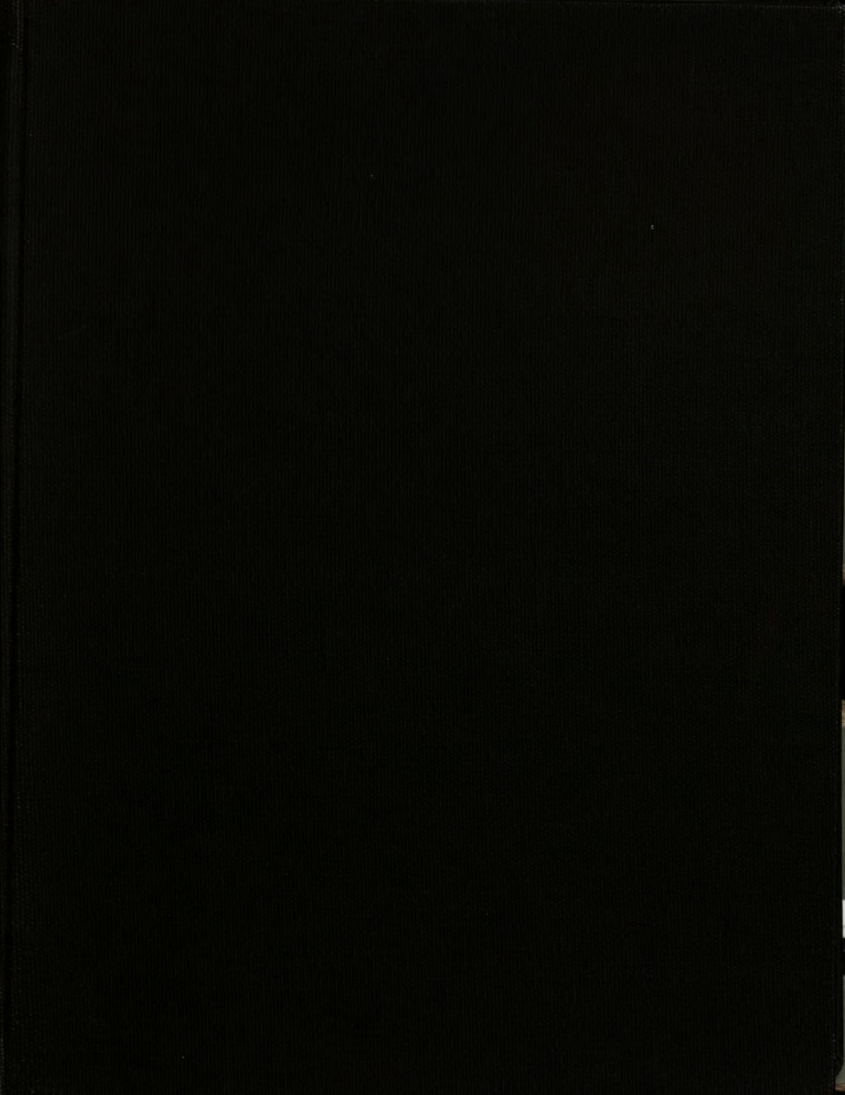
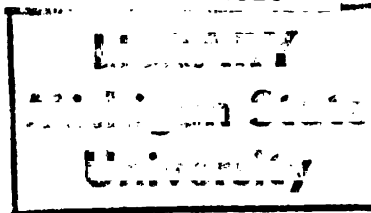






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**FACTORIES AND WORKERS IN THREE MICHIGAN TOWNS:
1880-1920**

**By
Barbara Speas Havira**

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

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Department of History

1986

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ABSTRACT

FACTORIES AND WORKERS IN THREE MICHIGAN TOWNS: 1880-1920

By

Barbara Speas Havira

This study focuses on the role played by small communities in U. S. industrial expansion and on the character of labor relations in small-town factories, as evidenced by the experiences of three villages in Southwestern Michigan between 1880 and 1920. Technology, legal requirements, unique historical factors, and workers' social characteristics provide the framework for analysis.

Warren Featherbone (Three Oaks), Cooper-Wells Hosiery (St. Joseph), and Belding Brothers (Belding), produced textiles and sewing notions. The majority of their workers were white women, both American-born and immigrants, who had neither a pre-industrial artisan heritage nor previous industrial experience. They found steady work, relatively safe workplaces, and modest wages in towns where there was little alternative employment. Interviews and behavior suggest that for them, employment was necessary for family and individual survival, rather than a means of individual mobility or social reform. Paralleling the findings of Walkowitz and Bodnar, the family and local concerns, not the workplace or the economic system, were at the center of their consciousness.

There was no evidence of high rates of labor turnover

or absenteeism, no unions and only a few recorded incidents of conflict between workers and managers. The few brief strikes were conservative efforts to forestall disadvantageous changes in working conditions rather than theoretically inspired working-class challenges to capitalist authority as such. For the most part, the managers prevailed.

The small-town settings appear to have had an ambivalent effect on corporate power. These firms were very powerful because they were the chief employers in their communities; yet their exercise of power was restrained by face-to-face contacts and by their desire to retain the good will and good opinion of the community.

To my father, Junius Edwin Speas (1908-1956), my mother, Florence Broeker Speas, and my husband, Robert Donald Havira, with love and gratitude.

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CHAPTER I VILLAGE MANUFACTURING: AN AMERICAN TRADITION

"It is commonly said nowadays that the big manufacturing plants are leaving the cities and locating in the smaller towns." The Acorn, 31 July 1903, Three Oaks, Michigan.

This opening quotation from the local newspaper in a small town in southwestern Michigan expresses some wishful thinking on the part of the editor, but also reveals more than a grain of truth about the industrial importance of small towns in the United States. It is well understood that between 1880 and 1920, the United States became a major industrial power, but the substantial contributions made by small communities to America's industrial growth have often been overlooked.

This neglect of small town industry applies to the study of labor history as well as to general discussions of economic development. Scholars have paid little attention to the nature and scope of industrialization in small mid-western communities, focusing almost exclusively on large eastern urban centers. The urban immigrant experience and the struggle between workers and managers to control the production process and the distribution of economic and political power have dominated our image of the industrial experience in America. These studies show that millions of immigrants endured crowded and unhealthy living and working conditions as they began new lives in an alien and often hostile society. Frequent unemployment alternating with grueling labor were their common lot. Violent confrontations brought some communities to the breaking point. More

recently, researchers have paid greater attention to the values and life style of workers themselves, in the workplace, at home and in voluntary activities, but have continued to concentrate on the experience of immigrants in large urban centers, especially those in the northeastern United States.¹

Such approaches overlook the substantial industrial development that occurred in small communities outside the northeast, and the distinctive experiences of their industrial workers, many of whom were native born. Since the first textile mills were established in Massachusetts in the early nineteenth century, many thousands of industrial workers have lived and worked in small communities throughout the United States. These towns have played a continuous and important role in U.S. manufacturing and have provided revenue essential to regional prosperity. By comparison, industrial labor in rural villages often brought fewer confrontations and less personal distress than occurred in rapidly expanding cities.²

Ignoring such workers implies that they are only a mirror of the urban immigrant experience, or are unimportant or vestigial, with little influence on contemporary or future labor relations. On the contrary, these industrial settings were not only significant to the persons who experienced them, but relevant to understanding industrial relations during this period and in later years. In many cases, both manufacturers and workers made deliberate choices to

establish themselves in these smaller settlements. Their general knowledge of living and working conditions in urban areas consciously and unconsciously affected their behavior and decisions regarding their respective roles in the industrial process. Although machine production imposed substantial uniformities on factory work, specific industrial experiences varied greatly. Among the factors which conditioned those experiences were the technology of production, the idiosyncratic history of and interaction between company and community, current legal requirements and the social characteristics of the workforce. A thorough understanding of industrialization on the national level requires attention to village settings as well as to urban ones, and to the material, ideological and social factors which conditioned small-town industrialization.

This study will begin to fill in the gaps in our knowledge about industrial labor by examining the chief industry in each of three villages in Michigan between 1880 and 1920. These are the Warren Featherbone Company of Three Oaks, Berrien county; Cooper-Wells Hosiery Company in St. Joseph, also in Berrien county; and Belding Brothers and Company silk mills in Ionia county.³

A number of criteria led to the selection of these three village manufacturers. First, size was a limiting factor. This study of small town or village industry includes only places whose populations were smaller than 10,000 during the entire period under study, 1880-1920.

This choice eliminates places which, like Lowell, Massachusetts, became large cities because of their manufacturing. The number 10,000 is somewhat arbitrary, selected partially because since 1900, the U.S. Census has used it to categorize data on manufacturing and population, thus providing a standard scale to measure proportional changes in these factors. These three villages were all smaller than 10,000. Their 1920 populations were: Three Oaks, 1362; Belding, 3911; St. Joseph, 7251. In addition to their industrial roles, these villages continued to provide traditional services to local farmers, retaining some of the flavor and appearance of farming villages. Second, each village had a single major manufacturer which began operations around 1880 and remained in existence for at least forty years. Each employed from 300 to 1000 workers, in settings where there was little alternative manufacturing employment. All three companies were also involved in similar kinds of manufacturing, the production of textiles and textile-related items, and employed a high percentage of single women in semi-skilled labor. The recruitment and response of these women and girls to factory employment is an important feature of this study. And finally, each owner-founder had extensive financial interests and family connections in the area. Managers, workers and other villagers were likely to be personally acquainted and to share many values and experiences.⁴

Despite some differences in size and location, these

three villages, St. Joseph, Belding and Three Oaks experienced a similar kind of industrial expansion between 1880 and 1920. For each of them, the lumber boom and the migration of farmers from the East had stimulated earlier periods of economic growth. As the lumber era ended, industry provided a new base for prosperity. During this forty-year period each acquired at least one large industry, more than doubled in population, and installed urban amenities such as paved streets, electricity and piped water. In each community, local entrepreneurs, not outsiders, established and managed its major industry--in each case one which manufactured textiles or sewing notions.

Together, these three companies and communities provide valuable data on industrial experience in midwestern towns between 1880 and 1920. Chapter I discusses the contributions of small communities to the growth of manufacturing in the U.S. in general and in Michigan. Later chapters describe the development of each company and its relationship with its town (Chapter II); the technology and processes essential to their industry (Chapter III); contemporary legal requirements (Chapter III); the social characteristics of their workforces (Chapter IV); and the nature of management and worker power (Chapter V). The challenges posed by the introduction of factories, such as defining the relationship between workers and management, and establishing the social status of the workers were resolved in ways appropriate to their respective small town settings.

Small Communities and Industrial Expansion

The triumph of industrialism in the U.S. had modest beginnings when factories and machine production began to replace hand production in homes and small shops in the early nineteenth century. These changes laid the basis for the industrial transformation of America well before the Civil War. The peak volume of home production in the United States probably occurred around 1820 and even though home and hand production continues today, its contribution to total output is negligible. For almost one hundred years nearly all manufacturing in the U.S. has occurred in factory settings. But not all of these factories have been in cities.®

Although often assumed to be inseparable, urban development and large-scale manufacturing are two distinct phenomena. Even the ancient world supported great cities. As late as the eighteenth century, commerce and transportation were more important than manufacturing to the development and prosperity of the two most important cities in the United States, Boston and New York. In the nineteenth century, many of the earliest factories located in rural areas in New England, rather than in established cities. Falling water to power their machines and a river to provide inexpensive transportation for finished goods were more critical than an urban location. Thus the earliest industrial setting in the United States was often a rural village. Sometimes entrepreneurs even constructed entirely new towns

such as Lowell, Massachusetts.⁶

A few of these sites later developed into large manufacturing centers but many others remained small towns, or were even abandoned when steam power freed industry from its dependence on falling water. Under the influence of steam engines and railroads in the late nineteenth century, manufacturing came to be more and more an urban phenomenon, where producers benefitted from greater access to markets, to a large labor supply and to transportation networks.

Nevertheless, many factories continued to operate in older, small communities and as the frontier moved west, pioneering communities established factories in remote areas, both to process raw materials and to manufacture consumer goods for local use. Even though lumbering, agriculture and mining were the dominant economic activities in frontier areas in the midwest, manufacturing for local and regional markets became a significant part of the economy.⁷

Many of these local manufacturers in the midwest employed only a few workers and were unable to compete with larger producers once the railroad opened the region to national markets. However, others clearly intended to meet more than local needs. For example, Alice E. Smith's Millstone and Saw: The Origins of Neenah-Menasha, and Charles N. Glaab and Lawrence H. Larsen's Factories in the Valley: Neenah-Menasha, 1870-1910 provide a detailed history of the development of the paper industry in several small towns along the Fox River in Wisconsin. Leaders in these settle-

ments actively sought to become major urban centers and hoped to avoid being just another small Midwestern manufacturing community.⁹ Boosterism inspired dreams of greatness in settlements throughout the Midwest, affecting real estate speculators, entrepreneurs and the populace in general.⁷

Although agriculture continued to provide most people's livelihood in the old Northwest, it is clear that by the late nineteenth century manufacturing also played an important role. Local industry not only met local needs but stimulated the commercial production of primary products and helped integrate these newly settled areas into the regional and national economies. The railroad which threatened the survival of some local industries by exposing them to national competition also provided opportunities for manufacturers in small towns to adopt large scale production methods and enter the wider competitive economy themselves. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, hundreds of manufacturers did just that, thereby creating widespread industrialization outside an urban setting. It is the nature of the industrial experience in small towns between 1880 and 1920 that is the focus of this study.

In 1890, the Superintendent of the U.S. Census announced that the department would no longer report on the extent of the frontier and on its westward movement because "at the present the unsettled area has been so broken into ...that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line."¹⁰ This announcement startled and disturbed many who were con-

vinced that the existence of a nearly unlimited supply of free land was essential to U.S. social and economic progress. Yet even as the land frontier was declared "closed," the nation was rapidly developing new frontiers, as an industrial power. Despite the panic of 1893 and the 1907 recession, the decades that followed resulted in remarkable changes in the U.S. economic system, in living styles and in population. By 1920 manufacturing employment had rivalled and surpassed employment in agriculture; more than one-half of the population lived in "urban places"; and waves of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe had crowded into central cities in the East and Midwest. The railroad had opened the West and the automobile was about to begin its transformation of American life.¹¹

Data on the volume of manufactures provide a glimpse of the scale of this industrial expansion. As shown in Table I-1, value added by manufacture in the U. S. increased more than 500 per cent between 1899 and 1919, from \$4.8 billion to more than \$25 billion (See Table I-1 for definition of value added). The greatest percentage of increase in population and manufacturing occurred in cities, especially in those larger than 10,000. But many smaller communities also experienced changes in the same direction, increasing population and increasing manufacturing employment. Individual small towns may have suffered decline, but as a group, places smaller than 10,000 continued to contribute substantially to American industrialization (Table I-2).

Table I-1 Value Added* by Manufacture in the United States

Year	Total	In Incorporated Places over 10,000 Number (per cent)	In Places Less than 10,000 Number (per cent)
1899	\$4,831,075,210	\$3,377,477,927 (69.6 per cent)	\$1,453,597,283 (30.1 per cent)
1904	\$6,293,694,753		
1909	\$8,529,260,992	\$5,999,237,370 (70.3 per cent)	\$2,530,023,622 (29.7 per cent)
1914	\$9,878,345,893	\$7,058,885,577 (71.5 per cent)	\$2,819,460,316 (28.5 per cent)
1919	\$25,041,698,490	\$18,543,530,808 (74.1 per cent)	\$6,498,167,682 (25.9 per cent)

*Value added equals the dollar value of manufactured products minus the cost of raw materials. Many economists consider this to be a better measure of the contribution of manufacturing to the economy than the gross dollar value of products because it controls for the relative cost of raw materials.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Vol. VIII, Manufactures: General Report, p. 118; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Vol. VIII, Manufactures: General Report, pp. 14, 106. Although this study covers years before 1899, in some cases the earliest data cited will be for 1899. U.S. manufacturing census data before 1899 are not strictly comparable with later data. Before 1899, census data on "manufacturing" included hand work and neighborhood producers, such as milliners, carpenters, dressmakers, and blacksmiths, whereas later censuses excluded such occupations. Explanation from Thirteenth Census, 1910, Vol. VIII, p. 18.

Between 1899 and 1919, from 25.9 to 30.1 per cent of total value added by manufacturing was produced in places smaller than 10,000 in population (Table I-1). Although there was a huge increase in the absolute value of manufacturing output in large cities (from nearly \$3.4 to \$18.5 billion, a 550 per cent increase), the volume produced in places smaller than 10,000 also increased 470 per cent, from \$1.4 billion to nearly \$6.5 billion. Despite an huge increase in population, the per cent of manufacturing produced in places of more than 10,000 grew very gradually during most of the years between 1899 and 1919. In 1910 the census noted the continuing importance of manufacturing in smaller communities in the following observation:

It is noteworthy, however, that whereas places of 10,000 or more inhabitants contained a materially larger proportion of the population of the country in 1910 than they did in 1900--37 per cent as against 31.7 Per cent--there was only a very slight increase in their proportions of the total number of manufacturing establishments, the wage earners in manufacturing industries, and the total value added by manufactures, and practically no change in their proportion of the total value of products. In other words, while these communities, considered as a group, have perhaps a little more than held their own in relative importance in manufacturing, they have not gained in this respect commensurate with their population.¹²

In other words, until World War I, the populations of places of 10,000 or more grew more rapidly than their manufacturing output. Only the years 1914-1919 witnessed a sharp increase in the percentage of manufacturing which occurred in cities greater than 10,000 in population. The industrial expansion associated with World War I established the industrial domi-

Table I-2 United States Population

Year	Total	Per cent in cities over 10,000	Per cent in places under 10,000
1890	62,622,250	29.2*	
1900	75,994,575	32	68
1910	91,972,266	37	63
1915	98,781,324	39.1	60.9
1920	105,710,620	42.3	57.7

Source: Eleventh Census, 1890, Vol. I, Part I, p. xi; Fourteenth Census, 1920, Vol. VIII, p. 106. *Per cent in cities of 8000 or more.

Table I-3 Value Added by Manufacture in Michigan

Year	Total	In Incorporated Places over 10,000 Number (per cent)	In Places Less Than 10,000 Number (per cent)
1899	\$143,725,728	\$85,008,397 (59.1 per cent)	\$58,717,331 (40.9 per cent)
1909	\$316,497,147	\$225,647,464 (71.3 per cent)	\$90,849,683 (28.7 per cent)
1914	\$493,361,368	\$313,194,451 (63.5 per cent)	\$180,166,917 (36.5 per cent)
1919	\$1,546,945,240	\$1,288,383,086 (83.3 per cent)	\$258,562,154 (16.7 per cent)

Source: Thirteenth Census, 1910, Vol. IX, pp. 547-548, 556; Fourteenth Census, 1920, Vol. IX, p. 685.

Table I-4 Michigan Population

Year	Total	Per cent in Cities over 10,000	Per cent in Places under 10,000
1890	2,093,890	23.9	76.1
1900	2,420,982	28.1	71.9
1910	2,810,173	37.1	62.9
1915	2,976,030	40.1	59.9
1920	3,668,412	51.6	48.4

Source: Thirteenth Census, 1910, Vol. IX, pp. 447, 556; Fourteenth Census, 1920, Vol. I, Population, p. 54; Vol. IX, p. 685.

nance of larger cities. By 1919, these larger urban areas had increased their share of manufacturing output from 69.9% in 1899 to 74.1% (Table I-1).

The data for Michigan offer some interesting variations on this national pattern (Tables I-3, I-4). These differences reflect both its relatively recent settlement and the disproportionate growth of cities in the southeastern part of the state. In particular, Detroit, Flint and Lansing grew very rapidly in the early twentieth century because of the growth of the automobile industry and the general expansion in heavy industry related to World War I.¹³

From 1899 to 1919, the value of Michigan production rose from \$143.7 million to \$1,500 million, more than a 1000 per cent increase, double the national average. The ratio between the value of goods produced in areas in Michigan that were greater and smaller than 10,000 also differed from the national ratio. In 1899, the proportion of manufacturing outside cities of 10,000 population in Michigan was greater than the national average--40.9 per cent compared to 30.1 per cent. By 1909, the Michigan and U.S. ratios were more similar, 28.1 per cent for Michigan and 29.6 per cent for the U.S. as a whole.

Between 1909 and 1914 there was a dramatic increase both in the absolute volume of manufactures in Michigan and in the percentage of production which occurred in places less than 10,000 in population in Michigan. By 1914, the large cities in Michigan had actually lost ground relative

to the smaller communities, whose share of manufacturing increased from 28.7 per cent in 1909 to 36.5 per cent. However, between 1914 and 1919, the booming automobile industry and the demands of World War I production resulted in an astonishing 400 per cent increase in manufacturing output in large Michigan cities, thus raising their proportion from 63.5 per cent to 83.3 per cent of the total value added by manufacturing in the state. During these same five years, smaller communities in Michigan also increased manufacturing output, but by less than 50 per cent, only half of their growth rate in the previous five years. By 1919, these smaller places provided only 16.7 per cent of the total value added, compared to 36.5 per cent in 1914 (Table I-3).

