country. Indeed not so much as a Cold till today, for which I feel truly thankful. For hard is the fate of the sick man in this Country. I intend stopping here during the winter as I have \$1300 or more in Gold, Good Health, my chest of Tools & can have from 12 to 16 Dollars Per Day for using. Buildings are going up here as if by magic. Lumber worth in the States \$20 is here worth \$350. Common kind of Board can be obtained here at \$21 Per week. But the best way is for Mechanics to Board themselves. Had to pay a Teamster \$4 for moving my chest about 80 rods. For storing them at Stockton \$3 Per month. I can hire a lodging Room about as large as a common Bed Room for \$50 Per month. Sheet Iron Stoves vary in Price from

\$25 to \$75. Thick Grain Leather Boots from 25 to \$80. Fine Salt was worth in the mines where I was last summer 75 Cts Per lb, Potatoes Ditto, Onions 1.25 Per lb, Molasses 1.00 Per pint Bottle, vinegar ditto, soap 2.00 Per Bar, Sulphur 50 Cts per Ounce. A Doctor's fee for a visit if not more than five rods distant \$8.00. Never make a charge less than \$4 where the Patient goes to them.

Such is California as I have found it. Much more would I say would time Permit but must defer at present. Shall endeavor to write monthly. Have recd no Letters from friends since I left you. Hoping that you & all of our friends are enjoying like myself Heavens richest Blessing, Good Health & that we may once more meet on Earth

I subscribe myself your wandering Brother. D.S. Gilman
Please forward this to our native Home after Perusal.

Enclosed is the first piece of Gold which I found in California. The largest Piece I got is worth a trifle over \$20 at 16 Dollars Per Ounce

40. [This and the following fragment are undated but written from California.]
(...) I did think of sending some Dust home, but have concluded not to at present as Dollar may perhaps help me to earn ten more. Tell Mother not to be uneasy, that I enjoy Health at which I am astonished considering how much I am exposed & if fortune favor intend to gain a little competence the coming season & in a few months return to friends & Country & roam no more. Give my love to all enquiring friends & tell Kate to be a good Girl till my return. 27th Rainy weather. Vessels are daily arriving with Passengers. Provisions are becoming cheaper & good Lumber does not meet with a quick sale at \$125 Per M. Jan. 29th Nothing of importance occurring. I shall now seal this forthwith, D.S.G.

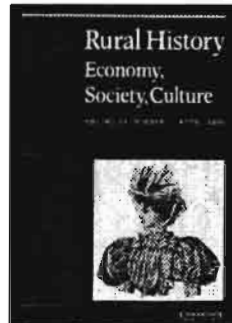
41. When morning broke I found myself about three miles from Camp, which I reached in time to partake of a hearty breakfast. I afterwards ascertained that once during the night I had rambled off at least five miles. Although where I first stopped was but one & a half from Camp. Such a night may not seem uninviting to Persons accustomed to such things. But to a new beginner like myself hunger, wet & fatigue, I am free to confess, was none of the pleasantest. Indeed, with the exception of the first night out of Boston, this was the hardest one I have seen for a twelvemonth. Having no full change of clothing with me I was forced to dry my clothes on my Back & did not fully accomplish it till the second day after my return to Camp. Failing to make satisfactory purchases of Beef, we set out on our return & reached this place after an absence of eleven days without taking the least Gold & none the worse that I am aware of for this excursion. Since my return I have sold my Boat for \$25 more than I gave for it. Beef is now spoiling in the Boats so many having engaged in the Business & I am safely out of it. The Country which we visited abounds in Hills & Vallies but has very little Timber. The vallies would be good for agricultural purposes were it not for the drouth of summer. But as it is the

soil is uncultivated & thousands of Cattle & Horses dot every Hill & valley as wild as the timid Deer with which they mingle. D.S.G.

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REVIEWS/COMPTES RENDUS

Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice, eds. *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History*, (Vancouver: UBC Press 1997)

BRINGING TOGETHER a collection of essays highlighting the lives and works of women engaged in the writing and teaching of history over the century spanning the 1870s to the 1970s, Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice address the creation of historical memory both inside and outside the academy. Through these portraits of the individual and collective efforts of "amateur" and "professional" historians, the editors suggest that because of the responsibilities and constraints associated with gender, women viewed history from a different perspective than male historians, addressed topics overlooked by men, and initiated social, cultural, and regional studies well before these became acceptable within the academy.

Divided into four thematic sections, the book traces what might be viewed as the "evolution" of historical writing by women of Anglo-Celt background as they moved from outside to inside the academy. The first section, "Community Building," looks at the individual and collective efforts of women engaged in writing nation-building history from a social rather than political perspective; an approach that allowed them to incorporate women into the story. Included are profiles of two Victorian women, Agnes Maule Machar and Sarah Anne Curzon, whose writings were influenced by their

religious and social convictions, and a study of the Ontario Women's Institutes' involvement in writing local histories. Despite differences, they shared a common interest in creating a history that would inspire Canadians to greater feeling for their country.

The second section, "Transitions," profiles historians who, through study and adoption of professional historical research methods, bridged the gap between "amateur" and "professional" history, still working outside the academy but gradually building links to the inside. Women living within Catholic religious communities engaged in historical writing in the course of their contemplative and record-keeping practices. Like the Women's Institutes, their work was collaborative. Individual women may have been prime movers; however, individual authorship was rarely acknowledged in publications. Cloistered women initially wrote to preserve historical memory within their own communities. It was in their work as educators that they began to expand their mandate. As their educational institutions strove to gain standing and recognition in the broader community, these women were required to go beyond the convent walls for training in academic disciplines. This process inevitably helped to professionalize their approaches to history, and also encouraged them to write for a wider audience.

Also operating outside of the academy, Constance Lindsay Skinner and Isabel Murphy Skelton gained a degree of professional respect and support from some male academics through their per-