

The Millworkers' World: A Chronology



"WEAVING A WORLD" is the result of a partnership between Museum L-A and Bates College. It has benefited from many collaborators and contributors.

The exhibit was conceived by Rachel Desgrosselières (Museum L-A) and David Scobey (Bates College). It was written by David Scobey and designed by Hannah Smotrich (School of Art & Design, University of Michigan).

Planning and visual research for "Weaving a World" was done by Museum L-A staff members Rachel Desgrosselières, Susan Beane, and Jessica Dumas. Archival research was done by a team of Bates students, including Thomas Burian, Jessica Dumas, Nate Purinton, Eliza Reed, Julia Simons, and Mike Wilson. Special thanks to the many community members who donated to Museum L-A photographs and other documents used in the exhibit.

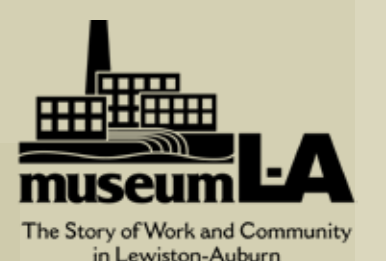
The voices quoted in "Weaving a World" were drawn from the Millworkers Oral History Project, a collection of Museum L-A. Interviews were conducted by oral historian Andrea L'Hommedieu and by students in the classes of Professors Margaret Creighton, Elizabeth Eames, and Heather Lindkvist, with project support from Holly Lasagna, Harvard Center for Community Partnerships, Bates College.

We are grateful to the Franco-American Collection, University of Southern Maine/Lewiston-Auburn College; the Lewiston Public Library; the Androscoggin Historical Society; and the Muskie Archives, Bates College, for generously sharing photographs and other documents from their archives. All materials are reproduced by permission. Special thanks are due to Donat Boisvert of the Franco-American Collection (USM/L-A) and Jim Allard of the Lewiston Public Library for helping to locate key materials; and to Will Ash of the Bates College Imaging and Computer Center for producing the base maps used in the exhibit.

"Weaving a World" was reviewed by the Museum L-A Exhibit Committee, by community historical experts Elliott Epstein and Doug Hodgkin, and by mill veterans Lionel Audet, Ray D'Amour, Lucille Barrett, Roland Gosselin, Gerry LaFrance, Fred Label, Helen Little, and Ray St. Pierre, who constituted the Mill Elders Advisory Committee. Their suggestions and corrections strengthened the exhibit immeasurably.

We gratefully acknowledge funding from a Rural Business Enterprise Grant, USDA-Rural Development Program (Michael W. Aube, State Director), a grant from the Harvard Center for Community Partnerships, Bates College, and faculty research support from the Office of the Dean of Faculty, Bates College. The aid of the Bates College Imaging and Computing Center is funded in part by grants to Bates College from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the NIH (GRANT NO. P20 RR-016463). "Weaving a World" is solely the responsibility of Museum L-A and does not represent the official views of the NIH.

Our deepest thanks go to all those community members who, through their memories, their keepsakes, and the power of their stories, made this exhibit possible.



1950: Centenary celebration of the Bates Manufacturing Company at the Lewiston Armory

1950s: New wave of migration from Quebec; half of Lewiston's residents born in French Canada

Bates Mill's "George Washington" bedspread becomes national best-seller

1951: City-wide strike against mills by Textile Workers Union of America

Bates Mill hockey team competes in international hockey competition

1953: First television sets in Lewiston

1956: Androscoggin Mill closes

1960: Grand Trunk Railway closes

POPULATION OF LEWISTON: 40,804

1961: Continental Mill closes

Pope John XXIII launches "Vatican II" council reforming Catholic liturgy and doctrine, 1962

1966: Maurice Chevalier sings at Bates Mill banquet

1967: Le Messenger ceases publication

Cassius Clay vs. Sonny Liston world championship boxing match in Lewiston Armory

Spurred by the pollution of the Androscoggin River, Maine Senator Edmund Muskie leads effort to pass clean-water laws and found the Environmental Protection Agency, 1963-1970

1971: Hill Mill closes; 125 workers transferred to Bates Mill and approximately 1000 workers laid off

1976: Facing liquidation, the Bates Manufacturing Company is bought by its workers in Employee Stock Ownership Program

1986: Employees sell Bates Manufacturing Company to outside investors

NAFTA passed by U.S. Congress mandating free trade between U.S., Mexico and Canada

1991: Libbey Mill moves operations to the South

1996: Museum L-A founded

POPULATION OF LEWISTON: 35,690

2001: Remaining workers at Bates Mill laid off

2002: Maine Heritage Weavers opens in the former Hill Mill

2004: Museum L-A holds first "millworkers reunion," launching Millworker Oral History Project

2004-2008: Museum L-A public history partnership with Bates College

1850

1850: Benjamin Bates and other investors incorporate the Bates Manufacturing Company

POPULATION OF LEWISTON: 3584

1850s: Canal system built to power Lewiston textile mills Construction and opening of Bates Mill and Hill Mill

1855: Maine State Seminary founded on outskirts of Lewiston

1861: Androscoggin Mill opens

Confederate attack on Fort Sumter begins the U.S. Civil War, 1861

1864: Maine State Seminary renamed Bates College in honor of benefactor Benjamin Bates

1865: Continental Mill opens

Lee surrenders to Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, ending the U.S. Civil War, 1865

1874: Lewiston & Auburn Railroad connects the Twin Cities to the Grand Trunk Railway system



1880: Beginning of large-scale immigration from French Canada to New England

Le Messenger, a francophone daily newspaper, begins publication in Lewiston

POPULATION OF LEWISTON: 19,083

1888: F.X. Marcotte's furniture store established



1880s-1890s: Growth of "Little Canada," French Canadian neighborhood between the Androscoggin River and Lewiston's textile mills

1900

1905: Construction of Saints Peter and Saint Paul Church begun

1909: Noted reform photographer Lewis Hine documents child labor in Lewiston textile mills

1920s: Decline of New England textile industry, growth of Southern mills

POPULATION OF LEWISTON: 31,791

1928: Southern competition bankrupts Androscoggin and Hill Mills Central Maine Power Company buys and consolidates Androscoggin, Hill, and Bates Mills

Stock market crash and the beginning of the Great Depression, 1929

Franklin Delano Roosevelt launches the New Deal, 1933

1936: Flood washes out bridges over the Androscoggin River and inundates downtown Lewiston



National labor insurgency leads to the formation of new industrial unions and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, 1935-1937

1937: CIO-supported strike of Auburn shoe factories, unsuccessfully seeking recognition for the United Shoe Workers of America

1938: Construction of Saints Peter and Paul Church completed



POPULATION OF LEWISTON: 38,598

1941: Textile Workers Union of America recognized by millowners

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, U.S. enters World War II

1941-1945: Lewiston textile mills produce sheets, blankets, and parachute cloth for the war effort



Many female millworkers move into jobs formerly held by men

1945: Local investors buy several mills and reorganize as Bates Manufacturing Company

1940s: Bates Manufacturing Company opens design showroom on 34th Street, New York City

2000

2001: Remaining workers at Bates Mill laid off

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