By 1919, manufacturing was much more concentrated geographically in Michigan large cities (83.3%) than in large cities in the United States as a whole (74.1%), but it was still true that large numbers of people in Michigan and throughout the country experienced industrial labor outside an urban setting (Tables I-1, I-3). Large factories required substantial capital, combined several processes under unified management in hierarchically organized work environments, and used semi-skilled labor and large-scale machine production to make standardized items. Firms in small communities addressed many of the same issues as did those in large metropolitan areas, including technological development, marketing, and labor and community relations. Although after 1920, large cities played a relatively greater role in

manufacturing, factories continued to operate in small towns in Michigan and throughout the country.¹⁴ In order to better understand their contributions to general industrial development and to the prosperity of specific communities, this study will examine selected industries in small towns in southwestern Michigan.

Industrial Villages in Michigan

In the popular mind, Michigan's importance in manufacturing is limited to its role in the automobile and related industries. These are concentrated in the southeastern part of the state, especially in Detroit, Flint, Lansing and Jackson. However, in the late nineteenth century, Michigan had a diversified manufacturing base that included the southwestern counties. In 1920, these counties contained only five cities larger than 10,000 and no one industry dominated the region.¹⁵ These counties will provide the sample for this study of industry in small towns.

A survey of the Reports of the Michigan Bureau of Labor at ten year intervals (1900, 1910, 1920) for thirteen counties in southwestern Michigan, documents the extent of the phenomenon of industrial villages in Michigan. (See map, Figure I-1.) This survey reveals dozens of manufacturing establishments which employed at least 100 persons and which were located in cities that contained fewer than 10,000 people (Table I-5). In this thirteen county area, there were thirty-seven such establishments in twenty-two towns in

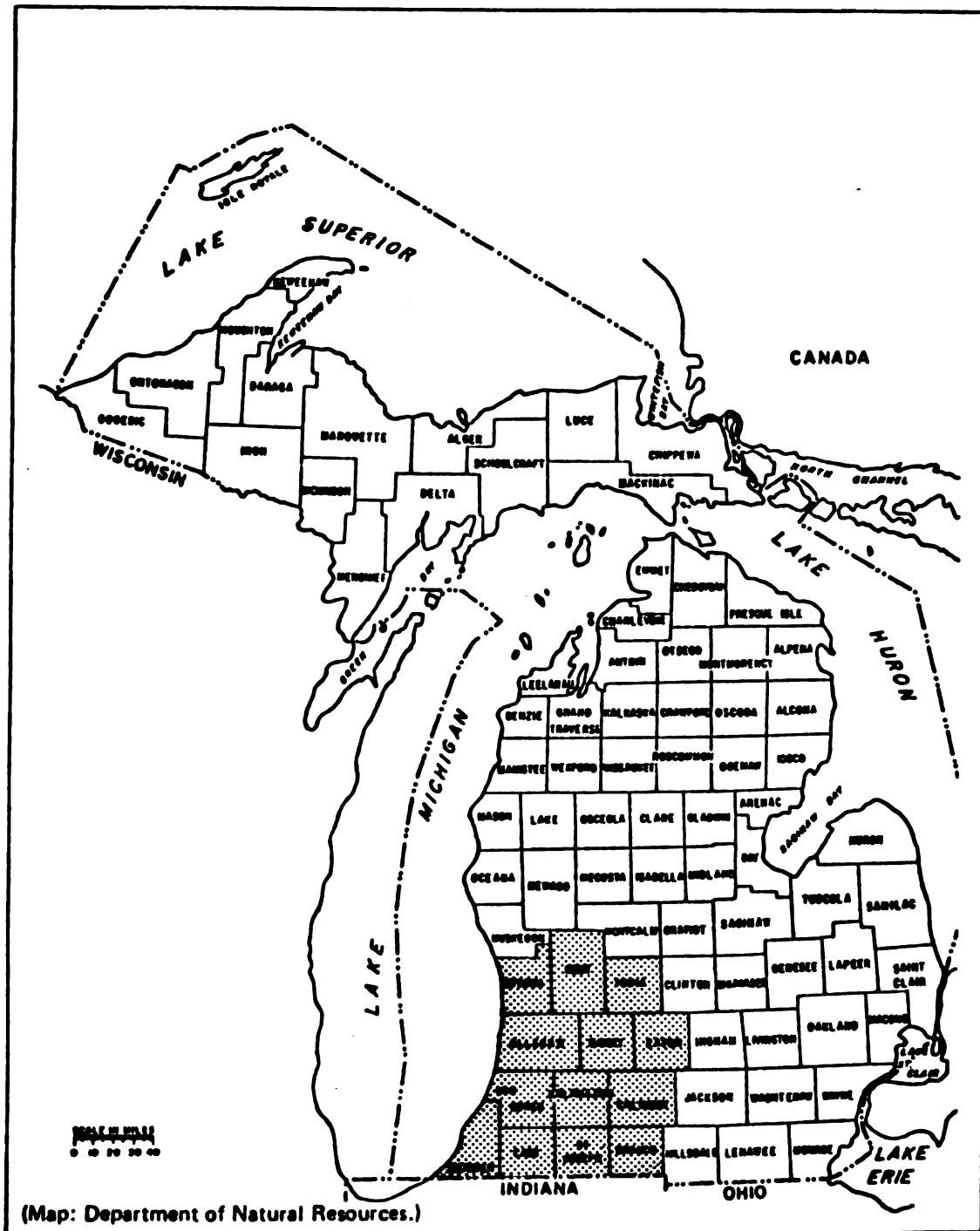


Figure I-1 Thirteen County Area

1899. In 1909, there were forty-four in twenty-four towns; and by 1919, there were seventy-four establishments located in thirty-nine different towns. Table A-1 in the Appendix provides a complete list of the seventy-four village factories, their products, locations, town populations, and numbers of employees, as recorded in the 1920 Report. These figures exclude all factories in cities larger than 10,000 which were located in this thirteen county region, cities such as Grand Rapids, Battle Creek and Kalamazoo. This tally makes no distinctions among establishments which were in operation during one, two or all three of the selected years. Even companies which continued in operation during all three sample years were not counted during a year in which they employed fewer than 100, nor when/if their cities grew larger than 10,000.

Table I-5 Number of Factories Employing 100 or More

Year	Number of Factories	Number of Sites
1899	37	22
1909	44	24
1919	74	39

Source: Michigan Bureau of Labor. Reports. 1900, 1910, 1920. The Reports contained data for previous year.

This emphasis on companies which employed 100 or more is justified for two reasons. First, a minimum workforce of 100 is large enough to be fairly certain that the establishment will fit the definition of a factory outlined above - one characterized by hierarchically organized large-scale machine production. It is also appropriate because such a

category includes most manufacturing employees during these years. Both nationally and in these Michigan counties, most manufacturers employed only a few people each, however a small number of relatively large factories produced most of the output and employed most of the workers.

Analysis of the 1919 U.S. Census of Manufactures shows that over 90 per cent of manufacturers employed 100 or fewer employees each, and together these employed only 30 per cent of the wage earners in manufacturing. The relative importance of large establishments increased dramatically for establishments larger than 101. Those employing 101-500 persons made up 4.7 per cent of the total but employed 31.2 per cent of the wage earners. In 1919 nearly 40 per cent of the wage earners were in plants which employed over 500, which represented less than 1 per cent of the total number of establishments. This pattern is particularly marked for factories larger than 1000, which represented less than one-third of 1 per cent of the total number, but employed over 26 per cent of the wage earners.¹⁴

The small towns in the thirteen county sample from southwestern Michigan reveal a similar pattern; namely, that the few largest plants employed nearly all of the industrial workers. For example, the 1920 Michigan Bureau of Labor Report, listed 56 manufacturers in Albion, Michigan (eastern Calhoun County) which employed a total of 2652 persons. Of these 56 manufacturing establishments, twenty employed fewer than five persons each, a total of 59 workers. Only five

Table I-6 Factories and Workforce Size: Albion,
Michigan, 1919

Employees per Establishment	Establishments		Total Employed	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1-4	20	35.7%	59	2.2%
5-10	18	32.1%	113	4.6%
11-20	10	17.9%	151	5.7%
21-50	2	3.6%	72	2.7%
51-100	1	1.8%	90	3.4%
over 100	5	8.9%	2157	81.3%
Total	56	100.0%	2652	100.0%

Source: Michigan. Bureau of Labor. Report. 1920.

establishments employed more than 100, but these five accounted for 2157, or 81.3 per cent of all the manufacturing workers in Albion (Table I-6).

This data is slightly distorted by the fact that the Michigan Bureau included as manufacturing certain kinds of hand and neighborhood production that were excluded in the U.S. manufacturing census. However, even if one excludes the establishments with under five employees, such as the bakery, millinery, laundry, and auto repair, the relative importance of the large employers is clear. Most of the industrial laborers in small communities worked in large, not small establishments, therefore it is reasonable to concentrate on these few large employers when analyzing industrial labor conditions in these small communities.

Aided by improved rail transportation and stimulated by markets in nearby Chicago, many small communities in south

Table I-7 Standard Industrial Classification Categories

*20	Food and Kindred Products
21	Tobacco and Tobacco Products
*22	Textile Mill Products
*23	Apparel and Related Products
*24	Lumber and Wood Products
*25	Furniture and Fixtures
*26	Paper and Allied Products
*27	Printing and Publishing
28	Chemicals and Allied Products
29	Petroleum and Coal Products
30	Rubber and Plastics Products
*31	Leather and Leather Products
*32	Stone, Clay, and Glass Products
*33	Primary Metals Products
*34	Fabricated Metals Products
*35	Non-electrical Machinery
*36	Electrical Machinery
*37	Transportation Equipment
38	Instruments and Related Products
*39	Miscellaneous Manufacturing (includes Ordnance)

Source: Albert W. Niemi, State and Regional Patterns in American Manufacturing, 1860-1900 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974), pp. 105-111. Niemi converted manufacturing census data for the years 1860 to 1900, which was divided into nearly 600 different categories, and which varied from one census to another, into one of the twenty major manufacturing industry groupings in the Standard Industrial Classification System. Such a reorganization permitted him to compare structural changes between censuses and between different regions and states (pp. ix-x).

I used Niemi's system to categorize the factories in Appendix, Table A-1 into appropriate classifications. * Marks the categories represented in Table A-1, which lists factories employing 100 or more, in towns under 10,000, in thirteen southwestern Michigan counties in 1919 (from Michigan Bureau of Labor Report, 1920).

western Michigan expanded their production and processing of primary products on a commercial scale and manufactured sophisticated consumer and capital goods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Table I-5 indicates the number of such producers in this sample, and Table A-1 and Table I-7 reveal wide diversity among these manufacturers. For example, Table A-1 lists nine paper mills and twelve manufacturers of furniture and wood products. This is not surprising since these thirteen counties had been heavily forested, mostly with hardwoods. But factories in small towns in southwestern Michigan also made pianos (2), furnaces (3), automobile parts (7), wool, cotton and silk yarn, notions, clothing and textiles (8), and specialty products such as power presses and store fixtures. These towns also made refrigerators (2), tanned leather (2), operated canneries (3), and built and repaired railway cars (2). (Numbers in parentheses refer to numbers of establishments listed in Table A-1.) Table I-7 provides a more formal measure of this diversity, since the seventy-four companies in the 1920 Report represent fifteen of the twenty categories in the Standard Industrial Classification system.

These small communities attracted many types of industry. The materials, technology, land, know-how, capital and labor necessary for these and other types of production were readily available. Steam power for production and water and rail transportation created great flexibility in choosing production sites. Both raw materials and coal for power

could easily be imported. Local business leaders commonly welcomed new industry and even solicited new factories by offering sites, tax breaks, loans and/or new buildings. They often formed organizations called "improvement associations," or "commercial clubs" to advertise their towns and negotiate with prospective industrialists. According to one historian, "Everywhere, associations of businessmen crusaded in behalf of local progress."¹⁷ In addition to these privately funded efforts, village councils offered attractive packages to new employers. In general, business leaders in small communities were enthusiastic about expanding local industry and concerned with making their towns attractive to industry by improving transportation facilities and providing water, electricity and fire protection. At a minimum, manufacturers, including the three in this study, must have thought that they had a good chance to establish successful enterprises. They did not appear to regard the small town location as an insurmountable obstacle. Each company expected to find the labor and materials, the transportation and marketing facilities they needed. In general, they were not disappointed.

CHAPTER II THE FACTORY COMES TO TOWN

This chapter discusses three specific examples of manufacturing companies that thrived in small towns in Michigan between the 1880's and 1920's. None of them used local raw materials, and all of them produced textile or apparel items for regional or national markets. Why and how did each firm choose to establish its factory in this site? How did each use advertising and marketing to create a niche for its products? What kind of relationship did each company have with its host city? What impact did these companies have on the economics and politics of their communities? What are some of the major changes that occurred in each settlement during these forty years? The answers to these questions help us understand the character of small-town industry in America.

Belding Brothers and Company and Belding Village

Belding village is located on the Flat River, in Ionia county about thirty-five miles northeast of Grand Rapids (See map, Figure II-1).¹ Between 1885 and 1832, it was the site of four Belding Brothers and Company silk mills. The surrounding area was and is heavily agricultural, not industrial. As late as 1910, 94.9 per cent of the land in Ionia County was in farms.² Nor did the silk mills cause dramatic change in county population. Its population changed little between 1890 and 1920 (Table II-1). During this period, approximately ninety per cent of Ionia County resi-

dents were born in the United States. Many were migrants, or the children of migrants, from New York and New England. In the nineteenth century, New Englanders made up a large percentage of Michigan's population and played major roles in Michigan politics, reform movements and education.³ According to Michigan historians, Dunbar and May, "Nowhere in the West did the Yankee stock predominate to the degree that it did in Michigan."⁴ The Belding family made up part of that New England migration to Michigan.

Table II-1 Ionia County Population

	1890	1900	1910	1920
Total	32,801	34,329	33,550	33,087
Native white, native parents	*29,140 88.7%	23,577 68.7%	23,405 69.8%	23,513 71.1%
Native white, foreign or mixed parents		7,348 21.4%	7,116 21.2%	6,938 21.0%
Foreign born, white	3,661 11.0%	3,308 9.6%	2,935 8.7%	2,506 7.6%
Negro	92 0.3%	95 0.3%	90 0.3%	99 0.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Compendium of the Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890, Part I, Population, p. 491; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Vol. II, Population, p. 938; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Vol. III, Population, p. 480. Table omits "Asians and other": 1890, 6; 1900, 1; 1910, 4; 1920, 31. *Parentage not specified.

Although they were most intimately associated after the silk mills opened, the village and the Belding family were connected even before 1885. Belding Brothers and Company also maintained business activities elsewhere before and

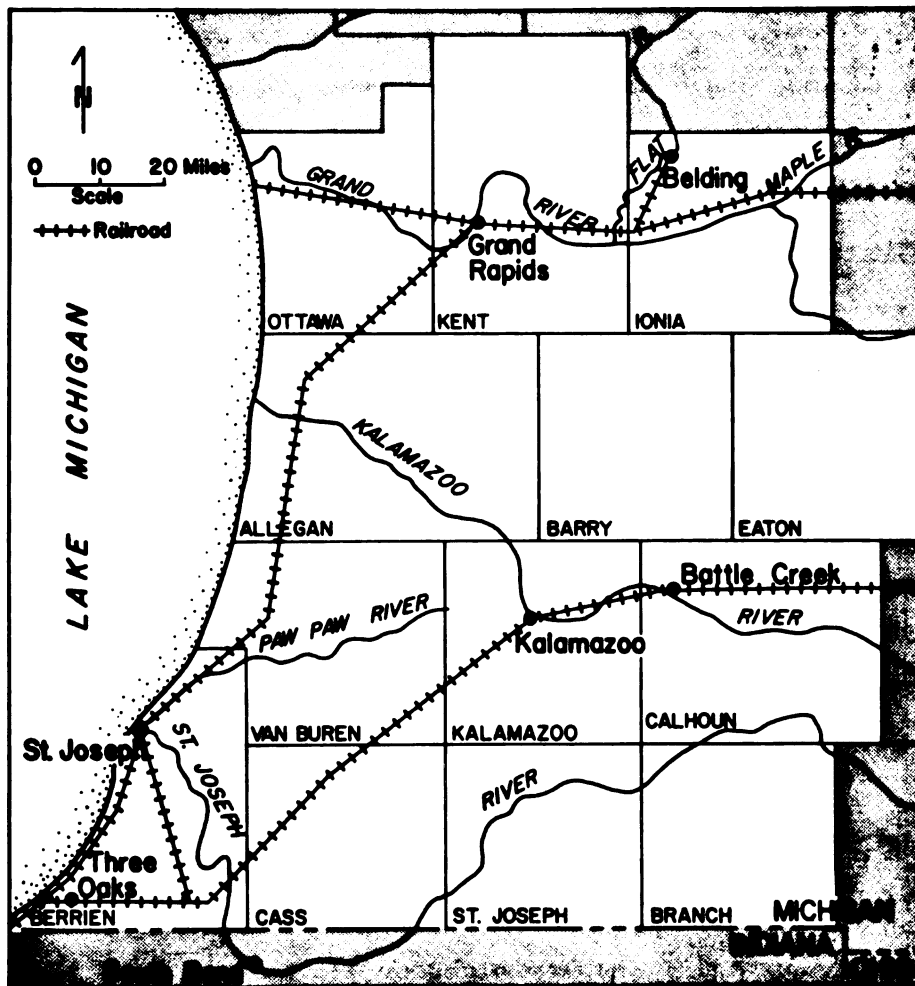


Figure II-1 Major Rivers and Railroads

during the period of manufacturing silk in Belding, Michigan.⁵ The Belding connection began in the 1850's when Hiram and Mary Wilson Belding came to the Flat River area from their farm in Massachusetts.⁶ Three of their four sons, Milo M., Hiram H., and Alvah N., helped clear some of the fifty acres their parents had purchased from an earlier settler.⁷ At this time, the settlement was known as Patterson's Mill, after Lucius Patterson, who owned a dam and saw mill there.⁸

Pioneer farming did not appeal to Milo, who soon returned east where he peddled various articles to village merchants. Back in Michigan, Hiram and Alvah also tired of farming. After Milo sent them some silk thread on credit, they began a little peddling themselves, visiting the scattered homes and villages in central Michigan.⁹ In a letter to his brother, one of them humorously remarked that "there wouldn't be any need for stores up here for a thousand years."¹⁰

Since the region was so thinly settled, their father drove them in the wagon several miles from their farm and then dropped them off to begin walking. They spent each day travelling separate routes, met each evening at a pre-arranged spot, and returned home only several days later. Sales at individual farms were light, but sales to merchants in small settlements made their trips worth while.¹¹

Although at times they carried a variety of goods, they gradually concentrated on silk thread and fabric because

they could obtain more credit for these items through their brother.¹² There was little money or occasion for fancy clothes and decorations in frontier areas, but a small amount of silk was always in demand. It was common for adults to have one good silk dress, or a suit or coat with a silk lining. New pieces of fabric were needed to mend and alter older garments. Silk thread was strong enough to make it a practical as well as a luxury choice at a time when high quality cotton thread was not yet available.

As business improved, they first hired assistants, then gave up walking, bought horses and wagons and carried their goods in trunks instead of knapsacks. They were making money, but there were still relatively few customers in the limited area around Patterson's Mill. They were encouraged by the success of these local trips to try an eight-month sales expedition to stores in Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Since they came home with money in their pockets, they decided to expand their business.¹³

Belding Brothers and Company officially came into existence in 1863 when their brother Milo joined Alvah and Hiram. Milo came to Chicago to manage the new sales office there. At first, Hiram and Alvah stayed on the road, as they had since their first small sales trips around Patterson's Mills. The fourth brother, David, joined the partnership soon after this and took charge of a second distribution center in Cincinnati. By the end of the century they had opened additional offices in New York, St. Paul, St.

