

# Documents of Mill Life

Documents on the following pages show timetables and regulations that governed the lives and reflected the work environment of mill workers in the mid 1800s.

After reading the boarding house rules of the Middlesex Company, the work timetable for the Lowell Mills, and the rules of employment at the Amoskeag Company, students may discuss how such rules and work times compare with those today.

## Work Timetable for the Lowell Mills

Students should realize that in 1851 there was such a thing as “Lowell time,” which undoubtedly differed from “Portsmouth time” and “Keene time.” Time was measured by the sun in a given locality; thus noon in Portsmouth would be slightly different from noon in Lowell and from noon in Keene. It wasn’t until later in the decade that a regional time zone was established in New England to make railroad scheduling easier. The division of the world into time zones with Greenwich, England, designated as the prime meridian, wasn’t widely accepted until 1884.

1. What signal let workers know when to begin and end work?
2. Why do you think “Breakfast Bells” rang thirty minutes earlier from April 1 to September 20? What would have allowed workers to begin work earlier during those months?
3. The section of the document reading “Work Commences” tells workers when to report to the factory. If the last morning bell rang at 6:50 AM in January, when did workers need to be in the factory?
4. When did the evening bell dismiss them from work?
5. How many hours passed between the time workers began and ended their shifts?

## Company Regulations

In general, the salient point of both sets of regulations is the degree to which companies supervised not only an employee’s work life, but also his or her personal life. Even so, living in company housing was considered a privilege. Buildings were well kept and were close to the mill yards so that workers didn’t have to worry about transportation to and from work. Especially for young, single female workers recruited from farms in the countryside, the boarding houses were advertised as a safe, moral environment.

# Boarding House Regulations



**REGULATIONS**  
FOR THE  
**BOARDING HOUSES**  
OF THE  
**MIDDLESEX COMPANY.**

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THE tenants of the Boarding Houses are not to board, or permit any part of their houses to be occupied by any person except those in the employ of the Company.

They will be considered answerable for any improper conduct in their houses, and are not to permit their boarders to have company at unseasonable hours.

The doors must be closed at ten o'clock in the evening, and no one admitted after that time without some reasonable excuse.

The keepers of the Boarding Houses must give an account of the number, names, and employment of their boarders, when required; and report the names of such as are guilty of any improper conduct, or are not in the regular habit of attending public worship.

The buildings and yards about them must be kept clean and in good order, and if they are injured otherwise than from ordinary use, all necessary repairs will be made, and charged to the occupant.

It is indispensable that all persons in the employ of the Middlesex Company should be vaccinated who have not been, as also the families with whom they board; which will be done at the expense of the Company.

**SAMUEL LAWRENCE, Agent.**

JOEL TAYLOR, PRINTER, Daily Courier Office.

From *Farm to Factory: Women's Letters, 1830-1860*, ed. Thomas Dublin (New York, Columbia University Press, 1981).

# Workers' Regulations

## REGULATIONS

To be observed by all persons in the employment of the AMOSKEAG MANUFACTURING COMPANY, at their New Mills in Manchester.

The overseers are to be punctually in their rooms at the starting of the Mills, and not to be absent, unnecessarily, during working hours. They are to see that all those employed in their rooms are in their places in due season. They may grant leave of absence to those employed under them, when there are spare hands in the rooms, to supply their places; otherwise they are not to grant leave of absence except in case of absolute necessity.

All persons in the employ of the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company at their New Mills in Manchester, are required to observe the regulations of the room where they are employed. They are not to be absent from their work without consent, except in case of sickness, and then they are to send information to the overseer, of the cause of their absence.

A strict adherence to the regulations of the houses where they board is expected. Always recollect that *ten o'clock* in the evening is bed-time, and the hour for closing the house for the night.

A regular attendance on public worship on the Sabbath is necessary for the preservation of good order; and the Company will not employ any person in their said Mills who is

known to be habitually absent, nor will they employ any person who uses *ardent spirit* as a beverage, or who uses *profane* or *indecent language*, either in the Mills or out.

