

LECTURE 7

SOCIAL & POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW TECHNOLOGY

c.1790-1850

A. Industrialization and politics, 1790-1830

1. Tariffs

- revenue tariffs, 1789+
- The Embargo of 1807 and the War of 1812
- protective tariffs, 1816-1830+
- the tariff of "abominations" 1828
- Calhoun's "South Carolina Exposition & Protest (1828)
- Tariff of 1832 and South Carolina's Nullification
 - Force Bill (Jan. 1833)
 - Clay's 20% compromise

2. Spanish Claims and the origins of Lowell, 1819-1839

- Transcontinental Treaty (1819)
- Spanish Claims Commission (1821-24)
- Daniel Webster represents the Boston Associates
 - succeeds in obtaining \$1.2 million out of \$5 million in claims monies disbursed;
 - receives a 5% commission
- Boston Associates purchase land at Chelmsford, 1821-22
- Mill construction: Merrimack Mfg. Co. (1822-23) and Hamilton Co. (1825-26)

3. French Claims, 1831-36

4. Lowell's growth: 200 residents (1821) to over 18,000 (1839)

- By 1839, Lowell's nine textile corporations employ 8,500 workers;
- Each week, its 29 mills churn out over 1 million yards of cloth while consuming 890 bales of cotton.
- In order to move cotton from Boston to Lowell, the proprietors build the Boston & Lowell Railroad (1830), one of the earliest in the U.S.
- In addition to building textile machinery, the Lowell Machine Shop under Major George W. Whistler also replicates British "Planet Class" steam locomotives in the 1830s

B. The Workers' World

1. Time-orientation vs. task-orientation

- training workers to be time conscious: like "putting a deer in a harness"
- "the village steeple is the unfailing companion of the waterwheel" (Patrick Tracy Jackson)

2. Work rules:

Example: Matteawan Company (see reader, pp. 146-47)

Example: DuPont Company, 1811

Example: Springfield Armory, 1816

Example: Burnley Cotton Mill, 1852

3. Labor protest:

--Lowell, 1836-1845 (reader, pp. 147-51):

--Almira's friend Ellen: "I object to the constant hurry of every thing.... the clang of the bell....the clang of the bell....just as though we were so many living machines....I won't stay here and be a white slave."

--Amelia: "our rights cannot be trampled upon" by "these drivelling cotton lords, this mushroom aristocracy of New England...."

--Amelia: "we answer through the ballot box..." (p. 151)

--Harpers Ferry, 1842 (reader, pp. 153-54):

--The clock strike (1842)

4. Labor-management issues:

- work rules/time-orientation
- reduced piece rates
- work loads: "doubling up"
- "secret practices" and controlling the shop floor (reader, p. 154)

5. Questions:

- Did mechanization deskill workers?
 - workers no longer own their own tools (reader, p. 182-83)
 - see McGaw's argument (reader, p. 160)

- Were workers "anti-technology"? (cf. reader, p. 162)

- What accounts for the absence of class consciousness in the Berkshire paper industry as opposed to its presence at Lowell and Harpers Ferry? (see reader, pp. 151, 162-63, 184).
 - Did Berkshire's small-size mills make a difference? (p. 164, 172)

- Was "leaving" a form of protest? --"to better myself" (cf. p. 159 and p. 148-50)

- What about gender differences?
 - women's work and women's pay (cf. p. 152 [re. Waltham]; p. 166 [re. Berkshires])
 - working conditions in the Berkshire Mills versus those at Lowell