Louis, San Francisco, Boston, Philadelphia, and Montreal.¹⁴

In order to improve the company's control over the quality of their goods and to insure prompt delivery, they decided to manufacture their own silk thread. Since none of them had any experience in a silk mill, they formed a partnership with one of their suppliers, E. R. Rose, in 1864. This partnership soon failed and Belding Brothers and Company began manufacturing silk thread on its own in 1866. Alvah was given the job of managing their first mill in Rockville, Connecticut.¹⁵

While Belding Brothers and Company was getting established as a manufacturer as well as merchant of silk thread, the village on the Flat River in Otisco Township had changed little since their parents had arrived ten years earlier. Agriculture and lumbering were the chief economic activities, and the population remained small. The 1870 census for Otisco Township listed only 1570 persons, 342 families.¹⁶ According to an early twentieth-century county history, the settlement itself had only thirteen families in 1871.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Belding brothers (Hiram, Milo, Alvah) saw business opportunities in the little community. In 1868, they began buying land to divide into town lots. According to the local newspaper, Hiram H. Belding was also instrumental in bringing a furniture factory and a new saw mill to the village. In 1871, Hiram organized the construction of a one and one-half mile railroad to link the village with the main line. Since the railroad provided freight

service only, he and a partner, George W. Ellis, formed the Belding Horse Car Company to provide passenger service to the main railroad line.¹⁸ According to the newspaper in a nearby town, it was at this time in 1871 that the village adopted the name "Belding," in honor of the Belding Brothers, "silk merchants of New York, Chicago and Cincinnati, who are largely interested in the place."¹⁹ The Belding brothers no longer lived there, yet they retained an "interest" in and even invested (or speculated) in village development. Hiram, who had taken over the Chicago office when the company sent Milo to New York, spent several months in the summer supervising these investments.²⁰

Belding village was located on the southern edge of one of Michigan's great pine forests. The Flat River, a tributary of the Grand River, drained one of the regions that was logged in the 1870's and 1880's. Each spring the river was jammed with logs being floated down to sawmills.²¹ The Belding newspaper estimated that 400 men worked driving logs on the Flat River in 1880.²² The railroad and the large new saw mill built by the New York firm of Wilson, Luther and Wilson gave a boost to Belding. The Wilson, Luther and Wilson mill could cut over fifty thousand board feet of lumber a day, and shipped approximately 600,000 feet per year. By 1879, they employed fifty to one hundred men year around, in lumber camps and in the mill.²³

Lumbering and farming were mutually supporting at this time. Prospective farmers were eager to purchase cut-over

lands and avoid the trouble of clearing the trees themselves. Some farmers worked as lumberjacks during the winter, glad of the opportunity to earn cash. Farmers also earned cash by selling food to the logging camps and wheat to grain dealers.²⁴ In 1879 Belding had three grain dealers.²⁵ The largest of these, Leonard and Divine, shipped 100,000 bushels of wheat in 1878 and 126,000 bushels in 1879.²⁶ Despite the volume of grain and lumber that moved through it, the village was still primarily a small service center for farmers and lumbermen. In 1879, the Belding Home News' Business Directory listed typical village businesses and no manufacturing. There was a banker, a general store and a livery stable. One could buy hats, boots, harnesses and the services of a doctor, blacksmith, painter and barber.²⁷ According to the 1880 census, there were 562 people in Belding.²⁸ The 1879 school district census counted 650, including 188 school-age children.²⁹

Meanwhile, Belding Brothers and Company established a second mill in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1872.³⁰ The late nineteenth century proved to be a good time to enter silk manufacturing in the United States. Improved technology had lowered production costs while home decorating and dress fashions encouraged increased consumption. Domestic producers benefitted from a tariff of fifty per cent on imported silk. The value of domestic silk products increased more than twenty-fold between 1870 and 1914.³¹ Belding Brothers and Company soon became well known for its

high quality thread and fabrics, and won prizes at state, national and international exhibits.³²

Until 1885, the Belding brothers' investments in the village and their silk business had been separate operations. These two activities became linked in 1885 when the company announced its plan to build both a thread mill and a hotel in Belding. Speaking to a reporter in 1901, Alvah Belding described how Belding became Michigan's "Silk City."

One day my brother and I came back here to Belding, just to see the town. That was about sixteen years ago--oh, yes, we're old men now, but there was something that drew us back, remembrances of our boyhood, I suppose. Anyway we looked over what had once been the homestead farm. It had grown into quite a village of market gardeners and small farmers. Said I to my brother: "What say you to building a mill here, just to help the old town along?" He thought it a good idea. There's where the sentiment came in. Of course a business can't be conducted along sentimental lines alone. A little hard-headed commercial sense must come in somewhere so we began to figure. We learned that we could take care of our help more cheaply here than in the east. We didn't need to think much more about it. Within three months ground was broken for the mill. We told the people here we had come back to the old boyhood home to help the town along; told them we'd employ about 400 hands and build a hotel and do a few more things, to show the Belding folks we'd not deserted them for good. We've done it sir.³³

Indeed there were several "hard-headed commercial" reasons why Belding would make a good manufacturing site. There was plenty of land available, as well as water, water power and railroad service.³⁴ The Belding brothers already owned about one-quarter of the land in the village, including lots on Main Street and fronting property on both sides of the river.³⁵ The village was relatively close to Chica-

go, a distribution center for Belding Brothers and Company. It was apparent that the population of the midwest region would continue to increase, promising even better markets. And last, there was no concern over labor. The company expected that people from the surrounding area would seek out jobs, and they were not mistaken. Surrounding farms supplied unskilled labor and the brothers were quite frank about the fact that they could "take care of [their] help more cheaply [in Belding] than in the east."

In 1885, Frederick A. Washburn came from the Belding company's New England mills to supervise the construction of the new mill in Michigan. Inexplicably this first mill was immediately sold to George Richardson of Chicago, a former manager of Belding Brothers and Company's Cincinnati office. Washburn became Richardson's employee and the chief superintendent of the mill until he retired in 1920. Belding Brothers and Company constructed their own thread mill in 1890, a weaving mill in 1901 and converted an existing building for use as a second weaving mill in 1909. In the twentieth century, Belding Brothers and Company reacquired the Richardson mill and renamed it Mill #4. During the twenty years when the companies were legally separate, their directors and superintendents were close associates. Written records and interviews with villagers confirm that the Richardson Mill was equipped and managed much like those of Belding Brothers and Company.³⁴ Given these similarities, this study discusses all the silk mills in Belding as if

they had been continuously managed by Belding Brothers and Company.

The Belding brothers also continued real estate development and other investments in the village. In 1884, Hiram Hurlbert Belding was a part owner and President of the Belding Manufacturing Company, which was later absorbed by the Belding-Hall Manufacturing Company. After the Hotel Belding was completed in 1888, it was turned over to the newly formed Belding Land and Improvement Company, formed by Hiram, Alvah, Milo (senior), and Milo (junior). Besides operating the Hotel, the Belding Land and Improvement Company sold village lots and constructed downtown business buildings. Alvah Belding and Milo Belding, Jr. served on the Board of Directors of the Belding Savings Bank. The company also built dormitories and single family homes for their employees.³⁷

There is no evidence that the family or Belding Brothers and Company directly participated in village politics, but its interests must always have been a consideration. The Belding brothers were probably temperance men, since their hotel never served liquor, but they did not campaign for prohibition in the village.³⁸ Publicly, the company supported village improvements, even those that cost it money, such as street paving and sewers.³⁹ The 1901 weaving mill was built in Belding on the condition that it would be exempt from taxes for ten years. In exchange, the company gave the city ten acres of land for a city park.⁴⁰ The

company also received some tax relief (about \$900) for the second weaving mill, ten years later.⁴¹ Such tax breaks were common practice in Belding and in other cities. In 1897, the village had offered new industries a free building and power plant for five years, plus moving expenses and \$1000.⁴² Private subscribers had paid the taxes for another village factory for ten years.⁴³

In 1920, Belding was a pleasant village with paved streets, electricity and plenty of open space. A city park bordered the lovely Flat River which winds through the town.⁴⁴ Belding offered services to nearby farmers, but was also a factory village that manufactured silk, refrigerators, baskets and shoes (Appendix, Table A-1). With the construction of new factories, Belding's population expanded rapidly in the late nineteenth century, then stabilized. From 562 in 1880, it grew to 1,730 in 1890, 3,283 in 1900, 4,119 in 1910, and 3911 in 1920.⁴⁵ The four silk mills were by far the most important industry. In 1910, they employed approximately 1200 persons, a number equal to more than a quarter of the village's population. For at least ten years (1907-1916), the silk mills employed more people than all other factories combined (See Appendix, Tables A-1 and A-2). After the establishment of the Richardson Silk Company in 1886, the demand for silk and the supply of labor supported the expansion of silk manufacture in Belding for more than thirty years.

Early in its history, Belding Brothers and Company

decided to limit itself to making and selling only high quality staple silk products, thus avoiding the severe market fluctuations that affected specialty and fad items.⁴⁶ Eventually it sold only its own branded products so it could guarantee both their quality and availability. At first its mills produced only hand-sewing silk for embroidery, crocheting and darning, and machine-sewing thread.⁴⁷ Later it added weaving mills which produced plain and striped silks for linings, dresses, petticoats and veils. Belding Brothers and Company advertising stressed the durability of its silk. The Company used only pure dyes, and refused to add the metallic salts used by some manufacturers, because although these salts added lustre and weight to the fabric, they also made it susceptible to fading and wear. The Belding name was woven into the selvage of all its fabric and the company promised to replace any that split, ripped or tore.⁴⁸

In addition to its mills in Michigan, Belding Brothers and Company also operated mills in Massachusetts, Connecticut, California and Canada.⁴⁹ In 1925, eleven branch offices sold its nationally advertised products to distributors in every state. With estimated annual sales of \$15,000,000 it claimed to be the largest manufacturer of silk sewing thread in the United States.⁵⁰

In 1925, when the surviving family members sold their controlling interest in the company for \$10,000,000, the company had made a profit every year except one since it had

been established in 1863.²¹ The group of bankers who purchased the company in 1925 and the villagers who depended on the mills were not so fortunate. Competition from synthetic fibers and the declining demand brought on by the depression led the new owners, who had no personal ties to Belding, to close the company mills there in 1932.²² But in the optimism that colored hopes in the nineteenth century, Belding Brothers and Company seemed to be a rising and sure star, as indeed it was for many years.

Cooper-Wells Hosiery Company and St. Joseph

Both St. Joseph, the site of the Cooper-Wells Company, and Three Oaks, the site of the Warren Featherbone Company, are in Berrien County, an agricultural region in the extreme southwestern corner of Michigan. As late as 1910, 91.5 per cent of the land was in farms.²³ In the nineteenth century it was attractive to settlers because of its good farm land, abundant timber and streams. After 1852 it also had railroad connections to Chicago and Detroit, a condition that aided farms, commerce and industry (See map, Figure II-1). Berrien County more than doubled in population between 1890 and 1920. Over 97 per cent of its residents were white and 85 per cent were native born (Table II-2). Germans made up the largest single group of foreign born.²⁴ Native born Berrien County residents were likely to have been Yankees from New York or New England, or migrants from Indiana or Ohio.²⁵

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Table II-2 Berrien County Population

	1890	1900	1910	1920
Total	41,285	49,165	53,622	62,653
Native white, native parents	*37,470 90.7%	29,162 59.3%	30,886 57.6%	36,190 57.7%
Native white, foreign or mixed parents		12,229 24.9%	14,038 26.2%	16,857 26.9%
Foreign born, white	5,815 14.0%	7,111 14.5%	7,955 14.8%	8,769 13.9%
Negro	625 1.5%	647 1.3%	713 1.3%	815 1.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Compendium of the Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890, Part I, Population, p. 491; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Vol. II, Population, p. 934; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Vol. III, Population, p. 480. Table omits "Asians and others": 1890, 33; 1900, 16; 1910, 30; 1920, 22. *Parentage not specified.

St. Joseph, Michigan sits on a high bluff overlooking Lake Michigan, south of the mouth of the St. Joseph River (See map, Figure II-1). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was an important transportation center, fruit market and resort as well as the home of the Cooper-Wells Hosiery Company, one of the largest knitting companies in the state.²⁴

During the period of heavy migration into Michigan in the 1830's and 1840's, St. Joseph had served as the only port of entry for settlements up to fifty miles inland. Supplies came over the Erie Canal to Buffalo, New York, and then by sailing vessel to St. Joseph. Until railroads were built, all freight coming to or from Kalamazoo, Schoolcraft,

Niles and Paw Paw in Michigan and South Bend, Indiana, passed through St. Joseph and up the St. Joseph or Paw Paw Rivers in flat-bottomed boats that were poled or rowed upstream. These boats brought in supplies for farmers, and carried out substantial quantities of agricultural products.⁸⁷

St. Joseph lost its transportation monopoly over inland locations in the 1850's when the Michigan Central Railroad reached Chicago, bypassing St. Joseph. The beginning of a commercial fruit industry revived river traffic to some degree in the 1860's and 1870's, but the railroad had taken over much of the workaday transportation needs of the area. After the Civil War, the growth of Chicago and the development of passenger steamships stimulated a new expansion of lake traffic at the port of St. Joseph.⁸⁸ By 1880, the village of St. Joseph in Berrien County had a population of 2603.⁸⁹ It had become primarily a Lake Michigan resort and a marketing center for the expanding west Michigan fruit belt. Visitors to its beaches and mineral springs supported several hotels and an opera house. Peaches, fruit packages, wooden tubs, lumber and fish were its main exports. The Chicago and West Michigan Railroad and twice-daily steamer service to Chicago were essential to its economy. A second village, Benton Harbor, had developed across the St. Joseph River (on the north side), adding more population, production and commerce and challenging St. Joseph's leadership in the area.⁹⁰

Local businessmen were aware that they needed additional bases for growth to supplement the small shops, hotels, saloons, services, and export houses that formed the core of the village economy. Their own self-interest encouraged them to try to attract new industry and employment to the area. One of these local boosters was the newspaperman, Leonard J. Merchant.⁴¹

In 1877, Merchant published a notice in his paper in which he proposed the formation of a Village Improvement Association. Abel W. Wells, a manufacturer of baskets and wooden boxes, who had emigrated from Canada about twelve years earlier, called the meeting which led to the creation of the St. Joseph Improvement and Benefit Association. The first officers included Abel W. Wells (president) and Samuel Thrall Cooper (vice-president), who would later be partners in the Cooper-Wells Hosiery Company. One of the Association's first projects was to distribute 3000 circulars which outlined St. Joseph's advantages as an industrial site and which Merchant had written, printed and donated.⁴² This was the first of a series of civic improvement clubs which over the next forty years, encouraged investment in St. Joseph, advertised it in other communities, and supported city improvements such as paved streets, electricity, water works, and garbage collection.⁴³

Early in 1878, the Association persuaded two manufacturers whose buildings had recently burned down to relocate in St. Joseph. One of these, A. H. Morrison's Wooden Ware

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Works, which had previously been in Alma, Michigan, thrived only briefly in St. Joseph until it burned down again and was not rebuilt. However, for several years, it manufactured pails, tubs, handles and clothes pins, and employed over 100 people. Later an even more prosperous company, Truscott Boat Manufacturing, built on the abandoned site.❧❧

The Association's greatest success was the establishment in 1878 of the Cooper-Wells Hosiery Company, which became the largest single employer in the city and operated in St. Joseph until the 1950's. Again, the Association took advantage of an opportunity created by a fire, and persuaded those associated with a woolen and knitting mill which had burned down in a nearby town (Niles) to move to new quarters in St. Joseph. Samuel Thrall Cooper, vice-president of the Association, and his sons Willis and Henry, were the original owners of this operation, capitalized at only \$15,000. At first the new firm was known by several names, among them, S. T. Cooper & Sons, and The St. Joseph Knitting and Spinning Works. The next year, when Abel W. Wells, president of the Association, invested in the mill, it became known as Cooper-Wells and Company. By 1883, approximately 240 people were employed making cotton and woolen hosiery. The company's success attracted other investors, who purchased \$150,000 worth of stock when the firm incorporated in 1889.❧❧

Although the Cooper name remained for over sixty years, the Cooper family involvement in the company lasted less

than twenty years. Samuel Thrall Cooper (1824-1892) retired from over twenty-five years service as a Methodist minister in Indiana and moved with his family to St. Joseph about 1871. This hosiery mill appears to have been Cooper's first business venture and he withdrew from the firm when it was incorporated in 1889. After his father left the business in 1889, Willis served as secretary and treasurer in the new company. Five years later, he too resigned from Cooper-Wells and Company, and sold his interest in the firm to Wells, and to another partner, George D. Mayo. Although no longer owners of a knitting mill, the Coopers apparently liked the knitting industry, because Willis immediately became the manager of the Chicago-Rockford Hosiery Company in Kenosha, Wisconsin. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, his brothers, Henry C. and Charles F., also moved there, and Charles became the superintendent of the Chicago-Rockford Hosiery Company.¶¶

Abel W. Wells' involvement in the hosiery mill may have been facilitated by Cooper's eldest son, Willis W., who had previously established a business partnership with Wells and others to manufacture fruit packages. Willis continued in this partnership for about ten years, from 1872 to 1882. During this time, he also joined his father and brother Henry in establishing the St. Joseph Knitting and Spinning Works.¶?

After 1894, Abel Wells was the dominant force in the Cooper-Wells Company, serving both as President and General

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Manager. Wells had been born in Canada in 1840, and came to the United States when he was twenty-six. Two years later, he made his home in St. Joseph and began a career as an entrepreneur, banker, industrialist and community booster. Although it was a large part of his estate, the knitting mill was not Wells' only business interest. For over twenty-five years, he was President of the Union Banking Company (capitalized at \$50,000), one of two banks in St. Joseph. He was also one of the owners of Wells, Higman and Company, which manufactured fruit packages, and which had annual sales of approximately \$25,000 in the early twentieth century. Wells had also invested in companies which manufactured fruit packages in Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and Texas. When he died in 1912, he left an estate estimated at over \$1,000,000. A. W. Wells served at least one term as Township Supervisor (1883). He supported the activities of the St. Joseph Board of Trade both by holding office and by contributing money. In 1887, he gave \$500 to help bring a railroad to St. Joseph. He was also active in the temperance movement. In 1884 he signed an abstinence pledge and later served as Secretary of the Law and Order League of St. Joseph and Vicinity, an organization to pressure local prosecutors and police to enforce liquor laws.⁴⁰

His son, James Ogden Wells, a 1901 Harvard graduate, continued this tradition of business and community involvement. Like his father, he was a temperance advocate. He and the two younger Cooper boys and the son of his father's

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business partner Higman were members of the Young Men's Prohibition Club. Later, he served on the city council and as Mayor. In 1915, when St. Joseph built a new city hall, he personally supplied the funds to furnish the new council room and the police headquarters. In 1919, he donated \$1500 and five acres of land for an athletic field for the new public high school. James O. Wells was also a major force behind the financing and construction of the newest and finest hotel in St. Joseph, the Whitcomb. He held a succession of posts at Cooper-Wells, including member of the board of directors, assistant plant superintendent, vice-president, and assistant manager. He gradually took over the day-to-day management of the company and inherited a large share of its stock when his father died in 1912. He was actively running the company until his sudden death in 1928, at age fifty-two. The estimated value of his estate was \$2,000,000.♦

The success of Cooper-Wells depended on manufacturing good-quality, low-cost basic knit goods, steady production, gradual diversification and active marketing. Its staple product was an extensive line of stockings for men, women, and children. One of its earliest and best-selling products was a brand of boys' black stockings called "Iron-clad." The battleship trademark emphasized these stockings' durability and long wear. In the 1880's, the company responded to seasonal demand by knitting cotton (purchased in Nashville) from January to July, and knitting wool (bought in

Chicago), during the rest of the year. Cooper-Wells made stockings in many different weights, lengths, and patterns in addition to the "Ironclad". A 1907 state Report said the company made 280 different styles of stockings. And a sales brochure from 1909 lists several hundred items, including mufflers, leggings, mittens and knit hats. Later Cooper-Wells added a line of sheer womens' stockings called "Admiration hose," and was one of the first companies to make nylon stockings.⁷⁰

Output at Cooper-Wells increased from 200 dozen pair per day in 1879 to 400 dozen per day in 1889. In 1899, when semi-automatic knitting machines replaced the original hand-operated units, capacity increased again, to 600 dozen pair per day. These new machines had been developed by George Mayo, one of the owners of Cooper-Wells and Company. Mayo continued to improve his machine until he had perfected a fully automatic one in 1903. The introduction of 200 of these fully automatic knitting machines increased output to 1100 dozen pair per day in 1903, and 1500 dozen pair per day in 1906. By the early twentieth century, Cooper-Wells was distributing its products throughout the midwest and the west, and later expanded into the national market. In 1917 the company made before-tax profits of \$388,323 on net sales of \$1,756,928. It continued to do well under its new owners, Gustave and Louis Frankel, who purchased it after the death of James O. Wells. Into the 1940's and 1950's, Admiration brand hosiery was recognized as one of the oldest and

best quality national brands.⁷¹

The Cooper-Wells Hosiery mill seems to have fully satisfied the hopes of the St. Joseph Improvement and Benefit Association. Employment at Cooper-Wells rose from 293 in 1899, to 441 in 1909, and to 517 in 1919 (Appendix, Table A-3). During the same period, the number of manufacturing establishments in St. Joseph increased from 10 in 1899, to 26 in 1909, and 50 in 1919, and the number of manufacturing jobs increased from 566 in 1899 to 1508 in 1919 (Appendix, Table A-1). Cooper-Wells and Company remained the largest single employer, whose 500 employees worked in a complex of buildings which included a power plant, dye house, storage, and shipping departments, as well as the knitting mill proper. Nevertheless, St. Joseph did develop a diverse industrial sector which produced machinery, novelties, boxes, printed matter, boats, and auto parts.⁷²

Other changes between 1880 and 1920 included an increase in population, new construction, improved transportation, recreation and city services. St. Joseph seemed to have fulfilled the predictions of its local commercial boosters. In 1883, the St. Joseph Traveler-Herald anticipated a prosperous future for the village, based on "increased population and extended industries."⁷³ St. Joseph's population grew from 2,603 in 1880 to 3,733 in 1890, 5,155 in 1900, 5,936 in 1910, and 7,251 in 1920, making it the largest of the three sites in this study.⁷⁴ Reflecting the general economic expansion, the village built new churches,

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schools, banks, a new city hall, and new commercial and retail buildings. Railroads and dock facilities were improved. Paved streets, an opera house, bandstand, and park appealed to resort visitors. Water, sewer, firefighting and garbage collection were provided as well. During this period, a local newspaper said that St. Joseph was "not a slow town" and "not a boom town," but experienced "sure and substantial growth."⁷⁶ The steady employment provided by Cooper-Wells and Company was a major contributor to this condition.

