

## HISTORIC HOMES AND PLACES.

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## LOWELL

The territory of the city of Lowell embraces that part of the old town of Chelmsford which was known as East Chelmsford. The inhabitants of the older municipality were from the earliest days devoted mainly to the pursuit of agriculture. At the beginning of the nineteenth century East Chelmsford, the name by which the site of Lowell was then called, was a village containing forty-five or fifty houses. Its natural advantages were its waterfalls and fertile meadows, attracting not only the farmer but the artisan.

In 1822 the great manufacturing company, The Merrimack, began its operations in the village of East Chelmsford. It was here that the Middlesex canal had its terminus as early as 1793. The canal was opened for navigation in 1803. Its width was thirty feet, and its depth four. There were twenty locks between Chelmsford and Boston, seven aqueducts, and it was crossed by fifty bridges. It was supplied with water by the Concord river at Billerica, and its cost was about \$500,000. Vast quantities of lumber and wood were transported upon it. Passengers were accommodated by a neat boat, which occupied almost one entire day in reaching Boston from the terminus at Chelmsford, or Lowell. From 1819 to 1836 were the palmy days of the enterprise. The beginning of the Boston and Lowell railroad in 1835 reduced its usefulness. The opening of the Nashua and Lowell railroad in 1840 still further impaired its prosperity, and in a few years the canal was given up. In 1859 the supreme court issued a decree cancelling all its privileges.

Pawtucket canal was built around the falls of that name and opened in 1796. Its object when built was the transportation of produce, but in 1821 it began to be relied upon to furnish water-power for the manufacturing enterprises of the city, which were then becoming important, and to the present time it has been thus employed. Boston capitalists soon controlled the situation, and a very general advance was made in the increase of capital and prosperity.

Bridges, next to canals, were the second element in the early success of Lowell. The Pawtucket bridge, or one on its site, called the Middlesex-Merrimack river bridge, was the first one built. It was opened for travel in 1792. It was a comparatively cheap and short-lived affair, and was in a few years succeeded by a better one. A bridge over the Concord river was built very early in the history of Chelmsford, and the first bridge at the mouth of Concord river was erected in 1774. The first structure was blown down by a gale before it was finished, and a second was erected in its place. A third bridge was built in 1819.

The rise of Lowell as a great manufacturing centre was due in general to the American spirit of independence. Dependence upon England for clothing was the source of dissatisfaction on the part of the American farmer, and this dependence weighed heavily upon the minds of patriotic American citizens. The argument used was, that if a country such as the United States was to be really free, it must have within itself all the means of supplying the people with every necessity and comfort of life. It was therefore a sequence that when the advantages



Toll House of Old Middlesex Canal, Middlesex Village.

of the site were seen, that the present Lowell was selected as a place where cotton cloth could be manufactured on a large scale for the American trade. Hence several men, great in their way, planned and executed the projects which brought the manufacturers of Lowell into being. One of them was Francis Cabot Lowell, (1775-1817) after whom the city was named. Others were Patrick Tracy Jackson, Nathan Appleton, Kirk Boott, Paul Moody, Ezra Worthen, and John Amory Lowell. Six hundred shares was the number in the company-first organized. It was the original design to start at Waltham. The insufficiency of the water-power in Waltham demanded a better place, and the Pawtucket Falls at Lowell was the spot selected. Boarding-houses for the operatives were built and placed under the care of matrons, and every means was used to maintain for the girls of American birth, who worked in the mills, the simplicity and purity of their country homes.

Improvements from the first went on rapidly. The names of the great corporations from the earliest were as follows: Merrimack Manufacturing Company, incorporated 1822; this was the first of the great manufacturing companies. The Print Works of the Merrimack Company, begun 1824. Locks and Canals Company, 1792; purchased by the Merrimack Manufacturing Company in 1822. The Hamilton Manufacturing Company, incorporated in 1825. The Appleton Company, incorporated in 1828. The Lowell Manufacturing Company, incorporated in 1828. The Middlesex Company, incorporated in 1830. The Suffolk Manufacturing Company, incorporated in 1831. The Tremont Mills, incorporated in 1831. The Lawrence Manufacturing Company, incorporated in 1831. The Lowell Bleachery, incorporated in 1833. The Massachusetts Cotton-Mills, incorporated in 1839. The Lowell Machine-Shop, incorporated in 1845.

The town of Lowell was incorporated March 1, 1826. The number of inhabitants in East Chelmsford had increased from 200 in 1820, to 2300 in 1826. The centre of the old town of Chelmsford was four miles distant, and the two villages had no common business relations. The population continued to rapidly increase after the incorporation. A steam railroad between Lowell and Boston was



Old Bowers House, Middlesex Village. Said to be first house built in Lowell.

opened in 1835. In the winter ice had closed the Middlesex canal, and transportation over bad roads by wagons was slow and costly to the inhabitants, and six stages passed daily from Boston to Lowell and back. To remedy the difficulties imposed upon the community by these circumstances, a macadamized road between the two places was suggested. But it was soon ascertained that the tramways of England, formerly moved by horse-power, could be propelled by steam, and the railroad was the result.

In 1836 the town of Lowell was chartered as a city. The act was dated April 1. This was the third city charter granted in Massachusetts, Boston and Salem being the others. The population was over 16,000 at that time. Lowell held its first political election under a city charter. The people have been always remarkably energetic, and the

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city's fame is world-wide. Before its day there was nothing like it in America. It has been visited by Presidents of the United States from the days of Jackson onwards, and by the distinguished of all lands. Eminent writers have sounded its praises in all modern languages.

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