All persons intending to leave the employment of the Company, are to give two weeks notice of their intention, to the overseer of the room in which they work; and their engagements with the Company are not considered fulfilled unless they comply with this regulation, in which case the person will receive an honorable discharge signed by the Agent, if requested.

Payments of wages will be made monthly. The pay rolls will be made up to, and including the last Saturday of each month, and paid in the course of the next succeeding week.

These regulations are considered part of the contract with all persons entering into the employment of said Company at their New Mills.

When overseers hire help, either male or female, they are not allowed to set them to work until they produce a copy of these regulations with a certificate signed by the person thus hired, that they assent and agree to conform to the foregoing regulations.

DAVID GILLIS, Agent,  
Of Amoskeag New Mills.

Manchester, N. H.,

184 .

I the undersigned, of

in the State of

do hereby agree to conform to the foregoing regulations.

From *Farm to Factory: Women's Letters, 1830-1860*, ed. Thomas Dublin (New York, Columbia University Press, 1981).

# Workers' Timetable

## TIME TABLE OF THE LOWELL MILLS,

To take effect on and after Oct. 21st, 1851.

The Standard time being that of the meridian of Lowell, as shown by the regular clock of JOSEPH RAYNES, 43 Central Street

|| From 1st to 10th inclusive. || From 11th to 20th inclusive. || From 21st to last day of month.

	1st Bell	2d Bell	3d Bell	Eve. Bell	1st Bell	2d Bell	3d Bell	Eve. Bell	1st Bell	2d Bell	3d Bell	Eve. Bell
January,	5.00	6.00	6.50	*7.30	5.00	6.00	6.50	*7.30	5.00	6.00	6.50	*7.30
February,	4.30	5.30	6.40	*7.30	4.30	5.30	6.25	*7.30	4.30	5.30	6.15	*7.30
March,	5.40	6.00		*7.30	5.20	5.40		*7.30	5.05	5.25		6.35
April,	4.45	5.05		6.45	4.30	4.50		6.55	4.30	4.50		7.00
May,	4.30	4.50		7.00	4.30	4.50		7.00	4.30	4.50		7.00
June,	"	"		"	"	"		"	"	"		"
July,	"	"		"	"	"		"	"	"		"
August,	"	"		"	"	"		"	"	"		"
September,	4.40	5.00		6.45	4.50	5.10		6.30	5.00	5.20		*7.30
October,	5.10	5.30		*7.30	5.20	5.40		*7.30	5.35	5.55		*7.30
November,	4.30	5.30	6.10	*7.30	4.30	5.30	6.20	*7.30	5.00	6.00	6.35	*7.30
December,	5.00	6.00	6.45	*7.30	5.00	6.00	6.50	*7.30	5.00	6.00	6.50	*7.30

\* Excepting on Saturdays from Sept. 21st to March 23rd inclusive, when it is rung at 20 minutes after sunset.

### YARD GATES,

Will be opened at ringing of last morning bell, of meal bells, and of evening bells; and kept open Ten minutes.

### MILL GATES.

Commence hoisting Mill Gates, Two minutes before commencing work.

### WORK COMMENCES,

At Ten minutes after last morning bell, and at Ten minutes after bell which "rings in" from Meals.

### BREAKFAST BELLS.

During March "Ring out".....at....7.30 a. m....."Ring in" at 8:05 a. m.  
 April 1st to Sept. 20th inclusive.....at....7.00 " " " " at 7.35 " "  
 Sept. 21st to Oct. 31st inclusive.....at....7.30 " " " " at 8.05 " "

Remainder of year work commences after Breakfast.

### DINNER BELLS.

"Ring out".....12.30 p. m....."Ring in".... 1.05 p. m.

In all cases, the *first* stroke of the bell is considered as marking the time.

From *Farm to Factory: Women's Letters, 1830-1860*, ed. Thomas Dublin (New York, Columbia University Press, 1981).