Warren Featherbone Company and Three Oaks Village

Three Oaks is a small village in the extreme southwestern corner of Michigan, about five miles from Lake Michigan and from the Indiana border (See map, Figure II-1). It never became a boom town, or even a city; its population grew from 474 in 1880 to only 1362 in 1920.⁷⁶ However, it was well known around the turn of the century as the home of the Warren Featherbone Company. Featherbone is unknown to most people today, but this stiffening made from turkey feathers was a nearly indispensable aid to making fashionable women's garments for forty years. It was the chance occurrence that Featherbone's inventor, Edward Kirk Warren, lived in Three Oaks, rather than any overwhelming material or economic advantage which made Three Oaks the site of the Warren Featherbone Company.⁷⁷

Three Oaks developed in the middle of one of the finest hardwood forests in Michigan. The Michigan Central Railroad

had opened the area to settlement and to large-scale lumbering in the 1850's. Within thirty years, most of the forest had been cut down, and the wood sold for housing, furniture or fuel. Some timber was used locally, but most was exported to Chicago or used to provide steam power. The Michigan Central itself purchased tremendous quantities of cordwood, using some in its own steam engines, and reselling the rest to Lake Michigan steam boat operators.⁷⁰

One of the men who organized the cutting and sale of timber in this area was Henry Chamberlain, future father-in-law of Edward Kirk Warren. While still in his twenties, Chamberlain held a number of official positions: township supervisor, representative to the state legislature, justice of the peace, and mail agent for the Michigan Central Railroad. He also owned hundreds of heavily forested acres along the railroad right-of-way in Berrien county and contracted to sell cordwood to the railroad in 1850. He built a home and a store at his delivery site. Originally known as Chamberlain's Side Track, this clearing developed into the village of Three Oaks, which was incorporated in 1867. In addition to the railroad, north-south and east-west roads linked the new village to nearby farms and settlements. There were also a few stores, a warehouse, a post office, several churches, and a school.⁷¹

Edward Kirk Warren literally grew up with Three Oaks. His parents brought him to Michigan from their home in Vermont in 1858 when he was eleven years old. His father

was a Congregational minister who had been sent to Three Oaks as a Home Missionary. The family lived for many years in a log cabin in the wilderness, with few neighbors or social contacts. In later years, Warren remarked humorously that there were so few people in the region that the Young Men's Sunday School Class consisted of four young ladies and himself. When he was seventeen, Warren became a full-time clerk and apprentice at Henry Chamberlain's store in Three Oaks. For the next nineteen years, until he began Warren Featherbone and Company in 1883, he worked in, or was a partner in, or owner of, one of the general stores in Three Oaks.°°

Edward K. Warren reported that it was his experience as a dry goods merchant that made him aware of the potential market for a product like featherbone. Before the development of featherbone, dressmakers had used whalebone and other kinds of bone, as well as horn, rubber, steel and rattan to provide stiffness and shaping. These materials had to be inserted into separate casings by hand and removed for each washing. The most widely used substance, whalebone, was made from a horny, comblike structure found in the jaws of baleen whales. The declining number of these whales, and the substitution of kerosene for whale oil in lamps, reduced the supply and increased the price of whalebone. In addition to being expensive, whalebone gradually became dry and brittle, annoying retailers, who could not sell it in that condition, and dressmakers and clients,

because it was no longer serviceable. Warren had noticed this himself and began looking for a substitute that was inexpensive, easy to use and durable. The need for stays and stiffening in so many portions of women's attire in the late nineteenth century promised a large market and correspondingly large profits to the manufacturer of an appropriate product.¹

Warren reported that he had also observed that feather duster factories and poultry houses threw away tons of feathers that were too stiff to be used in dusters. He proposed to use the feathers discarded by these factories to make "an elastic substance to take the place of whalebone."² His original process involved removing the feathers from the quills, cutting the quills into strips, and binding these together with thread into a continuous long strip. Company advertising featured turkeys as the raw material for featherbone, but goose feathers were also suitable.³

When production began in 1883, there were probably quite a few jokes about Warren's plan to process turkey quills into a stiffening for women's apparel. The editor of the Three Oaks Sun remarked, "No doubt quills will be fed in at one end and ready-made corsets be discharged from the other."⁴ To the surprise of many, the company expanded production throughout the first year of operation. The number of employees increased from eight to seventy-five, and orders came in steadily. The factory even had to shut

down for a while when it had used up its supply of quills. The local labor force was soon absorbed and Warren recruited twenty-five young women from neighboring towns. As the company added new equipment and storage facilities, Three Oaks anticipated a new kind of prosperity from this industry that processed turkey feathers.**

The town offered its enthusiastic support in 1885, when Warren formed a partnership with a whip maker from New York to produce a buggy whip made of featherbone. The newspaper editor, William K. Sawyer, led a committee of Three Oaks citizens to urge Warren to locate this new enterprise in Three Oaks also. Similar requests were made from committees from Michigan City, Indiana, and from many Michigan communities, including St. Joseph, Grand Rapids, Saginaw and Niles. These visitors offered a variety of inducements, ranging from free factory sites and buildings, to promises to purchase stock in the whip company. For their part, Three Oaks villagers and farmers subscribed \$10,000 for stock in the new company. The Three Oaks newspaper argued that if the whip factory were established elsewhere, the existing featherbone plant would move. Three Oaks need not have worried, the new whip factory was indeed built there near the other featherbone building.**

Unfortunately, the great expectations that accompanied these events were not immediately satisfied. By 1887, the whip company was making thirty different styles of whips and reported increasing demand, but still found 1887 a "terrible

hard year for the whip business."⁷ A brief business status report for 1892 indicated that their three-story frame building could accommodate one hundred, but currently employed only forty."⁸

In 1892, the stockholders accepted an offer to buy the whip company, but the sale did not go through."⁹ Apparently business did not improve significantly in the following years. By 1897, the Warren Featherbone Whip Company had ceased manufacturing whips in Three Oaks. Instead, the Warren Featherbone Company sold featherbone material to a succession of whip companies and licensed these firms to use the Warren Featherbone trademark. This practice continued for a decade or more and brought some profit to the company, but was a far cry from fulfilling the original hopes for the Featherbone Whip Company in Three Oaks."¹⁰

Despite initial successes in 1884, the Warren Featherbone Company also faced substantial production, marketing and financial difficulties. Years of effort, experimentation, invention and testing were necessary to develop the machinery and processes to make featherbone. E.K. Warren and his partner, George Holden invented, built and tested these machines in their own machine shop in Three Oaks."¹¹ They launched a widespread advertising campaign in hundreds of magazines and newspapers to introduce featherbone as a substitute for whalebone."¹² In 1887, a group of Chicago investors loaned the company \$100,000 to finance these early development costs. Despite their efforts, until 1893 they

were unable to match the quality of whalebone, or even of the recently introduced and less expensive steel stays."⁷³

By 1891, the company was in deep financial trouble. Despite substantial advertising efforts and the expense of providing free demonstrations in major cities, featherbone sales had declined and merchants returned quantities of unsold materials. Technical difficulties continued to resist solution. The split turkey quills were of uneven thickness, and it was difficult to bind them into a smooth, even, flexible strand. During a 1906 patent infringement trial, Edward K. Warren described pre-1893 featherbone as "crude, thick, uneven, without uniform edges or smoothness." (Advertising at the time was less frank about featherbone's drawbacks). The plain featherbone was unsightly, and in the finer grades, limp as well. When treated with glue, it became stiff, smelly and sticky. Covering it with ribbon or fabric improved its appearance but not its serviceability. So many merchants, dressmakers, and customers had had unsatisfactory experiences with featherbone that when Warren opened new demonstration centers in 1892, he called them "Queen Isabella Dress Boning Parlors," and deliberately omitted the word "featherbone." He explained, "The word featherbone had even become a word of reproach rather than one of favor and satisfaction which I had so fondly dreamed that it would carry with it."⁷⁴ In 1893, George Frost and Company, which had been the major buyer of featherbone corset bone, cancelled their account. Total sales in 1893

were only \$76,000, down from \$125,000 in 1892. The company was in a serious financial condition, facing debts of nearly \$90,000 and having few assets to cover them. E. K. Warren had to use his personal credit to refinance the company's debts.⁷⁵

At this critical point in late 1893, the company finally developed a product that was smooth, uniform, flexible and durable enough to make excellent corset and dress stays. After ten years of experimentation, frustration and market failure a new production process made featherbone a success. In this process, the original featherbone was sized with glue, dried, heated until it was soft and then molded into a uniform and permanent shape.⁷⁶ As Warren had hoped, it proved to be lightweight, flexible, washable and relatively inexpensive. It could be cut with scissors and sewn directly into the seams of garments by hand or machine. As fashions changed, the company devised new product lines that complemented current styles. Dozens of widths, different coverings and various degrees of stiffness recommended its use in bonnets, collars, bustles, corsets, sleeves, brasieres, hoops, fancy trims, belts, and in the seams of tight fitting gowns.⁷⁷

The company used every medium available to it to advertise this new, improved featherbone. It supplied free print-ready advertisements to retailers to encourage them to take out ads in their local newspapers. It supplemented early publications such as, Featherbone: A Novel Product

and How It is Used, with seasonal editions of Featherbone Magazinet (first published in 1893) and Warren's News.⁹⁸

Table II-3 Featherbone Sales

1891	\$ 83,972
1892	\$125,936
1893	\$ 76,729
1894	\$134,250
1895	\$275,585
1896	\$256,545
1897	\$295,244
1898	\$378,190
1899	\$502,873
1900	\$721,526
1901	\$844,174
1902	\$873,540

Source: U.S. Circuit Court, Northern District of Illinois, In Equity, Warren Featherbone Company v. Herbert DeCamp and James Anderson. Edward Kirk Warren Deposition, June 1906, p. 703. Warren Featherbone Collection, Regional History Collections, Western Michigan University.

This table of total sales for the years 1891-1902 shows the company's improved market success (Table II-3). In 1899, Warren's sold 142 miles of featherbone covered with grosgrain ribbon, only one of forty styles then available. So much featherbone required huge quantities of quills. In 1901, the company purchased 260,000 pounds of them.⁹⁹ The success of the new featherbone also increased employment at the Three Oaks factory, from 182 in 1894, to 310 in 1896, to 392 in 1901 (See Table A-4). In 1899, the Warren company advertised for twenty-five to fifty additional workers. It built additions to the factory in 1898 and 1901, and rented the local opera house for use as a shipping room because the one in the factory was too small to handle current output.¹⁰⁰ Still the Three Oaks plant alone could not produce

enough, and the company temporarily opened three branch plants from thirty to one hundred miles from Three Oaks. These satellite factories were in Porter, Indiana (1899); Middleville, Michigan (1901); and Chicago (1902).¹⁰¹ According to testimony given at a patent infringement trial in 1906, most of the 200 workers at each of these branches operated winding machines and made what was known as "primary cord," an early stage in featherbone manufacture. In the 1890's this was slow hand work, and there were not enough people nor sufficient space in Three Oaks to produce as much primary cord as was needed. By 1906, when automatic winding machines became available, these three branch factories had closed and all production occurred in Three Oaks.¹⁰²

By 1900, Warren's Featherbone was both profitable and popular. Company advertisements included an endorsement by the famous Sarah Bernhardt: "I have always had Warren's Featherbone used in my costumes, for I believe it to be the best dress boning material in existence." Queen Isabella Boning Parlors no longer disguised the fact that they used Warren's Featherbone. In addition to maintaining these permanent parlors in Chicago and New York City, Warren's travelling dressmakers offered free demonstrations and instructions in department stores and dressmakers' shops. Free sewing machine attachments and instruction booklets were made available both in stores and through the mail.¹⁰³ The word "featherbone" was added to the language and included in dictionaries.¹⁰⁴ Standard dressmakers' manuals

included references to and directions for using featherbone.¹⁰⁵ In contrast to their criticisms regarding the original featherbone, dressmakers and tailors at the finest New York stores recommended Warren's Featherbone in an eight page article in The American Magazine in 1901.¹⁰⁶

The Warren Company continuously modified its product line in response to changing demand, both civilian and military. Advertising brochures from the early twentieth century show that Warren's produced a wide variety of sewing notions, trims, bindings, elastic and tapes. Special looms wove sixty or more strips of seam binding at a time. The company also produced non-featherbone stiffeners made of celluloid, rattan, wire and crinoline for use in bustles, bodices, collars, belts and hats. During the World Wars, Warren's produced ammunition belts, parts for parachutes, and raingear. After World War II, changing fashions and the increased use of plastic led the company into many other types of production, such as plastic raincoats and children's wear. In 1957, the company, no longer owned by the Warren family, closed its plant in Three Oaks and moved to Gainesville, Georgia, where it celebrated its centennial in 1983.¹⁰⁷

From the 1880's to the 1950's, and especially in the pre-automobile era, the Warren Featherbone Company was a major economic force in Three Oaks. Between 1890 and 1920, its regular workforce was equal to at least twenty-five per cent of the village's population. The Warrens also owned

substantial property in the village and had other economic interests. The family's Oak Meadow Farm of 2000 acres sold meat and dairy products to Chicago, and peas to a local cannery.¹⁰⁸ In 1898, the Warren Featherbone Company bought the local newspaper, the Three Oaks Press, later renamed The Acorn.¹⁰⁹ The establishment of the E. K. Warren and Company bank in 1902, and the C. K. Warren and Company department store in 1909 completed their major local investments.¹¹⁰ But Warren's experiences selling cattle to Chicago markets had interested him in raising cattle on the open range. E. K. Warren and his son Charles, gradually acquired a half million acres of grazing land in Texas and Mexico.¹¹¹

More than the owners of the other two companies in this study, the Warren family played an active role in village politics and campaigned for village improvements and social reforms. The post of President of the Village Council was held by E. K. Warren or one of his sons in twelve of the seventeen years between 1895 and 1911. He himself served six terms (1895-1900); his son Charles K. served five (1904-1907, 1911); his son Paul C. served one (1910).¹¹² They supported efforts to install public waterworks and electricity, and opposed the sale of liquor in the village.¹¹³ To encourage the Michigan Central Railroad to go ahead with its plans for a new depot in Three Oaks, Warren family members donated the necessary land for the depot and for a new street.¹¹⁴ In 1907, voters approved an addition to the school only after E. K. Warren offered to pay up to \$4500 of

the cost.¹¹⁵ Family members later gave more money to the school for vocational classes and playground equipment, and seven acres of land for a new building.¹¹⁶ E. K. Warren was even more active in the field of religious education. He had been involved in Sunday School since childhood and taught in the Three Oaks' school. He held office at the township, county, state and international level.¹¹⁷

Warren also used his energies for patriotic purposes. Inspired by the motto, "Three Oaks Against the World," Warren led the village to win a national competition to acquire a cannon captured during the Spanish-American War. This was a fund-raising event for a national monument to the war dead, in which the prize cannon would go to the community which gave the largest per capita contribution. Three Oaks (1890 population, 885) won when 312 persons paid \$1,132.80, an average of \$1.28 per village resident. President McKinley dedicated the site in 1899.¹¹⁸ E. K. Warren also campaigned vigorously for liberty bonds during World War I, and reportedly purchased over \$50,000 himself.¹¹⁹

Edward Kirk Warren and his wife, Mary Chamberlain Warren also left several gifts to the people of Michigan. They established and endowed a non-profit organization, the Edward Kirk Warren Foundation, whose purposes were "the preservation of forests; the establishment and maintenance of a park or parks; the collection and preservation of historical documents, data and publications."¹²⁰ They deeded to this Foundation, the Chamberlain Historical Museum in Three Oaks,

300 acres of virgin beech-maple forest (Warren Woods), and 289 acres of dunelands with more than one mile of Lake Michigan frontage (Warren Dunes). By 1939, the Chamberlain Historical Museum had 70,000 exhibits and drew more than 10,000 visitors annually.¹²¹ The collection was later given to the state and forms part of the State Historical Museum collection.¹²² The Warren Foundation gave Warren Dunes to the state in 1939, and later leased Warren Woods to the Michigan Department of Conservation for ninety-nine years.¹²³

This rather lengthy (but far from complete) survey of the various activities of the Warrens is important to understanding the nature of their economic and social position in the village, and therefore to understanding the character of industrial relations in that setting. Many of the improvements in public facilities and services that the Warrens supported furthered their own business interests as well as improving the quality of life for all. The new municipal waterworks provided not only a better water supply, but lower fire insurance rates for the company.¹²⁴ A new railroad depot was of great value to the Featherbone Company, which accounted for approximately two-thirds of the receipts at the Three Oaks station.¹²⁵ An attractive modern village with good roads brought patrons to the family bank and department store. A quality water supply, electricity, and good schools helped the village grow and added to the labor supply. Winning the cannon from the Spanish-American

War boosted village spirits, and the Featherbone Company benefitted from the national publicity. These examples illustrate Atherton's observation in Main Street on the Middle Border, "Every country town had an inner circle whose own personal interests were so tightly interwoven with those of the community at large that one cannot determine where self-interest ended and public spirit began."¹²⁴ Warren was interested in making money, but that was not all he cared about. He was a classic Yankee--an entrepreneur, a reformer, a patriot, a supporter of public education and of Sunday school. And he was committed to doing all of those things in Three Oaks.

When the Featherbone Company began with eight employees in 1883, Three Oaks was only a small community of fewer than 500. It had good train service, a general store, some repair services, a post office, a school and a few churches. The tree cutters had done such a thorough job that in photographs from this time, the village looks as if it were in a treeless prairie. Forty years later, the Featherbone Company was nationally recognized and employed hundreds of workers. In 1920 the village's 1362 residents enjoyed the amenities of twentieth century life--running water, electricity, paved streets, telephones--and many trees had grown again. A large number of the villagers were employed in the Featherbone factory, and many agreed with the local historian who wrote: "The steady year-round employment offered by the Warren Featherbone factory...meant the dif-

ference between [Three Oaks being] a small rural trading center and a self-supporting and industrially busy town."¹²⁷

Conclusion

Each of these three villages--Belding, St. Joseph, and Three Oaks--entered a new phase when its major industry was established between 1878 and 1885. These factories were part of a transition from an economy based almost exclusively on selling timber and agricultural products to one in which manufacturing for regional and national markets became increasingly important. Improved transportation was essential to acquiring necessary raw materials and distributing finished products. The movement away from a local, extractive, and subsistence economy to a national, commercial one was a major aspect of nineteenth century United States history.¹²⁸

According to the modernization model of American history, these three companies, their founders, and owners were classic examples of the modernization process. Richard Jensen described the role of such modernizers, many of whom were New Englanders, in Illinois history:

The newcomers transformed the economy by combining advanced technology, sophisticated organizational skills, a devotion to the importance of hard work, and genius in analysis of opportunities and devising complex visions of the future. They set up banks, corporations, investment houses and insurance companies that permitted society to shift its resources into the most productive sectors.¹²⁹

Similarly, these three Michigan companies and their owners

carried out the organizational goals and fulfilled the values typical of modernization. They were actively committed to change, to making the future different from the past. They participated in and created institutions to bring about these changes. Their factories were only part of this process. In addition, they were major stockholders in local banks, and partners or sole owners of other local investments. Real estate development, retail sales, commercial farming, hotels, newspaper ownership and secondary manufacturing interests represented the bulk of their local economic interests. Their "complex visions of the future" led them to participate directly and indirectly in village politics, to support improvements in public services and transportation, and to bring other industry to the area.

Another commentator on this process, Richard D. Brown, observed:

For nineteenth century people the drama of modernization, of thrift, self-discipline, and improvement for the sake of future rewards, was underwritten by religious faith for Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Modernization was endowed with moral purpose, as mankind would be raised from ignorance, superstition, filth, and degradation so as to become enlightened, cosmopolitan, rational, and productive. Experience merged with secular and religious aspirations to legitimate modernization.¹³⁰

To help achieve these moral purposes and overcome ignorance, these companies and families supported public education, libraries and museums. The Coopers and the Warrens were from clergy families; the Beldings and the Warrens were migrants from New England; all three favored temperance,

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with varying degrees of activism. Hard work, efficiency, discipline, orientation toward the future, commitment to economic expansion and progress--these were values they upheld in public statements and in public action. They were active, not passive or fatalistic in their lives. They invented, moved, experimented, started new operations, built where no one had before, deliberately and confidently created new institutions.

In general, the changes that occurred during this period were welcome ones which fulfilled the towns' ambitions for progress, prosperity and increasing population. These were not really company towns. Although the Warrens and the Beldings owned substantial real estate in their villages, the settlements were not their private property. And in St. Joseph, the Wells' family owned little real estate. These companies and their owners paid taxes to the elected government. They paid their workers in cash, not scrip. Their influence was economic and social, not feudal. There is no evidence that the arrival of factories destroyed valued life styles or social relationships. Substantial but not explosive population growth followed, but the towns remained fairly small, and most town residents could still recognize each other by name and/or face throughout this period.

