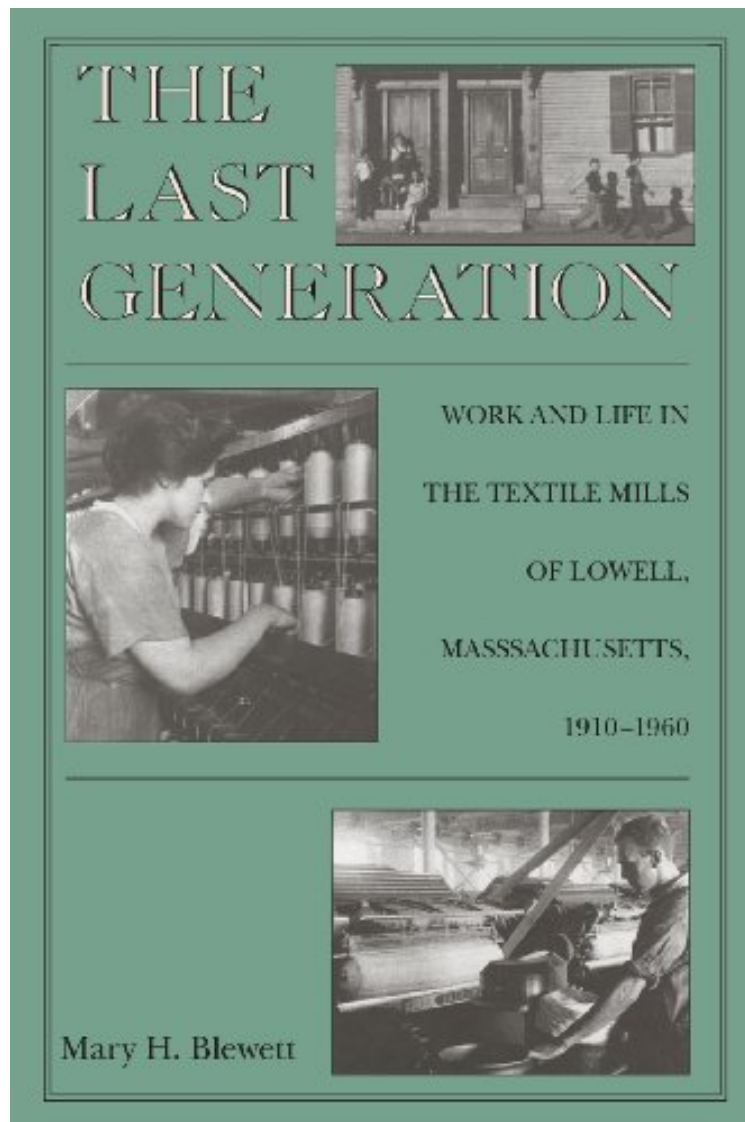


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The Last Generation: Work and Life in the Textile Mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, 1910-1960 (Political Thought)

Mary H. Blewett

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Mary H. Blewett : **The Last Generation: Work and Life in the Textile Mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, 1910-1960 (Political Thought)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Last Generation: Work and Life in the Textile Mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, 1910-1960 (Political Thought):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. it is a great historical piece written in segments that detail several of ...By J.M. FloridaMy grandmother Mabel Mangan is featured in this book, it is a great historical piece written in segments that detail several of the Mill Worker's lives and how they perceived the day to day life that was their reality. Even though I am a bit biased, the book is very well written. The boot mills are no longer in operation but there is a mill museum with a few still in operation.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Tale of my hometown and of my grandparents likely life/ work in the millsBy Denise WolfIt wasn't many generations back that my forebears came from French Canada to seek a better life by working in the mills of Lawrence, Mass.This thoughtful history was almost like living in their shoes.

Oral histories of many of the last generation of Lowell, MA, textile mill workers preceded by two introductory sections. The first presents the historic setting of economic development and subsequent decline of the textile industry in Lowell. The second is a brief explanation of the production process wherein the last generation of mill workers expended so many of their skills and so much of their energy.

From Publishers WeeklyBlewett (Men, Women, and Work : Class, Gender, and Protest in the New England Shoe Industry, 1780-1910) has assembled a polished and highly readable volume that offers a view of a vanished workplace. Included are oral histories of 30 textile workers--among them spinners, weavers, loom fixers--each depicting a vivid personality and a distinct experience of life in the mills. At 14, Valentine Chartrand found employment as a doffer--removing bobbins spun full of yarn and replacing them with empty ones. During WW II, she moved to an armaments factory; after the war, almost edged out by men, she obtained mill employment with difficulty, and labored through her 60s. Harry Dickenson was also a "mill rat," navigating his way up from doffer to foreman. He became dissatisfied when the owners brought in their college-educated sons to replace mill-trained men as managers. There are narratives by union organizers and by a boss who fired the union president. Workers tell how nationality (Lowell was heavily populated by immigrants) or gender denied--or helped secure--the best jobs. Some people felt trapped in their occupation and others recall careers with pride and contentment. Data on textile production and the economic and historical setting of Lowell elucidate the accounts. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalThese are first-hand accounts of 34 textile workers during the industry's last half-century in Lowell, Massachusetts. They provide a compelling story of hard lives led in "dark Satanic mills" with very low-paying 60-hour work shifts; unhealthy conditions; and harsh, unfeeling supervisors. Transcending their difficult existence, however, these mostly Irish and French-Canadian immigrants and their descendants who followed them into the mills shaped strong family structures and created vital ethnic communities. Blewett's historical setting and the explanation of technical processes enrich the narratives. Highly recommended for research and academic libraries.- Harry Frumerman, formerly with Hunter Coll., CUNYCopyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. "A compelling story of hard lives led in 'dark Satanic mills' with very low-paying 60-hour work shifts; unhealthy conditions; and harsh, unfeeling supervisors. Transcending their difficult existence, however, these mostly Irish and French-Canadian immigrants and their descendants who followed them into the mills shaped strong family structures and created vital ethnic communities. Blewett's Historical setting and the explanation of technical processes enrich the narratives. Highly recommended."Library Journal"Blewett does an excellent job of preserving the final chapter of the story of the mills by compiling an oral history of 30 former worker. She also provides a wealth of introductory and interpretive text, as well as an extensive glossary of textile-related terms. The workers discuss in detail the specifics of their jobs and their difficult and often brutal working conditions. They also give a picture of life in new England throughout much of this century."New York Times Book "One of the best books of oral history to date and the most revealing volume on textile workers. . . . Blewett has renewed the life, the whispers, and even the laughter that were once vibrant in Lowell's now-empty mills. . . . Unquestionably, [the book] demonstrates that oral history has much to offer us as feminists and makers of our own collective history."Women's of Books"The past ten years or so have seen the publication of a number of remarkable labor histories based on skillful employment of oral historiographical techniques. The Last Generation is a splendid example of this genre . . . [and] deserves a wide audience among those interested in the manner in which human dignity and integrity can be sustained and even flourish amid the most adverse of conditions."Wilson Library Bulletin"A penetrating exposition not only of the cultural and economic realities that determined the lives of this generation, but also of eh way in which these individuals viewed their lives from the vantage point of the post-textile era. The narrative is well constructed . . . [and]succeeds admirably in conveying the experiences of this entrapped generation. . . . A powerful social and cultural history of the highest caliber."Choice"A significant addition to the relatively sparse literature on the last years of the New England textile industry. Not only do the narratives powerfully enhance conventional study of the industry but they also establish persuasively the considerable merits of oral history."Journal of American History