Despite some differences, these three examples had much in common. In each case, village residents or persons with extensive previous contacts in the area played leading roles in the new enterprise. All three companies started

new textile-related factories where none had existed before, and recruited and trained workers who had no previous experience in manufacturing. They were the largest single employers in their respective communities, and provided steady employment for a substantial percentage of the village population for over thirty years. They created and managed large-scale factories, and determined wages, hours, and working conditions for an entire generation of workers.

CHAPTER III MATERIAL WORKING CONDITIONS: MAKING SILK, STOCKINGS AND STAYS

Preceding chapters have documented the variety and extent of factory production in villages in southwestern Michigan between 1880 and 1920, and have also traced the evolution of three specific textile related companies in this region. By the late nineteenth century, powered machinery had transformed most textile production from a "home" industry into one characterized by large-scale factory production, as illustrated by the three companies in this study. All factories have some features in common, and yet industrial workers have had widely different experiences. The nature of a specific industrial experience is affected by a variety of factors, for example, by government requirements and prohibitions, by economic conditions and wages, by employers' idiosyncracies and the social and economic status of the workforce. Finally, the technology of production itself plays a major role in defining the physical setting and nature of a job, and in determining its inherent pleasantness or unpleasantness, safety, danger or comfort of a job. The organization of production also offers greater or lesser opportunities for social contacts with other workers, providing conditions which isolate people or which facilitate camaraderie during a large percentage of one's waking hours, thus potentially affecting the degree to which workers will identify themselves as members of a common unit. This chapter examines several aspects of factory work--

government regulation, the technology of production, hours and wages--to see how each contributed to shaping the character of the industrial experience in the three settings in this study.

Michigan Law and Factory Inspection

In the late nineteenth century, progressive reformers urged state governments to monitor, and eventually to regulate material working conditions in factories.¹ In 1893, Michigan followed the lead of Massachusetts and other states in passing a series of statutes which specified minimum standards in factories regarding fire safety, general sanitation, ways to prevent injuries and other topics. The legislature provided for an annual inspection of every factory in the state in order to publicize and enforce these standards. The inspectors ordered manufacturers to make the changes required by law within a specified time and revisited sites to confirm that the changes were made. Michigan's Bureau of Labor hoped to achieve voluntary compliance through education and persuasion, but also had the power to prosecute violators. Those convicted could be punished by fines of from \$5.00 to \$100.00, and/or up to 90 days in prison.² The annual Reports of these inspections provide an important source of data on working conditions at the three factories in this study and throughout the state, as well as judgements about the relative quality of conditions at the Belding silk mills, at Cooper-Wells hosiery

mill, and at Warren Featherbone.

Inspectors had authority to order changes in a wide range of factory conditions. Some were defined very specifically, others allowed room for interpretation. Fire safety laws illustrate this pattern. Factory doors should open out, not inward, and it was illegal to lock or bolt factory doors during working hours. All factories of three stories or more were required to have outside fire escapes, and the inspector had the power to specify their number, location and design, "as may be deemed sufficient."³ The factory inspectors also checked to see that boilers had low water alarms, in order to prevent the all-too-frequent phenomenon of the exploding boiler, and examined the condition of elevator cables.⁴ Ordering rubber treads on stairways and guards on elevator shafts were also within their powers. Among the most hazardous features in the nineteenth century factory were the moving parts of power transmitters. The law required that these gears, set screws and belts be "properly guarded," leaving this up to the discretion of the inspector. The inspectors could also order that belt shifters be installed on individual machines so workers could stop and start their own machines, and not have to adjust them while they were still running. Too many workers had been injured when they tried to adjust a machine while it was working, since foremen didn't like to stop a dozen machines when only one needed attention. Also up to the inspector's discretion was the judgement that the factory

was "in a cleanly state" and supplied with a "sufficient number" of water closets and wash rooms."

The detailed results of these annual inspections indicate that material working conditions in these three factories conformed very closely to minimum state safety standards. In twenty of the twenty-eight years covered by the Reports, inspectors mentioned no violations of fire or factory safety laws in the Belding silk mills and ordered no changes. In the other eight years, fewer than fifteen violations were listed. These included orders to change doors to open out (1894, 1895, 1905); to provide fire escapes in boarding houses (1903, 1915); to cover exposed cog gears, belts and set screws (1894, 1903, 1911, 1914), and to repair low water alarms on boilers (1911, 1914). Similarly, state inspectors ordered changes in nine of the twenty-eight years at Cooper-Wells and Company. These included orders to install new stairs (1894); doors that open out, guards on rip saw and handrails on stairs (1895); guards on elevators and stairs, and doors that open out (1897); handrails on stairs (1898); low water alarm on boiler (1901); guards on set screws, and proper fire escapes (1903); guards on elevator shafts (1909) and on overhead belts (1918). The inspectors found even fewer deficiencies at Warren Featherbone Company, where they ordered changes in only six years out of twenty-eight. These included orders to install guards on gears and belts, and doors that open out (1895); handrails on stairs (1897 and 1899); a low water alarm on a boiler

(1909); guards on belting (1907); guards on shafting, motor and flywheel (1918).⁶

Since the purpose of the state's attention to factory conditions was to protect worker health, it is appropriate that the inspectors' annual Reports included data on industrial accidents. In this effort, they were totally dependent on each company's records and it is difficult to determine how complete their reports were. Injuries that were the result of a major fire or explosion which caused extensive damage and/or killed or seriously injured someone would certainly have been recorded. But less spectacular events were probably often overlooked. Some volumes identified the injured by name, age, sex, marital status and occupation as well as by employer. Other volumes were less informative. Some Reports listed actual injuries, eg. cut off two fingers from the right hand. Others used only vague categories, eg. "serious," "severe," and "slight." As was to be expected, a large number of accidents were reported in lumbering, metal-working, mining and automobile manufacture. Laundries also accounted for many injuries.⁷

Even though these lists must be regarded as incomplete, it is clear that textile work was much safer than many other manufacturing occupations. In the thirty-seven volumes of Reports, only twenty-four on-the-job injuries were listed for these three companies. All of the reported injuries occurred between 1905 and 1914, and none were fatal. The Belting mills listed only nine injuries, all in 1914, probably

reflecting temporarily zealous record-keeping rather than an increased injury rate. One of these injuries was labelled "serious", and caused the worker to miss thirty-seven days of work. The others were considered "slight", and the injured missed between one and thirty days of work. No other information was given, but one wonders about a "slight" injury that caused a thirty days absence from work. During the same time period, Cooper-Wells reported only six on-the-job injuries. All of the injured were males who subsequently missed from two to sixty days of work. Warren Featherbone reported only nine industrial accidents between 1907 and 1914. All of the injured were males who missed from one to 30 days work.⁶ Although not listed in the state Report, one former Warren employee remembers being hurt herself at work, when her hair was caught in a machine and part of her scalp torn out.⁷ She said it happened so quickly that she didn't feel it at the time. She doctored herself and missed no work. No other interviewees recalled any accidents, nor were any reported in the village newspapers, which routinely reported injuries in other factories in town, as well as traffic and gunshot accidents.

The relatively low injury rate at these mills is attributable to a combination of factors, including the use of modern equipment and factory design, as well as the careful enforcement of the law. The following discussion of production processes examines the effect of production technology on the health and safety of workers in these three mills.

Production Processes: Belding Brothers and Company

According to contemporary observers, large factories built after 1880 were in general cleaner, safer and healthier places than were the earlier smaller factories. They also judged that plants in the Midwest and South were physically superior to those in the East, and that managers of large factories made substantial efforts to provide clean, well-ventilated and sanitary working conditions.¹⁰ The four Belding Brothers and Company mills seem to fit this model of new large Midwestern mills in which the management provided state-of-the-art lighting, ventilation and sanitation.

The employees of Belding Brothers and Company worked in four main buildings, two thread mills and two weaving mills, which had been constructed between 1885 and 1909. They were typical nineteenth century rectangular factory buildings, with brick load-bearing exterior walls, flat roofs, and interior columns which supported wooden floors. They were each about fifty feet wide but varied from 200 to 400 feet in length, and from two to four stories high. The largest one employed 500, and the smallest, 250 workers. Each mill had at least one exterior tower which contained a stairway and a water tank for the sprinkler system. The mill complexes included power plant, dye house and shipping facilities as well as the main production buildings.¹¹

The Belding mills were equipped with the Sturtevant system of heating, ventilation and humidity control, which was widely used in factories and in large public buildings

at the turn of the century. With this system, a fan blew fresh outside air over steam pipes, and distributed the heated air through the building in ducts. To increase the humidity in the plant, pans of water were placed in the ducts or water was sprayed into them. Textile mills had to maintain relatively high humidity in the spinning and weaving rooms in order to prevent threads from breaking. Until the 1880's, most mills accomplished this by keeping the windows closed and forcing steam into the rooms, creating stuffy and damp environments. This method caused substantial discomfort and even health problems for many textile workers earlier in the nineteenth century. In the 1880's, most mills installed mechanical systems which both controlled humidity and provided fresh air for workers. In the early twentieth century, the Belding mills installed an improved method developed by the Johnson Service Company.¹²

One of the advantages to a manufacturer of locating in a small town was that land was relatively cheap. This factor also benefitted workers who were spared the discomfort of working in crowded conditions. The four silk mills were located on both sides of the Flat River in Belding, about one-quarter mile apart. Since there were no other large buildings nearby and they were only fifty feet wide, all the mills had cross ventilation and natural light. Workers could regulate the windows according to their own comfort, but had to avoid direct breezes which tangled their work. Former Belding silk workers remember no particular

discomfort, except on very hot summer days. The mill's power plant provided electric lighting to supplement natural light, and to keep the mill running during the dark winter hours.¹³

Many different processes were required to turn skeins of raw silk into finished products. The Belding mills purchased raw silk in 125 to 225 pound bales from Italy, Japan and China, using from 5000 to 10,000 pounds of raw silk a week in the early twentieth century. The raw silk skeins were weighed, sorted, and washed, then wound onto bobbins. The silk threads were doubled, twisted and spun to the proper thickness and tension for each use--hand sewing, machine sewing, embroidery, crochet, warp and woof in weaving. The average machine sewing thread contained 360 strands of cocoon silk. Sewing, embroidery, and crochet thread was then dyed and finished, wound onto spools and packaged. Yarn for weaving was reeled onto bobbins (woof) or beams (warp), then woven, dyed and finished as fabric. The adaptation of powered machines to these various processes in the last quarter of the nineteenth century permitted a tremendous increase in the output of silk and greatly reduced its cost.¹⁴

Because of these new machines, many jobs could be performed by unskilled or semiskilled workers. In the words of one visitor to the Belding mills:

The various steps of manufacture into thread, fabrics, and embroidery silks, are accomplished by machines with almost human intelligence.... The machines are well nigh automatic, but not

quite, and it is in watching them to see that they do their work right, to look out for broken threads, empty shuttles and such things that the thousands of girls are needed.¹⁰

Inexperienced people could learn to weave plain fabrics in a few weeks and eventually learned to operate four looms simultaneously. Some tasks, such as sorting raw silk skeins, and labelling the skeins of finished embroidery silk, were still performed by hand. But most of the occupations in thread and weaving mills--winding, spinning, doubling, reeling, spooling--involved monitoring machines, replacing bobbins, and tying broken threads. Spoolers, labelers, and enterers (people who tied the threads of a new warp to the loom) sat at their work. Spinners, winders, and weavers monitored several machines and were on their feet most of the day. They could sit only when no adjustments were needed.¹⁴

The use of powered machinery in textile manufacture not only increased production and reduced necessary skill levels, but also added noise and danger to textile work. There was a constant whizzing, whirring, and buzzing in the winding and spinning rooms. Weaving rooms were particularly loud. For example, one researcher reported that weavers in New Jersey's jacquard silk weaving mills frequently suffered from deafness caused by the loom thunder.¹⁷ Other studies report that cotton and wool weavers often described a deafening pounding that made the walls and floors shake, and a thunder so great that "you couldn't hear someone speak, unless they shouted in your ear."¹⁸ There were no such de-

scriptions of the Belding mills. Former Belding silk workers described the noise in various ways. According to one, the "click-click" of the shuttles was noisy, but "no awful roar" and "you could hear yourself talk." Another said that the looms "thumped pretty loud" and one "had to shout quite a lot" to be heard.¹⁹ The two mills in Belding contained only about 800 looms, far fewer than the thousands which were common in huge mills in the East. Perhaps the relatively small size of these mills accounts for the absence of the din so often reported in other places.

Before electric motors powered each machine, the power transfer system in mills was noisy and hazardous. Under this older system, a central boiler in the basement supplied power to each machine by a network of shafts, belts, and gears which passed through holes in the floors. This system created a constant roar, absorbed a lot of floor space, and presented great risks that clothing or hair would be caught on some moving part. To start or stop a machine, one shifted a moving belt from one position to another. Three of the four Belding mills used this method for part of the time they were in operation, then changed to electric power. The fourth mill always used electric motors instead of the old belt drive method.²⁰

The Belding mills had some features which tended to reduce the dangers inherent in working with powered machines. For example, these mills used machines which stopped automatically when threads broke or ran out, thus reducing the

risk of injury. Previously, workers had to change bobbins and spools while they were still spinning. These village mills were also less hazardous because the machinery was not crowded together. In urban areas, where factory space was at a premium, narrow aisles often increased the risk of being caught in a machine. Photos show that machines in the Belding mills were widely spaced. Even under the best circumstances however, powered machines were dangerous. Power looms could "throw a shuttle" and send a bobbin flying across the room, instead of through the loom. Belding weavers were concerned with being hit, but the shuttles usually fell harmlessly on the floor.²¹

Hazards existed in these mills, but textile production was one of the cleaner and less dangerous forms of factory work.²² Furthermore, in 1909, a U. S. Senate Report judged silk manufacturing to be the safest kind of textile production. Insurance companies acknowledged the relative safety of silk manufacture by charging lower rates for it than for other kinds of textile manufacturing. Unlike cotton and wool manufacture, silk processing involved no lint or dust to damage lungs. Because silk fiber was so expensive and delicate, it was in the manufacturers' self-interest to keep their mills clean, their machinery in good repair, and to provide good ventilation and lighting. In 1901, Alvah N. Belding stated proudly, "We have built such perfect mills that our insurance rate is the lowest obtainable."²³

State factory inspectors, Detroit reporters, visiting

doctors and lecturers on working conditions were unanimous in their assessment of the Belding mills as clean, spacious, well-lighted and superior to the majority of the mills in the East and the South. In 1902, the State Commissioner of Labor praised

the silk factories of the Belding Brothers and Co. at Belding...as regards cleanliness, ventilation, general sanitary conditions, safeguards and practical consideration...for the personal well being of its employees.²⁴

In 1909, a lecturer "in the interests of female and child labor," A. G. Gates of Canterbury, New Hampshire, was impressed with the neatness and "perfect sanitary conditions" in the Belding mills.

If all the institutions where women and girls are employed were anywhere near the high standard of the Belding silk mills,...the question of woman labor in our Great Nation would be a far different problem.²⁵

Evidence indicates that as regards material working conditions, the Belding mills were at a level with the best in their era.²⁶

Production Processes: Cooper-Wells and Company

The Cooper-Wells hosiery mill in St. Joseph carried out many of the same processes as the Belding silk mills, even though it worked with cotton and wool rather than silk, and produced knitted rather than woven fabric. The 100 by 40 foot frame mill which was built in 1879, burned and was replaced in 1903 by a three-story brick structure, 227 by 67 feet. In this new building, electric motors on each floor

or department drove the shafts and pulleys which powered the various machines. Machines for carding, spinning, and winding yarn were on the third floor; the knitting machines were on the second floor; the first floor housed offices and the finishing rooms. By the early twentieth century, the Cooper-Wells complex took up an entire city block, and included three three-story buildings. One housed the mill itself; a second, 50 by 155 feet, was a warehouse for raw stock; the third, 42 by 200 feet, stored finished goods. Three more buildings, each about 50 by 100 feet, contained the engine room, the dying operations, and the oxidizing room. As many as 600 people were employed in this mill.²⁷

When they planned their new building in 1903, the owners of Cooper-Wells were apparently eager to take advantage of technology which would reduce the risk of fire. Brick construction and a solid four inch floor (without passages for power belts) reduced the risk of spreading fire--a threat in any factory, but especially in one which contained so much flammable material. The new building also contained an automatic fire alarm and sprinkler system, and a fire door on the elevator. Insurance was seldom adequate to cover losses. For example, the 1903 fire caused damages estimated at \$125,000, including the loss of raw materials and finished goods, but insurance covered only \$42,000. The new mill cost between \$130,000 and \$140,000. Even if insurance equalled the cost of construction and lost materials, it could not make up for the loss of business during recon-

struction. It was obviously in the owners' interest to prevent fire.²⁸

Cooper-Wells bought some finished yarn, but also had a spinning department that was capable of producing between 1600 and 2000 pounds of yarn a day, on four 300-spindle mules.²⁹ The company bought bales of unprocessed cotton and wool fibers which had to be cleaned and carded before being spun. Carding separated and fluffed the fibers on spiked tools which lined the fibers in the same direction. After carding, the fibers were drawn into a "sliver" and prepared for spinning by being stretched and partially twisted into "roving". The spinning mules spun, twisted, and stretched the fibers into yarn, which was then wound onto bobbins or cones for knitting. The operators monitored these machines, replacing bobbins of roving and yarn as needed, and piecing fiber ends to make a continuous thread.³⁰

During the time period of this study, the technology of commercial knitting changed a great deal. These changes increased output per machine, produced better fitting garments, and reduced the skill level needed for some operations. Until 1889, Cooper-Wells and Company used only hand-operated hosiery knitting machines. The operators both drove the machine and made all the adjustments needed to alter the knit for leg, heel, foot and toe. It required some skill to operate these machines smoothly. Semi-automatic hosiery machines were introduced in 1889. These were powered by a drive belt, but still required the operator to

stop the machine at both the heel and toe, to engage the extra reinforcing thread needed for these parts, and to change the action from round work (used for the leg and foot) to back and forth (used for heel and toe). Operators had to be alert to make these adjustments at the proper time, as well as to replace broken needles and bobbins as needed. One operator could manage eight semi-automatic knitters, producing a total of twenty dozen pair a day.³¹

Fully automatic knitting machines were introduced gradually, beginning in 1893. By 1903, Cooper-Wells had 200 fully automatic machines, capable of producing a total of 1100 dozen pair of stockings a day. These machines stopped themselves at the heel and toe, engaged and disengaged the reinforcing thread used on those parts, and changed their own motion from a circular stitch to back and forth. Making plain below-the-knee hose, these machines could run continuously and knit a string of hose which were later cut apart. One operator could monitor fourteen such knitters, producing a total of forty-two dozen pair of hose a day. Doing plain knitting, operators had only to watch for broken needles and empty bobbins. However, even with the fully automatic machines, the operators had to intervene if they were knitting fancy patterns or stockings with ribbed tops.

In addition to performing these basic tasks of spinning and knitting, workers in the mill mended damaged goods, looped or seamed toes, and performed a range of finishing tasks, such as cleaning, bleaching, dying, pressing and

folding. They worked in a new, clean, spacious well-lighted mill but also encountered a variety of undesirable working conditions. The increased use of machines produced high noise levels in some departments and added risk of injury. The dying and bleaching rooms, where only males were employed, were notoriously unpleasant.³²

In cotton and wool processing, dust and lint posed additional and chronic problems, especially in the carding room. A 1915 investigation of Michigan knitting mills reported the following complaint from workers: "Sometimes I feel kind of sore on my chest, but I do not know as it is from the lint or not....Lint down your throat is just horrid." In some mills, suction fans drew off some particles, thus insuring "the most favorable conditions possible," but even these left annoying and potentially dangerous dust in the air.³³ It is not known whether the Cooper-Wells' mill contained such fans. But excessive dust and lint did sometimes cause problems at Cooper-Wells'. In 1905, workers staged a brief strike, and demanded improved ventilation "to stir the cloud of lint that hangs around the machines."³⁴

Eye strain was also a common problem in hosiery and knitting mills, particularly for loopers, whose job was to connect the edges (loops) of two pieces of knitted material to create the effect of continuous knitting. Black thread and fabric are particularly hard to see. Since Cooper-Wells specialized in black stockings for boys, advertised under the "Iron Clad" slogan, many of their employees must have

worked with black thread. Remarks by Michigan hosiery workers to a state investigator in 1915 included: "The work is terribly hard on the eyes. I guess almost everyone in this work has to wear glasses;" "Hard on eyes; hard on back; hard on me all over;" "Arms ache."³⁸

It is difficult to generalize about the amount of physical stress experienced at Cooper-Wells because their employees performed so many different tasks, and little detailed information has been preserved. There is no doubt that many jobs, such as looping, required constant close attention. Those who monitored machines had some time between tasks, and when the machines were stopped for repairs. Opportunities for conversation varied, depending on whether they were working with noisy machines or not. Some workers could sit, while others stood most of the time. Some worked in relatively comfortable settings, while others were in hot, linty or steamy rooms. Some had easy "light" work, others did a lot of lifting. The mill did have the latest in fire safety equipment, and in a 1907 Report, the state factory inspector described this mill as "one of the most up-to-date hosiery mills in the United States." According to this Report, Cooper-Wells gave

great care and attention to the questions of light, heating, ventilation, and fine drinking water, as well as other small matters that pertain to the comfort and health of their employees.³⁹

From the perspective of these inspectors, some noise, dust and unpleasantness were unavoidable in factory work. They praised employers who attempted to ameliorate the worst of

these conditions by providing modern, well-maintained machines, fresh drinking water, clean rest rooms, and well-lighted work rooms.

Production Processes: Warren Featherbone Company

Work at the Warren Featherbone Company included three broad categories: those associated with making standard sewing notions, such as ribbon, twill tape and seam binding; those involved in making its unique patented product, Featherbone; and a number of general support operations. Their 400 workers were employed in a complex of seven buildings, including a three-story, 600 feet long main factory. Separate buildings housed the machine shop, power plant, dye house, print shop, and box making and shipping departments. Again, this included a wide variety of specific tasks, under widely varying working conditions, involving both hand and machine work, different opportunities for relief from monotonous tasks and for conversation with co-workers.³⁷

The Warren Featherbone Company designed and built some of the machines used to process featherbone, modifying and improving its original production methods. First the feathers were sorted by color and turned the same direction. They were then hand-fed into a series of machines that in turn, cut the plumage from the spine, split the quill and removed the pith. Next the quills were cut lengthwise into strips about eight inches long, and wound with thread to form a continuous round cable "not larger than the stem of a

rose." Machines called double or single winders were used for this purpose. The cord was packaged in twelve-yard reels, and sold to retailers who re-sold it by the yard. The factory also sewed four cables together, side by side, to form a wider product that could be used as dress stays.³⁸ In 1888, the company began to cover the cord with cloth or ribbon, introducing an additional occupation into the plant, operating sewing machines. Starting in 1894, the cords were also treated with glue, dried, heated and shaped before they were covered, requiring the development and operation of several unique machines and techniques for working with sticky, hot featherbone.³⁹ In 1899 the company made forty different styles of featherbone of various widths and with different kinds of coverings, to meet dozens of specific needs for shaping and stiffening clothing. In 1901, they sold 1200 miles of only one particular style, Gros Grain Ribbon Featherbone Tape.⁴⁰

The Warren Company wove much of the ribbon, twill tape and seam binding used on featherbone and also sold such notions separately. Therefore some of their workers engaged in tasks similar to those in any textile operation: preparing raw materials for processing; monitoring spinning, winding and weaving machines; and dying and packaging finished products.⁴¹ As in the other mills, physical working conditions varied with the particular job, but in general, Warren Featherbone was a new, clean plant, which provided the basic amenities expected from "enlightened" manufacturers. State

factory inspectors "found conditions unusually satisfactory" and praised management for sparing "no pains to insure the health and comfort of their employees."⁴²

We have seen how legal pressures, insurance companies, and these employers' general concerns for their own reputations and for their employees' well-being combined to create conditions in their mills that ranked among the best in their era. They were also subject to extra legal and public pressure because they employed large numbers of women and some minors (See Chapter IV). Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Michigan limited the hours and occupations of women and minors and required their employers to provide them with special facilities, such as seats and clean separate washrooms. These "restricted" hours were still long, since the law permitted a twelve-hour work day and sixty hour week until 1909. In that year, the state limited the employment of women and minors in stores, factories, mills and workshops to an average of nine hours per day, or fifty-four hours per week, with a maximum of ten hours in any one day. The 1909 law also prohibited the employment of anyone under sixteen and of any female under eighteen between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. The legislature appointed special women inspectors to interview female workers at places which employed a high percentage of women. Their visits brought additional pressure for compliance and their interviews with workers supplemented the data that the regular inspectors had collected from employers.⁴³

Their combined reports indicate that the companies in this study complied with minimum state standards regarding the employment of women and minors. In twenty-eight years, the state inspectors had relatively few criticisms. Each company received a few orders to provide additional washrooms for their women employees, and to keep the wash rooms clean.⁴⁴ And one woman inspector told Belding Brothers and Company to prohibit men from using profane language in the presence of girls.⁴⁵ The companies in this study did not require overtime, and thus did not break the law. However, the workday at each of them equalled the legal maximum hours for women under eighteen during the period 1880-1920.⁴⁶ In the earlier period, they worked 60 hours from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., five days a week, with an hour for lunch, and then another five hours on Saturdays, from 7 to 12. When they worked 54 hours a week, they worked an hour less each day. This meant that they worked twelve hour days in the 1880's, when many industries were seeking a ten, or even an eight hour day.⁴⁷ Although state regulation of the employment of women was so minimal that employers could easily comply, these companies stand out among other employers as being unusually cooperative. Belding Brothers and Company received especially high praise from Inspector Luella M. Burton: "Nowhere I have visited in the state have I found better conditions existing than in these silk mills."⁴⁸ Conditions at Cooper-Wells and Warren Featherbone were also deemed "unusually satisfactory."⁴⁹

The employment of children as well as of women was a social and political issue at the turn of the century. Child labor was widespread in many sectors of textile work between 1880 and 1920. Persons under the age of sixteen made up 20.8% of silk workers in 1870 and 25% of southern cotton mill workers in 1890 and 1900. In 1905, 9.2% of silk workers nationwide were under sixteen. In 1907-08, 6% of the silk workers in Patterson and 23.2% of Pennsylvania's silk workers were under sixteen. In response to these patterns, states and the federal government enacted legislation to reduce and control the employment of children.⁸⁰ In 1893, Michigan raised the legal minimum age for children to work in factories from ten to fourteen. Even then, it was legal to employ children between fourteen and sixteen years of age only if they or their parents had filed sworn statements with their employers, certifying their date and place of birth and their ability to read and write. Each employer was supposed to keep this information on file for the factory inspector, and to post the legal hours of labor for minors in each room where young people worked. The factory inspector also had the power to require a physical exam for children under sixteen to certify that they were capable of their assigned tasks. The county physician would do this at no charge to employer or employee.⁸¹

Compared to many other textile factories, these three companies employed relatively few minors, and obeyed state law rather closely. The factory inspectors' Reports show

Table III-1 Employees Under Sixteen

Company	Total 14-16 Year Olds	Percent of Workforce
Belding Brothers	193	1.59
Richardson Silk	67	1.1
Cooper-Wells	551	5.5
Warren Featherbone	356	5.0

Source: Michigan. Reports. 1894-1920. See Appendix, Tables A-2, A-3, A-4.

Table III-2 Violations of Child Labor Laws

YEAR	NUMBER OF MISSING STATEMENTS	NUMBER OF WORKERS UNDER 14
1894	x BB	
1895	x BB, CW, WF	2 CW, 2 WF
1896	x CW, WF	2 WF
1900	x BB, WF	
1902		1 BB
1903	6 BB	2 BB, 2 CW
1906	7 BB	
1907	2 BB	
1908	2 BB	
1912	2 BB	
1913	x CW	

x = no exact number reported, BB = Belding Brothers and Company, CW = Cooper-Wells and Company, WF = Warren Featherbone and Company.

Source: Reports. 1894-1920.

that over a twenty-five year period, only 1.1% to 5.5% of their workers were between 14 and 16 years of age (Table III-1). Cooper-Wells, which had the largest number and percent of 14 to 16 year olds, also had the highest percent of immigrants (See Chapter IV). Warren Featherbone, located in a very small rural community and chronically short of labor, also depended on a few young workers. Belding Brothers and Company employed hardly anyone under sixteen. These youngest workers were likely to begin by spooling, coiling and packaging thread and notions. Many of those under sixteen worked part-time during the school year, from seven to eight a.m., four to six p.m., and on Saturdays. Most worked full time only during school vacations.²²

At each company, the inspectors found only a few violations (Table III-2). Cooper-Wells in 1894 and 1895, and Warren Featherbone in 1895 and 1896, were cited for failure to post notices listing the hours of labor for minors. Statements certifying the ages and education of minor employees were also sometimes missing. However, in twenty-eight years, only eleven underage employees were discovered at the three firms. There were probably more, since several former employees remember that some people began working when they were eleven, twelve and thirteen at the Belding mills and at Warren Featherbone. And there was nothing to prevent the companies from immediately recalling those who had been sent home by the state inspector. But in spite of some deviations from the law, it is clear that none of these

firms employed large numbers of minors, and that they generally complied with state law.³³

Wages and the Division of Labor

The final aspect of material working conditions to be examined in this chapter is compensation or wages. The only pay records available for Warren Featherbone Company cover the years 1890-1893, 1899-1900, and 1903-1914. None are available for the other two firms. Therefore this discussion depends primarily on average daily wages reported by employers to the state factory inspectors. The data is inadequate to address questions of economic mobility, or of workers' standard of living in relation to changing wage and price levels.³⁴ However it does indicate whether the workers at Belding Brothers and Company, Cooper-Wells and Company and Warren Featherbone and Company were well or poorly paid in comparison to each other and to statewide averages.

Table III-3 Average Daily Wage

Company	1898	1899	1900	1901
Warren Featherbone	.72	.89	.80	1.00
Belding Brothers	.85	.80	.93	1.00
Richardson Silk	.77	.81	.83	.85
Cooper-Wells Hosiery	.95	1.00	1.12	1.01

Source: Michigan. Reports. 1899-1902.

The most complete and comparable wage data available for the companies in this study are average daily wages for

the years 1898-1901 (Table III-3). For these years, the state factory inspectors reported the average daily wage paid by each employer, including men and women, both in the factory and the office, but excluding supervisory employees.

Based on this table, the Warren Featherbone Company paid the lowest wages of the three companies in this study, reporting an average of only \$.72 per day in 1898. Seven years earlier, a state inspector had observed that "the wages paid are apparently small" at Featherbone. At that time, the average daily women's wage at Featherbone was only \$.60, while Belding Brothers and Company paid an average of \$.75 a day."¹¹ These low wages reflect this company's business difficulties in the nineteenth century. However, by 1901, business had improved dramatically, and Featherbone had raised its wages to match those of the highest paying companies. Warren Featherbone's 1900 payroll book confirms this wage increase, showing an average daily wage of \$1.03, and an individual range from \$.73 to \$1.31.¹² In this four year period, Belding Brothers and Company also raised its average wage significantly. It is reasonable that the Richardson Silk Company paid the lowest average wage because it operated only a thread mill, and used a higher percentage of less skilled workers than the other factories. In contrast, two of the three Belding Brothers and Company mills were weaving mills, and weavers were among the most skilled and best paid textile workers. Wages at Cooper-Wells changed the least in these four years. According to a tex-

tile trade journal, \$1.00 was the standard wage for knitters at the turn of the century.²⁷

Table III-4 Canvass of Women Workers: Average Daily Wage

Year	State-wide	Belding	St. Joseph	Three Oaks*
1898	-	-	-	-
1899	.83	.74	-	-
1900	-	-	.98	1.03
1901	-	-	-	-
1902	.80	.90	-	-
1903	-	.90	1.01	.85
1904	.92	.99	.89	.95
1905	.97	.95	.91	1.15
1906	1.03	1.08	1.00	1.45
1907	1.07	1.13	1.04	1.45
1908	1.14	1.21	1.13	1.30
1909	1.05	1.23	1.11	1.38
1910	1.21	-	-	1.53
1911	1.22	1.21	1.24	1.35

- Indicates no data for that year.

Source: Michigan. Reports. 1899-1912. *Warren Featherbone Company Records, Regional History Collections, Western Michigan University.

Except for the Warren Featherbone Company, only scattered wage data are available for these companies for years other than 1898-1901. Some is from newspaper accounts and interviews, but most result from the serendipitous inquiries of specially appointed women factory inspectors, who annually "canvassed" a limited number of women workers in selected communities. In their reports, they lumped the answers from all women factory workers in each community into a single "average," without distinguishing workers by company (Table III-4). However, since each of the three companies employed a majority of the women workers in their respective villages, it seems likely that the "average" would be at

least close to their wage. Unfortunately, these special inspectors canvassed Three Oaks' workers only in 1911. For other years, the table uses average wages from the Warren Featherbone payroll records. These are not strictly comparable to the other averages in Table III-4, because they include male as well as female wages."

Based on these canvasses, it appears that wages paid by these three companies were very close to the state average wage for women. The wage data reported by these workers was also consistent with the data reported by the employers in Table III-3. In 1905, when the statewide average wage for women factory workers was \$.92 per day, the average daily women's wage was \$.99 in Belding, and \$.89 in St. Joseph. The statewide average wage of \$1.03 per day in 1906 was close to the average wage of \$1.08 in Belding and \$1.00 in St. Joseph. The 1911 canvass found a statewide average for women workers of \$1.22, while the average wage for women in Belding was \$1.21, in St. Joseph \$1.24, and a surprising \$1.48 in Three Oaks. This was the only canvass made in Three Oaks, and it may have been subject to a sampling or clerical error, since it is so much higher than the wages recorded in other years."

The scanty wage data found in interviews and newspaper accounts confirms the general conclusion that wages at Belding Brothers and at Warren Featherbone were bracketed around the state average, with Belding Brothers paying somewhat more and Warren Featherbone paying quite a bit less.

(No supplementary wage data was available for Cooper-Wells.) In 1901, an unskilled Belding silk worker told a reporter she earned \$1 day, exactly what the inspector had indicated to be the average.⁴⁰ A pamphlet published in 1914 reported that workers at Belding Brothers earned from \$8 to \$16 a week, \$1.34 to \$2.68 a day.⁴¹ Beginners and the unskilled were paid the smaller amount; weavers earned the maximum. These figures are close to the 1913 statewide average daily wage of \$1.33 for women and \$2.49 for men (Table III-5). By 1920, the most skilled weavers were paid \$4.50 a day.⁴² Wages at Warren Featherbone were more modest than this. A 1903 newspaper article indicated that Featherbone paid beginners \$4.50 a week and that piece workers earned from \$6 to \$8 a week.⁴³ However, the 1903 payroll books show an average weekly wage of only \$5.15, only \$.65 above the beginner's wage.⁴⁴ Even assuming that the average was somewhat reduced by the number who worked less than full time, nevertheless, few earned \$6 to \$8 a week. Former Featherbone employees knew that their wages were slightly lower than average. They earned only \$14 a week in 1919, when the average Belding worker was paid \$18 or more.⁴⁵

The wages individual workers received depended on the specific jobs they held, and that in turn was affected by gender. In these three companies, as was common throughout industry, most jobs were segregated by sex. Although there is little statistical evidence of a substantial wage gap by sex in the companies in this study, Table III-5 summarizes

Table III-5 Average Wages of Michigan Factory Employees

Year	All	Workers Only		Under 16		Office		Foremen F=female
		M	F	Boys	Girls	M	F	
1897	1.29							
1898	1.37							
1899	1.39							
1900	1.48	1.67	.87					
1901	1.67	1.57*				2.32*		2.73
1902	1.68	1.60*				2.19*		2.75
1903	1.75	1.83	.95	.76	.65	2.61	1.33	2.86
1904	1.77	1.83	1.01	.79	.64	2.70	1.36	2.91
1905	1.82	1.91	1.01	.77	.64	2.74	1.43	3.02
1906	1.88	1.93	1.03	.87	.67	2.84	1.48	3.05
1907	1.93	2.02	1.06	.89	.74	2.94	1.53	3.18
1908	1.92	1.97	1.09	.84	.69	3.03	1.54	3.21
1909	1.98	2.06	1.14	.88	.71	3.10	1.57	3.31
1910	2.13	2.19	1.18	.93	.81	3.21	1.57	3.46
1911	2.23	2.32	1.24	.91	.88	3.32	1.71	3.56
1912		2.37	1.32	1.09	.88	3.24	1.76	
1913	2.41	2.47	1.33	1.08	.91	3.44	1.81	3.77
1914	2.45	2.52	1.38	1.08	.89	3.32	1.89	3.84
1915	2.54	2.61	1.39	1.08	.89	3.58	1.86	(2.10)F 3.93
1916		2.49	1.45	1.17	1.01	3.82	1.95	(2.10)F 4.20
1917		2.95	1.67	1.42	1.15	4.24	2.12	(2.12)F 4.72
1918	4.14	3.73	2.19	1.67	1.43	5.08	2.44	(2.27)F 5.09
1919	4.82	4.60	2.63	1.79	1.67	5.71	2.94	(2.67)F 6.66
								(3.44)F

*Combined male and female wages

Blanks indicate missing data.

Source: Michigan. Reports. 1898-1920.

the wage differential on a statewide basis for factory, office and supervisory personnel. Census data, newspaper accounts, interviews and photographs confirm sex-segregated employment patterns at Belding Brothers, Cooper-Wells, and Warren Featherbone. Following the custom in textile mills, the plant superintendents, division heads, warpers, loom fixers and dyers were male. Only males were employed in the engine rooms and in the shipping, construction and maintenance departments. Females were usually winders, knitters, labellers, spoolers or weavers. Weaving was one "women's occupation" that was especially well paid. Women and girls also operated sewing machines, did mending and packaging, and worked in the office. Both men and women worked as lower level supervisors, as foremen and forewomen.⁶⁶

The relatively low average wages paid by all three companies in this study reflect the fact that one-half to three-fourths of their employees were women.⁶⁷ State inspectors were conscious of the gap between women's and men's wages. For example, the author of the 1906 Report judged that wages in the knitting industry were "low", and attributed this to the fact that 70% percent of the workers in Michigan knitting mills were female.⁶⁸ Men held nearly all of the best paying jobs, and even when women and men did the same work, they were not always paid at the same rate. In 1891, several women complained about this to the state inspector. One said, "I am working in a knitting factory. Men in the same work get \$20.00 per month more than women.

I think there should be equal pay for the same work."⁶⁷ In spite of complaints, the wage gap continued. A survey of employees of twenty-one knitting mills in Michigan in 1905 found that the average daily wage for men ranged from a minimum of \$1.10 to a maximum of \$2.34; while women's wages ranged from a low of \$.66 to a high of only \$1.50.⁷⁰

For statistical purposes, the Michigan labor bureau multiplied the "daily wage" by six to derive the "weekly wage", even though the standard work week was five full days and a half day on Saturday. Annual wages would be less than fifty-two times the weekly wage, because most workers lost wages when work was slow and when the factory closed for vacation, inventory or repairs. The companies in this study often closed for one or two weeks at Christmas and/or in the summer.⁷¹ Although there was some seasonal variation in output, layoffs were rare in these firms; "steady" work was the pattern.

The average wages reported in the tables in this chapter might have been further reduced by the "fining" system which was in effect in many turn of the century factories. It was traditional in many textile mills to fine workers for tardiness, for producing damaged goods and for breaking rules, for example, talking too much.⁷² Other mills charged workers for materials or supplies. In 1915, a Michigan Commission of Inquiry observed that such practices had the "tendency to clip the edge off the weekly wage."⁷³ In 1891, the custom seemed to be rare in Michigan, since the

Bureau of Labor reported fining in only two factories, both in Ypsilanti. Those factories imposed fines ranging from \$.25 to \$2.50 in a week.⁷⁴ But a 1914 survey of 503 Michigan establishments, representing more than fifteen different industries, found that 663 of 8,358 women employees had been fined. Some of these fines were as much as \$2.00, representing a substantial cut in the average woman's wage of \$8.28 a week (Table III-5).⁷⁵ Neither interviews nor written records refer to fines at Belding Brothers or at Cooper-Wells. However, the Warren Featherbone company payroll books list weekly deductions for "poor" work for nearly every worker between December 1904 and December 1906. These deductions became less frequent during 1907 and ceased in 1908. Nearly every worker lost from five to ninety-five cents weekly, although everyone also received a weekly ten percent bonus during these years as well. It is likely that these deductions and across the board bonuses were temporary experiments to stimulate both greater output and more perfect work. During these years, the company also imposed a small number of charges for scissors, pliers and shears, ranging from ten to sixty cents.⁷⁶

Conclusion

This survey of production processes and material working conditions at Belding Brothers and Company, Cooper-Wells and Company and Warren Featherbone and Company reveals conditions that were among the best in U. S. textile manufac-

turing between 1880 and 1920. Rather than "dark, satanic mills," each operated modern, spacious, well-lighted factories that were the objects of local pride. Although working conditions varied, most of their employees monitored or operated machines, and worked in large rooms filled with the whirr and clatter of spinning mules, winders, looms, knitting or sewing machines. Government regulation and private insurers enforced minimum efforts to prevent fire and avoid accidents. Factory safety was narrowly defined as having guards on machinery, low-water alarms on boilers, and railings on stairways and elevator shafts. The Michigan inspectors seem to have been honest and conscientious in their inspections and in making follow-up visits to confirm that orders had been obeyed. They praised all three employers for their cooperation. It would be too strong to call textile work "healthy", but it was clearly much safer than mining, metal-working or lumbering. Accidents were rare at these three factories.

As was common in the textile industry, a large percentage of their workers were women (See Chapter IV). However, contrary to the textile industry image, most laborers were over sixteen, not children. State records for the three companies in this study indicate that only 1.1% to 5.5% of their workforces were under 16. Only a very small number were illegally employed.

Compared to current practice, the six-day factory work week was excessive, running sixty hours a week until 1909,

then only fifty-four hours. These were the maximum hours permitted for females under eighteen and for youth of both sexes. The factory whistle was a standard in each village and these hours laws were scrupulously observed. In spite of the long hours and monotonous, tedious labor involved in factory work, many villagers preferred it to the limited alternatives available. Some male workers valued its steadiness, and female workers compared it favorably to domestic work, sewing, sales work and teaching. Factory workers had much more control over their private lives than domestic workers, and usually worked shorter hours. This desire to have time of one's own, apart from working hours, became increasingly important in the twentieth century.⁷⁷

Not only the factory's fixed workday, but factory wages were also considered a "plus." Existing wage data indicate that wages were about "average", and included a sex differential. A 1914 survey of 50,230 working women at 1,348 Michigan establishments found that 21.7% earned less than \$6 a week; 51.4% earned under \$8; and 48.6% earned \$8 or more.⁷⁸ These figures approximate the wages women received at the three companies in this study. Presumably, the average male earned more. However, even male wages were lower than those available from some other employers during this period. Iron works and boat manufacturing companies in St. Joseph paid higher wages than Cooper-Wells.⁷⁹ And in the early twentieth century, both Warren Featherbone and Belding Brothers and Company lost male employees when auto-

mobile manufacturers opened in nearby towns and offered substantially higher wages. Some who stayed with the textile firms were unwilling to move or to commute. Others judged that although their current wages were lower, they were more likely to remain "steady," less subject to the fluctuating employment that characterized the automobile industry.⁸⁰ Contemporary observers also noted that low wages went further in small towns where there were no transportation expenses and where housing and food cost less than in major urban areas.⁸¹

Factory work also had special appeal for females. In 1899, the average wage of women factory workers in Michigan, \$.83, was much more than the \$.49 paid to domestics, or the \$.23 paid to lowly "cash girls," who were employed in department stores to carry customer's payments to a central cashier and return with their change.⁸² There were also opportunities to increase one's earnings above the average by increasing output, learning a more highly rated job, or becoming a first level supervisor. Factory forewomen could earn about 50% more than an average factory worker. In 1891, the average Belding Brothers and Company worker earned \$.75 a day, and foreladies earned \$1.30; the average Featherbone employee earned \$.60 and foreladies earned \$1.25.⁸³ Department store clerks had a certain middle-class prestige, yet a state inspector observed that "the great bulk [of lady clerks] are but poorly paid....Those who are obliged to entirely support themselves are far worse off than women and

girls who work in the shops and factories." In her judgment, it took almost everything they earned to pay for appropriate clothing.²⁴ Belding Brothers and Company silk workers shared this view, when they told a reporter that they couldn't earn enough to live on as clerks in a city shop.²⁵

The mature, relatively prosperous status of textile manufacturing between 1880 and 1920 played a major role in determining material working conditions at these three firms. Their workers experienced none of the disruptions associated with a transition to a markedly different organization of production or with changing skill levels. Living in an industrial age, they knew in advance roughly what their roles in the factory would be. Most worked in settings that were noisy, but posed little obvious danger. They worked fixed hours and could count on fairly steady year-round wages. Men and women could earn enough to support themselves and their families without constant anxiety, though with little surplus. Materially, their work settings lacked the kind of extreme conditions that placed severe stress on workers and were likely to result in resentment and conflict. The next chapters will examine the social and power dimensions of industrial experience in these three settings.

CHAPTER IV HELP WANTED: WOMEN AND GIRLS PREFERRED

Unlike factories in large eastern cities which could recruit workers from large populations supplemented by a stream of immigrants, factories in small towns had only limited populations in the immediate vicinity. Nevertheless rural industries in America have traditionally been successful in their efforts to recruit workers. In the forty years before 1920, industries in small towns employed a large percentage of the U. S. industrial workforce and produced more than 25% of the nation's manufactures.¹ Job-related geographic mobility was widespread; many people were willing, even eager to move; travellers, newspapers, family and friends spread information about job opportunities. Even women and girls sought work away from their homes. According to one historian, a nineteenth century "factory had only to open its doors in any part of the rural United States to find itself besieged by girls and young women from miles around, all eager for work."²

Perhaps it is too strong to describe Belding Brothers, Cooper-Wells and Warren Featherbone as "besieged", but they too were successful in recruiting women and girls to do traditional "women's work" in the textile industry, in spite of the fact that factory work contradicted widely held notions about women's proper place.

Although moderated in the years after the Civil War, to some degree the attitudes and behavior of "the lady" had become a general standard of femininity and respectability.

A "true" lady would avoid manual labor, contact with the public, casual or unstructured associations with men, and any appearance of sexual impropriety. Restrictive clothing and formal manners and speech, as well as remaining within the bounds of home and family were also elements of being a "lady." Such genteel expectations contrasted with older American traditions, with frontier and farming conditions and with European patterns. Within those contexts, women's work was essential to the household economy, and idleness was considered either unvirtuous or an unattractive aristocratic habit.³

Even though popular literature, religious tracts and public debate were preoccupied with preserving female domesticity, sexual propriety and daintiness, the wages and jobs open to most working women precluded any pretense of achieving such circumstances. Many women and their families, particularly farmers and immigrants, resisted the "lady" ideal. Their working and living conditions prevented them from achieving the delicate appearance of "ladies," and required them to engage in manual labor and associate with women and men outside the protected circle of family supervision. In fact, their willingness and ability to do these things were important aspects of their contributions to maintaining their families. In order to survive, their families needed workers, not "ladies."⁴ These attitudes towards work were consistent with those expressed by Lucy Larcom, an early mill operative in Lowell, Massachusetts,

who said of factory girls: "They were making their own traditions, to hand down to their Republican descendants - one of which is that honest work has no need to humble itself in a nation like ours."⁴

However, according to the analyses of historian Sarah Eisenstein, few advice books for working girls emphasized the dignity of honest labor. Instead they stressed the importance of maintaining the appearance of a lady, and indicated that working for wages threatened that status. These books, written by journalists, reformers and educators in the 1890's, depicted women workers to be in "exceptional" family circumstances that temporarily required their wage labor. They worked because their fathers were ill, not as a routine, life-long commitment to employment. The authors discouraged identification or involvement with other workers. Women who wished to be ladies were warned to avoid being friendly with other workers, talking about work in social settings, joining others for recreation, discussing private matters or wasting their money "treating" the group. Worker solidarity was clearly defined as a threat to the status of "lady."⁵

Particularly in urban settings, working in a factory lowered a girl's social standing. In 1888, the U. S. Commissioner of Labor considered the low social standing of urban working women to be a major social problem. In 1915, a Michigan commission made a similar observation:

It is unfortunate that the girls who works in a factory is placed by society on a lower plane than

the one who is "helping mother." There is no reason for this. While staying at home may, to some, imply the ability to live without work, yet that "working" should lower the girls' social status is illogical and demoralizing. In fact, it is the industrious woman, rather than the idle one, who should be esteemed and placed on the higher plane. But so long as the "habit of thought" is in the direction of doing homage to idleness, industry, among women, will be at a social discount and idleness at a premium.

A few Americans believed that women who "chose" to work no longer had a right to gentle treatment. In some places, working women lost even limited community protection, because women wage earners were defined as "without virtue." Places where women and men worked "indiscriminately together" were especially suspect. Some believed that a few years of work in a store or factory made a woman "unfit" for home duties.⁷

By the early twentieth century, however, popular advice books began to be more realistic about women workers. They acknowledged that most women workers could not achieve the protected social and material environment once expected of "ladies." These authors relaxed some of their strict standards of propriety and womanliness so that fewer women were automatically excluded from acceptance. In the words of Sarah Eisenstein, "The image of the lady who worked blurred into one of working women who acted like ladies."⁸ According to this formulation, even factory girls could be ladies.

In spite of the debate over the social acceptability of women working for wages outside the home, more and more women were seeking employment and more and more employers

were finding reasons to prefer women workers. Throughout the nineteenth century, the "de-skilling" process associated with an increasing division of labor, and the introduction of specialized automatic machines had opened more and more manufacturing to the unskilled. Instead of years of apprenticeships, a few hours to a few months training was all one needed. Employers considered women workers superior to men in "steadiness," "common sense, neatness, integrity," "easier to deal with" and "cheaper," too. According to some employers, men expected to be promoted and to get raises, women didn't. Local custom and labor availability further defined "women's work."⁹

Despite its drawbacks and limitations, factory work offered rural women and girls an opportunity to earn cash with little investment in money or training. Between 1880 and 1920 there were relatively few jobs open to women and girls in mid-Michigan, and factory wages and hours compared favorably to those of teachers, domestics and farm laborers. In 1901, a female worker at the Belding Brothers mills made the following comparison between farm work and the ten-hour days at the mill:

That makes 60 hours a week, a dollar a day for ten hours work. We pay two dollars for room and board. On the farm we received nothing for our work, save when father could give us a little, and we had much more fatiguing work to do.¹⁰

For the most part, the companies in this study had little difficulty recruiting workers, because they offered a scarce product, a paying job, to a receptive audience.

Belding Brothers and Company

The largest of the three firms in this study, Belding Brothers and Company, employed an average of 750 people between 1893 and 1919. The number increased as the company expanded. From 1893 to 1904 there were two silk mills in Belding with a combined average workforce of 410. From 1904 to 1908, the three mills employed an average of 940. Between 1909 and 1919, the four Belding silk mills employed an average of 1000 (See Appendix, Table A-2). The 1910 silk mill workforce of 1198 was equal to more than a quarter of Belding's 1910 population of 4119. When the first mill opened in 1886, only a few skilled workers came from Belding Brothers and Company mills in the east; the rest were recruited locally. New workers were paid a fixed amount for a few weeks; later they went on piece work and earned more. In addition to their regular full-time workers, Belding Brothers and Company hired school children to work part-time, from 7 to 8 a.m., 4 to 6 p.m. and 7 to 12 on Saturdays. The company lent machines to other employees who worked in their own homes doing spooling and other tasks at piece work rates.¹¹

According to state factory inspector's Reports, 75% of Belding's silk workers were female. The 1900 Belding city census confirms this pattern, listing 554 silk workers, 424 females and 130 males. More than half of the total (294) boarded with non-relatives. This included the 100 women who lived at one of the three company boarding houses. Single

women living independently made up the largest category of Belding silk workers. Nearly all of the rest of the mill workers lived with parents or spouses; only a few lived in separate households. However, even those who boarded with non-relatives were not necessarily separated from family contact, since brothers and sisters sometimes boarded in the same homes. The 1900 census lists about 150 silk workers whose parent, child, spouse or sibling was also employed in the silk mills, showing that family ties continued into the mill itself. No doubt there were also other relatives employed, such as in-laws and cousins. Over 80 percent of the females were under twenty-five, and only 10 percent were married. The males were slightly older and more likely to be married; sixty percent of the males were under twenty-five, and forty percent were married.¹²

There were few immigrants and little ethnic diversity among the Belding silk workers. In 1900, almost 90 percent (489) had been born in Michigan or in neighboring states. Fewer than 10 percent (47) were foreign-born, the largest number (32) in Canada. About one-third (176) had at least one foreign-born parent, most often Canadian. These patterns reflect the composition of the communities from which Belding Brothers and Company recruited its workers, the central part of Michigan's lower peninsula.¹³

Since it depended heavily on single women who came to Belding specifically to work in the silk mills, the company often sent recruiting agents by train to towns and villages

in Michigan. Family members and word-of-mouth also brought prospective employees. Recruits who brought six others with them were reimbursed for their train fare. These agents and a series of "souvenir" booklets emphasized Belding's steady employment, "easy" labor, clean work setting and low-cost, high quality company housing. Appealing to many young women's interest in their appearance, the company promised wages high enough for workers "to dress...on an equality with the best class of female wage-earners in any section of the country." These booklets were also frank about the fact that only serious workers who meant "business" need apply, those looking for a "good time" were not welcome. Hoping to attract conscientious and ambitious young women and to counteract the generally negative image of women factory workers, the company stressed that silk mill work was "healthy" and its women workers were "ladies" with the highest morals. Belding Brothers and Company seems to have had little difficulty in staffing its mills, even during the peak production years of World War I.¹⁴

The comfortable and economical housing available to company employees partially accounts for Belding Brothers and Company's success in maintaining an adequate workforce. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the mill owners responded to a local housing shortage by building three dormitories for single women and approximately sixty private homes for married employees. Built on 60 x 130 foot lots near the mills, the homes had six large rooms, full

attics and basements, plumbing, electricity, and central heating. They were rented or sold to workers with families and were maintained by company personnel. The company claimed that the dormitories, which were also located close to the mills, operated at a slight loss. The price of room and board, deducted from each paycheck, was consistently less than one-third of the average woman's wage at the mill. Former residents report that meals were generous and well-prepared. Non-resident silk workers could also purchase a hot noon meal at low cost. There was often a waiting list for the dormitories, since they had room for only about 300 residents, approximately one-third of the number of women employed in the busiest years.¹⁰

The facilities and regulations in the dormitories were comparable to those in many college dormitories at the time.¹¹ Each building contained parlors, a piano, a large dining room, and bedrooms for about 100 residents (2 to a room). The buildings had central heating, hot and cold running water in bathrooms located on each floor and facilities for doing personal laundry. Clean bed linen was also provided. A matron managed each dormitory and generally supervised social activities. Male guests could visit in the parlors downstairs, while women friends were usually invited upstairs to the lounges on each floor or to an individual room. Female guests could also spend the weekend or come for Sunday dinner. Lights were out at 10:00 p.m. and all residents were required to be in the boarding house

by 9:30 unless they had permission from the matron to stay out later. Extensions were granted routinely, especially on Saturday night, but never past midnight. These special housing arrangements made it easier for the girls' parents and the community to accept the idea of young women living apart from their families. At the time, a working class woman who lived alone may have risked loss of reputation, and a woman's low wages made it hard to find safe and respectable housing. The dormitories provided a surrogate family environment for its residents--supervision, respectable living arrangements, and companionship. They were important to fulfilling the company's promise that: "Here the young women employed in the mills are required to be ladies in the fullest sense of the word, and they are received and treated by the people of the city as such."¹⁷

Although there were undoubtedly some raised eye brows, there is substantial evidence that the Belding silk workers were accepted and respected in the community. The independently owned local newspaper, local ministers, visitors and former silk workers agreed.

Unlike many other villages, Belding proudly called itself a factory town, and the local newspaper defended its mill girls in articles such as "The American Factory Girl: She Surpasses Her European Sisters in Every Respect." This 1897 article expressed the ethnocentric theme, "America is Better," by contrasting the neat, efficient, well dressed, sober and cultured American girls with the disheveled and

impoverished English mill workers, brawling and frequenting alehouses and pawnshops.¹⁶ Over the years, the newspaper noted the marriages and deaths of the silk workers and praised them for their hard work, upward career mobility, cultural and educational accomplishments.

Far from expressing values or behavior that challenged community standards, the mill girls fit right in. Both silk workers and others attended the same churches and public schools. Church youth programs and the Red Cross Society included many mill girls. Village mill workers welcomed dormitory girls into their homes and in turn visited the boarding houses. Rules in the company boarding houses were strictly enforced, and residents who refused to obey were asked to leave. Formal action was usually unnecessary because the dormitory residents themselves would refuse to associate with "tough" girls who drank or "didn't care who they went out with," and the recipients of such disapproval would "voluntarily" move out.¹⁷

Local clergy described the mill workers as "progressive," "intelligent," and "the cream of their communities" and noted that "scores" had gone on to college. The newspaper celebrated one such high achiever in the 1924 article "Hard Work Brings a Plucky Girl Success." The subject of the story, Miss Alice Sonntag, played the piano, was queen of the high school carnival and class valedictorian. She was the third girl in her family to finish high school while working part-time at the mills. One of her sisters was a

teacher and she herself planned to attend normal school in the fall.²⁰

Even outsiders remarked on the absence of snobbery toward the mill workers and the successful merger of "the lady and the mill girl." In the words of a reporter for the Detroit Journal, "Belding is a city of labor, a city in which labor is honored and respected, and where morality is not at a premium, as in so many mill towns."²¹ A decade later another visitor observed:

The general status of wage earners in the Belding mills is far above that of the average factory community....There are no social bars up against the mill girl in Belding. No class lines are drawn. The silk mill girl is just as much of a lady as the bank president's daughter or any other young lady in the village....The girl feels herself just as good as anybody else, which she is.²²

Former silk workers were aware of these issues, as suggested in such remarks as: "The bosses didn't feel themselves above the girls," and "they were never looked down on for working in the factory because too many big shots in town used to work there themselves."²³ This last comment acknowledges the existence of a social hierarchy in Belding while explaining why "there were no social bars up against the mill girl." The "big shots," meaning the families of store owners and professionals, had worked in the mills themselves.

Apparently Belding was not the only industrial town where such a pattern prevailed. For example, Herbert Gutman made a similar observation about the middle classes in industrial towns he studied and quoted a similar comment

from a local paper. "Many had risen from a lower station in life and intimately knew the meaning of hardship and toil....The Portsmouth Times boasted, 'We have very little of the cod fish aristocracy, and industrious laborers are looked upon here with as much respect as any class of people.'"²⁴ As in Belding, the newspaper denied that differences in wealth and power were reflected in personal status.

Like many other towns, Belding depended on factories (not just silk mills) for its very existence. It was an ethnically homogeneous community, settled by recent arrivals from Michigan and nearby states, all seeking to improve their lives and fortunes. There were few "old-time" residents to snub the mill workers. Individual mobility validated the existing socioeconomic system, and while Belding denied looking down on mill workers, it reserved its highest praise for the upwardly mobile. Social distinctions did exist and not all of the 1,000 workers could have been "the cream of their communities," but it is clear that Belding's factory workers were full participants in village life.²⁵

Although it was a factory village, Belding was also an attractive community, both esthetically and socially. It was a pleasant walking village, with a pretty river, city park, schools, shops and churches. In the early twentieth century, twelve passenger trains stopped at Belding every day, so it was easy for workers to take weekend visits home.

Young women who had their own money and were interested in their appearance were pleased to have shops nearby, and quickly replaced country clothes with fashionable new articles. Town residents also noted that Belding was a good place for a young rural woman to meet a husband. Belding even had its version of a "promenade". On Saturday evenings, young people dressed in their best and walked "the Long Walk" on Main Street, to see and be seen. They could also participate in some of the many activities in the village: church socials, roller skating parties, canoe outings, singing groups, movies, sewing circles, dances and picnics. These hundreds of single young women living away from their parents' homes made up a large percentage of the village's population. Although some of them must have experienced periods of fatigue, homesickness, and financial worry, the atmosphere in Belding was enlivened by the high spirits of healthy young women, excited about being on their own in town. In the words of one former silk worker, "There were worlds of girls here in those days."²⁴

Cooper-Wells and Company

The Cooper-Wells hosiery mill and its workforce provide bases for both comparison and contrast with the Belding mills. Like Belding Brothers and Company, Cooper-Wells was the largest single employer in its community, St. Joseph, between 1880 and 1920. In 1879, the year after it opened, the mill employed only 80 workers, but its workforce in-

creased to an average of over 400 for the years 1893 to 1919, with a peak of 602 in 1918 (Appendix, Table A-3). Some of its first workers came from Niles, Michigan, 15 miles away, and had formerly been employed there in a mill that had recently burned down. The rest of the workers were recruited locally, including a number of first- and second-generation Germans from St. Joseph's large German community. Beginners earned a fixed wage, then went on to piece work. In addition to those who worked full time in the factory, students worked before and after school, on Saturdays and during school holidays. A number of people also did "home-work." For example, in 1883, 126 females and 39 males worked in the mill and another 75 women finished goods at home.²⁷

The company did not seem to have had a formal recruiting program, but did advertise periodically in the St. Joseph newspapers. These ads offered "permanent situations" and "pay while learning" to "young ladies from 16 to 25 years of age."²⁸ Based on the 1900 manuscript population census of St. Joseph, Cooper-Wells seems to have gotten pretty much what it asked for. Out of a total of 226 hosiery workers, the census lists 143 females and 83 males.²⁹

Compared to the Belding workforce, Cooper-Wells' employees were slightly younger and more likely to be single. At Cooper-Wells, eighty-eight percent (126) of the females and eighty percent (67) of the males were twenty-five or younger, compared to eighty percent and sixty percent at

Belding Brothers. At Cooper-Wells, ninety-five percent of the females and seventy percent of the males were single, compared to ninety percent and sixty percent at Belding Brothers.

The Cooper-Wells' workforce also differed from that in Belding because of its strong family contacts. Unlike the Belding mills, which employed a large number of people who lived with non-relatives, most Cooper-Wells' employees lived at home. All but twenty (18 females and 2 males) of the 226 hosiery workers listed in the 1900 census lived with family members, usually with parents or spouses. People not only lived with their families, but nearly half (106) of the hosiery workers had a parent, child, spouse or sibling also employed at Cooper-Wells. Many probably had other relatives employed there too.

The Cooper-Wells workforce was not only younger and more likely to live with their families, it also included more immigrants than Belding's. Of the 226 hosiery workers listed in the St. Joseph 1900 census, fifty-five percent (126) were foreign-born, 98 in Germany and 24 in Russia. Nearly ninety percent (198) had at least one foreign-born parent, usually German. Only forty-two percent (95) were born in Michigan and neighboring states. In contrast, almost ninety percent of Belding's workers were born in Michigan and neighboring states; fewer than ten percent were foreign-born.

The social characteristics of the Cooper-Wells' work-

force are related to the distinctive history and economy of the St. Joseph area. Although Cooper-Wells was the largest single manufacturing employer in St. Joseph, it was not as important to the city's identity and prosperity as the four silk mills were in Belding. Cooper-Wells' largest workforce, 602 in 1918, was equal to only 8% of St. Joseph's 1920 population (7250), whereas the Belding silk mills' peak employment was equal to 25% of its population. St. Joseph's more complex economy included other large factories. It was also an important lake and railroad shipping point and a mineral water and lakeside resort. These other economic activities offered employment opportunities for men as well as women, so entire families, not just single women, came to St. Joseph seeking employment. There had been significant numbers of German immigrants in St. Joseph and surrounding farms since the 1860's. Family members and German-speaking churches sponsored a continuing stream of immigration. Unlike Belding's situation, it was not necessary for Cooper-Wells to actively recruit workers in the surrounding areas, nor to provide housing in order to acquire a needed workforce. St. Joseph's role as a commercial lake port and the "seamier" social features associated with this role, also made it relatively unattractive to "respectable" single women. Alone of the three villages in this study, St. Joseph had residents who listed themselves on the 1900 Census as "keepers" and "inmates of houses of ill fame", gamblers and hoboes. In 1900 there were many "boarding

houses" for St. Joseph's transient population, but few were suitable for "respectable" single working women. It is not surprising that most Cooper-Wells factory workers lived with their families.³⁰

The hosiery mill had little difficulty attracting sufficient workers, and until World War I, the local newspapers reported only one type of labor scarcity at Cooper-Wells. This was a summer shortage resulting from a "regular exodus of berry pickers." The company wanted "steady year-round" labor. However some knitters apparently preferred to vary their work pattern in the summer by picking berries instead. As a result, the knitting mill was left short-handed. Clearly annoyed, the company announced that it would hire permanent replacements for the "berry pickers," and that those who left had "forfeited" their places and could not count on being re-hired in the fall.³¹

This situation implies that jobs were plentiful enough for workers to be confident of alternative winter employment, and is consistent with the family residence pattern. Single workers who lived in homes where several were employed were not as likely to fear brief periods of unemployment. Nevertheless, the company also seemed confident that an offer of steady work would attract replacements.

Although there had been a general scarcity of labor in the textile industry since the early twentieth century, St. Joseph newspapers indicated no serious shortages until 1918. In that year, Cooper-Wells needed to increase its workforce

by 10% to meet production demands for a government contract for socks. It was probably competing for the same workers needed by Bradford and Company, another St. Joseph firm, that was making canvas bags for the army and also wanted to hire twenty-five additional women workers. Cooper-Wells tried to recruit women school teachers from Chicago to work in the knitting mill for the summer. This willingness to hire temporary workers is a measure of their desperation. It took three to six months to learn to operate a knitting machine, and Cooper-Wells had long had a policy of employing knitters on a steady year-round basis. The company also advertised for boys and girls to work before and after school, on Saturdays and in the summers, and for women to do mending in their homes. Based on the frequency of "help wanted" ads in St. Joseph newspapers, this labor shortage continued into 1920. For weeks, the ads appeared almost daily.³²

Up to this time, most of the Cooper-Wells' employees had been the sons and daughters of families living in St. Joseph, not single people, living away from their families. Immigrants, more than surplus labor from surrounding farms, had made up their workforce. The war cut off immigration, and it seems that the existing labor supply was not adequate to meet war-time demand. It had also always been difficult for workers to find economical housing in St. Joseph, and in 1919, Cooper-Wells responded to both the labor and housing shortage by building a dormitory with rooms for about fifty

women. Its announced intention was to "attract young women from neighboring farms to work in the mill," in conscious imitation of the Belding Brothers and Company dormitories. The new Cooper-Wells building, constructed next to the factory on the Lake Michigan beach, contained facilities for dining, laundry, sleeping and socializing. The company planned to operate the residence "at cost," and provided a piano, a Victrola, electric washing machines and electric sewing machines for residents.³³

Interviews provide scanty and contradictory views regarding the status of immigrant employees of "the sock factory." The owners of the hosiery mill were certainly among the economic and social elite of the community (See Chapter II), and there would have been no objection to being associated with them. Presumably there was also no stigma attached to male employment, but the status of the female workers is less clear.

One informant suggested that class prejudice contributed to both the labor and the housing patterns of Cooper-Wells' workers. He indicated that some city residents subscribed to the most restrictive assumptions of appropriate female behavior and excluded all wage-earning women from polite society. The women in such families were not employed, nor would the family rent rooms to working women. Such attitudes would account for the small number of hosiery workers who were neither immigrants nor the children of immigrants (28 out of 226, 10 males and 16 females). Local

women may have been unwilling to be employed and outsiders did not come, because they could not find suitable housing. In some communities, the homeowners' need for cash might have overcome such scruples, but St. Joseph homeowners could supplement their incomes by renting to summer visitors instead. The community was so popular as a resort that it was common for families to move into their own basements and rent their upstairs rooms to visitors for the summer. Factory workers did not earn enough to compete for rooms with summer visitors.³⁴

Although there is no specific evidence of ethnic prejudice in St. Joseph, it did occur elsewhere. Often, the status of an occupation was determined by the status of the people who were employed to perform such work. Work that was considered acceptable for "ladies" in some places was not acceptable in others. It often happened that native-born women refused to do the same work that immigrant and black women did.³⁵ It may have been that ethnic prejudice played a role in reducing the number of native-born women who were willing to work at the Cooper-Wells mill, where so many immigrant Germans were employed. Persons who evaluated jobs for women in terms of "status" and "gentility" may have paid more attention to the ethnicity of co-workers than to the work itself, to wage rates or to occupational opportunity.

In contrast to the above implications of an ethnic and class hierarchy in St. Joseph, another informant provided a

picture of cooperation and respect between natives and immigrants. She stressed that children attended the same public schools, that German craftsmen and shop-keepers were well-regarded and active in community affairs, that her neighbors who worked at Cooper-Wells were considered respectable people. J. Ogden Wells, the last family member to own the mill, often walked through the mill and addressed workers by name. Immigrant women who did domestic work, such as her own mother, made friends among the long-time St. Joseph residents. Her mother's former employer gave her a large plot of land on which to build a home when she married.³⁶

Without more data, it is impossible to completely resolve the question of the status of hosiery workers in St. Joseph. Employment patterns were more similar to the traditional European family-labor system than to the Lowell and Belding boarding-house style. The women employed at Cooper-Wells also fit the national profile of the typical woman worker at the turn of the century--young, single and immigrant.³⁷ The presence of German immigrants at Cooper-Wells probably attracted more to the mill. But whether this also made native workers avoid "the sock factory" is not clear. There might have been few native workers for a variety of other reasons. Native-born residents may have had greater occupational choices or less need for extra money; families might have preferred to keep unmarried daughters at home "helping mother"; a shortage of affordable housing and the lack of aggressive recruiting by the company might have

discouraged many who wished to work. By constructing a dormitory in 1919, the company implied that it subscribed to this last theory.

Like the Belding silk mills, the Cooper-Wells hosiery mill made it possible for young women and men to support themselves or to contribute to the family income. However, unlike Belding's, few of the Cooper-Wells' workers were "on their own". Most lived at home, many in a geographically defined immigrant neighborhood on the Lake Michigan beach, close to the mill. Unlike Belding Brothers and Company, Cooper-Wells had no investment in and made no claims regarding the quality and integrity of its workers. There was no compelling economic reason for the company to be concerned with its workers' status or living conditions, at least not until 1918.

The St. Joseph newspapers paid little attention to the hosiery mill or to its workers. Only boosterism or extraordinary events, such as a fire, strike or new construction, received mention. Perhaps this is to be expected since the hosiery mill and its workers were less important to St. Joseph than the silk mills and silk workers were to Belding's identity and prosperity. St. Joseph had a more complex economy which included other large factories, owned by other interests. In addition, it was also an important lake port and a mineral water and lakeside resort. These other economic activities attracted a diverse and transient population.

Comparatively speaking, St. Joseph was a "wide open" town in the late nineteenth century. Unlike Belding and Three Oaks, which were dominated by temperance advocates and were "dry" during much of this period, St. Joseph was very "wet." For many years, it had at least eleven saloons, and in 1916 voted to continue liquor sales, but was outvoted by the rest of the county. Street fights were common and parts of the town were decidedly "ramshackle" in the late nineteenth century. As lake and river shipping gave way to rail transportation, some of these seedy establishments closed. Others fell to business efforts to make the area more appealing as a summer resort, but the resort atmosphere included "first-class" public houses, elegant private saloons, and pool and billiard parlors, as well as the beach, an amusement park, and hotels for summer visitors.³⁰

Based on its size, the complexity of its economy and its transient and diverse population, St. Joseph was the most "urban" of these three communities. By 1920, St. Joseph possessed a number of new commercial buildings, hotels, theaters, schools and churches. Paved streets and sidewalks, new water and sewer systems, electricity, telephone service and recreational facilities were among the amenities which created a more pleasant physical environment for all the city's residents, including the mill workers.³¹ Unlike Belding, which was dominated by its image as "Michigan's Silk Mill City," and by the "worlds of girls" who worked there, St. Joseph did not identify itself as a mill

town, and was also very different from Three Oaks, the small farming village that was home to the Warren Featherbone Company.

Warren Featherbone Company

In contrast to the bustle and comparative complexity of economic and social life in St. Joseph, life in Three Oaks, the farming village that was the home of the Warren Featherbone Company, was quiet indeed. These population statistics reveal a gradual growth rate, except for the 1880-1890 decade: 1880, 474; 1890, 885; 1900, 994; 1910, 1175; 1920, 1362. By 1920, its population was only one-third the size of Belding's and one-fifth as large as St. Joseph's.⁴⁰ Nevertheless Warren Featherbone Company employed an average of 211 persons from 1893 to 1899, and 328 from 1900 to 1919, with a peak workforce of 527 in 1914 (See Appendix Table A-4). Like the other two firms, this company paid beginners a fixed amount, then moved them to piece work. Besides their regular factory workers, Warren Featherbone employed young people before and after school, on Saturdays and during school holidays, and a small number of "outside" workers to do piece work in their homes.⁴¹ The Warren company actively recruited female workers as sewers, winders and weavers. Between fifty and sixty percent of its workforce was female, less than in the other two companies, perhaps because of its more restricted labor pool or because the process of Featherbone manufacture provided fewer "women's" jobs.⁴²

The U. S. Census provides the following profile of Featherbone employees in 1900. Table IV-1 contains comparable data for Belding Brothers' and Cooper-Wells' workers. In the 1900 census for Three Oaks township, 192 persons (111 females and 81 males) identified themselves as Featherbone employees. Seventy-five percent (85) of the females and fifty percent (43) of the males were twenty-five or younger, making these workers slightly older on the average than those in the other two companies. Warren Featherbone employees were also more likely to be married. Only eighty percent (89) of the females and 50 percent (41) of the males were single.⁴³

The residence and family employment patterns of Featherbone workers were similar to those observed at Cooper-Wells, and unlike those at Belding. Nearly eighty percent lived with their families, usually with parents or spouses. Only forty (32 females and 8 males) listed themselves as "boarders." In 1892, a state factory inspector remarked that it was common for more than one family member to be employed at Featherbone. The 1900 census confirms this and lists 61 (of 192) who had a parent, child, spouse or sibling also employed at Featherbone. In addition, workers were probably related in ways not noted in the census.⁴⁴

With regard to national origin, the typical Featherbone employee was similar to workers at both Cooper-Wells and Belding Brothers. Like the Belding workers, most Featherbone employees were born in Michigan or in one of the neigh-

Table IV-1 Workforce Characteristics, 1900

	Belding Bros.	Cooper-Wells	Warren Co.
	No./Percent	No./Percent	No./Percent
Total	554	226	192
male	130/23%	83/37%	81/42%
female	424/76%	143/63%	111/58%
Under 25 by sex			
male	81/62%	67/80%	43/53%
female	348/82%	126/88%	85/76%
Single by sex			
male	76/60%	59/70%	41/50%
female	370/90%	136/95%	89/80%
Lived with family	261/47%	206/91%	152/79%
Boarders	294/53%	20/9%	40/20%
male	24	2	8
female	270	18	32
Michigan born	432/78%	72/32%	109/55%
Foreign born	47/.9%	126/55%	32/17%

Source: US. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900. Manuscript Population Schedules, St. Joseph Township and Three Oaks Township, Berrien County; Otisco Township, Ionia County, Michigan.

boring states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio or New York. Fifty-five percent (109) were born in Michigan and twenty-five percent (44) in one of its neighbors. Only seventeen percent (32) were born outside the United States. The Three Oaks' workers shared a strong German heritage with those in St. Joseph. Nineteen were born in Germany, and eighty (forty-one percent) had at least one German-born parent.

Bureau of Labor Reports and company records suggest that it was no easy task to maintain such a large workforce in such a small village. In 1892, an inspector remarked, "Much trouble was experienced in securing help here. . . [Girls] who leave home to work prefer the life and bustle of a town or city to the quiet of a hamlet."⁴⁰ Warren's was even willing to "borrow" workers. In 1903, when a fire destroyed the Cooper-Wells knitting mill, Warren's invited the temporarily "unemployed working girls of St. Joseph" to come to Three Oaks to work.⁴¹

In addition to this apparently chronic problem, the Warren Company experienced at least two specific periods of labor shortage. The first occurred between 1898 and 1904 during a rapid increase in demand for featherbone, and a second time during World War I. In order to increase production around the turn of the century, Warren Featherbone had to open branch plants in Chicago, in Porter (Indiana), and in Middleville (Michigan), because labor and housing were not available in Three Oaks. The company later devel-

oped machinery that reduced the number of workers needed, closed those branch plants and consolidated all production at Three Oaks, but for at least five years, it struggled to keep up with orders.⁴⁷

In 1914 and in 1918, the company again had trouble meeting production demands. The minutes of a September 11, 1918 meeting of department heads reveal aspects of the labor supply situation in Three Oaks and of management and worker power. (The power dimensions of this incident will be explored in the next chapter.) The company was behind in several orders, especially on items made at home by "outside" workers. Warren Featherbone had long employed outside workers to manufacture, finish, mend and package their products. Representatives delivered the necessary machines and materials as needed. Despite the current pressing situation, some of their most productive workers were not working. As one of the department heads said, "They have all sorts of excuses lately, taking vacations, getting the children ready for school and canning." The staff pointed out that some of these people had four different machines in their homes and that it cost the company when they were not used. It did no good to threaten to take the machines away, because they had no other workers to give them to. They had a list of people who did "homework", but many of them refused this particular job, preferring to do other kinds of work. The staff finally decided to rent a building in a neighboring town and hire new workers to make the 464 dozen

guimpes (stiff frames for combination high collars and dress yokes) and 2134 gross (144 yard coils) girdelin (stiffening for waist bands) they needed. The founder, E. K. Warren's annoyed comment, "let them whistle up here," suggests that Three Oaks people who wouldn't work then were risking future idleness.⁴⁸

Like the Cooper-Wells hosiery workers who risked their factory jobs when they choose to pick berries in the summer, these village women were willing to take the chance. Implicitly, their wages from Warren Featherbone were not their families' only source of income, and their economic situation was such that, at times at least, they could choose among wage labor, household tasks and leisure.

As desirable as this ability to choose was for the workers, it was most inconvenient for the company. This incident underscores the truth of a state inspector's earlier remark, "Much trouble was experienced in securing help here."⁴⁹ Three Oaks' small labor pool was a distinct disadvantage for the manufacturer. This was probably one of the reasons that, according to Edward Kirk Warren, the inventor and owner of the company, it was "contrary to best business interests and against the wishes of outside directors" to keep the Featherbone factory in Three Oaks.⁵⁰ On the one hand, Warren Featherbone was in a good position to hire. It was in a seller's market, no other organization in the village employed more than a few people. On the other hand, people were not waiting in line for jobs either. In econom-

ic terms, the labor supply was inelastic at the upper end; it had limits to expansion.

Of the three villages, Three Oaks had the fewest facilities to attract outsiders. Comparatively speaking, its housing, employment, business and educational opportunities were rather limited. Neither was it exciting enough to attract people who were interested in a "good time." After 1899, there was not even one saloon. The school, various clubs and the churches organized most social events, such as picnics, skating parties, "socials," and amateur theatricals. The Opera House opened in 1891 and was the site of many of these activities, as well as hosting dances and professional travelling entertainers. There were no regular movies in Three Oaks until 1909. Three Oaks was close to Lake Michigan and people could easily take the train to Chicago or to other places, but the village itself was small and quiet.²¹

Most of the men and women who worked for Warren's were from the village itself, from nearby farms, or had moved there to join relatives. Proximity to home and family and neighborliness were valued aspects of employment at Warren's. The factory's five-minute warning whistle gave time for many to leave home and still arrive at work on time. People could leave their work briefly to meet some domestic emergency. Singing on the job and sharing treats with co-workers were also routine. Even though wages were low, local people were "willing to go to work." As one former

employee said, "We needed the money. Featherbone was handy. There was not much else available." For most employees, Warren Featherbone was not a place to make one's fortune, or even to learn a skill which could bring mobility. It was a place to earn a modest income in the company of one's neighbors and relations.²²

Conclusion

Although they operated in relatively small communities, each of these three firms was successful in getting the numbers and quality of workers needed to maintain profitable manufacturing for at least thirty years. The state factory inspectors document consistently large workforces in each company. However, since the companies also supplemented factory production by employing "homeworkers" and school children on a part-time basis, it appears that the labor supply was not over-abundant in any of these towns. Unlike conditions in major urban centers, these village homeworkers did not deprive factory workers of jobs, nor did they depress their wages. One historian observed that "the supply of homeworkers in industrial cities was virtually inexhaustible."²³ This was not the case in small cities, particularly in Three Oaks. Within the factory itself, part-time workers were generally considered less efficient than full-timers because the companies had to invest in machines which were used only part-time, and yet had to provide training and supervision for more workers.²⁴ On the

other hand, the school children and the homeworkers formed a "reserve" labor supply, that could be utilized during busy times and let go during slow times. Their skills and training could be called upon again later, and some might even become full-time workers. Their part-time status was no disadvantage when doing hand work which did not require the use of machines, such as making sample cards and mending.

Despite contemporary concerns about the appropriateness of wage labor for women and the existence of widely held negative images of factory labor, fifty to eighty per cent of their total workforces were single women under twenty-five. All three of these companies specifically sought women workers. Their recruiting appeals had much in common. Cooper-Wells announced: "Twenty-five knitters wanted....Only young ladies from 16 to 25 years of age need apply." Warren Featherbone's advertising read: "More Help Wanted-25 to 50 persons to run single winders. Women and girls preferred." Only Belding Brothers and Company acknowledged the debate over the appropriateness of factory employment for women. This firm did more than advertise for workers, it published lengthy pamphlets designed to assure readers that its women employees were "happy and contented young ladies."==

Even though most of the workers at each company were single young women, there were also differences among them with regard to sex, age, marital status, nativity and residence. Belding Brothers employed the most, and Warren

Featherbone, the fewest women. Cooper-Wells was the only company near a large immigrant population. Its male and female employees were the youngest, the most likely to be single, the most likely to live with family and the most likely to be foreign born. In contrast, Belding Brothers and Company employed mostly native born women, over half of whom lived on their own, as boarders, or "adrift" in period language. The Warren Featherbone Company workers were also mostly native born, but slightly older, more likely to be married, and more likely to live with their families. Perhaps it was appropriate, even necessary, for Belding Brothers and Company to assert that its mill girls were "ladies" and to provide housing for them, because it deviated from the acceptable social pattern by having so many young women living away from home.

Whether the workers lived in a dormitory or with their families, there is only anecdotal information about the way their wages were spent. Having multiple wage earners was a common working class family survival strategy.²⁴ Presumably the married workers spent their money on household needs, and the young people's wages went in varying proportions to the family and to their own purposes--leisure, clothes, education and savings. All of those interviewed were matter-of-fact about their contributions to the family. "We were a poor family." "I quit school, got a [work] permit, and went to work the next day. I wanted to help Dad support the family (ten children)." Others used to money to "get

really dressed up" and to put themselves through business college. One woman's parents let her keep her money "if she didn't waste it."⁷ Even those who kept all their wages and supported themselves contributed indirectly to the family economy by reducing pressure on family resources.

At the turn of the century, rural and small town residents welcomed wage labor. Especially for women and girls, there were relatively few employment opportunities in mid-Michigan. Compared to teaching, domestic work and farm labor, factory work was relatively easy to learn and easy to do, and at least as well paid. One of the employers, Belding Brothers and Company, described the situation this way: "the girls in our employ here in Belding are the daughters of farmers, who have come to work in our mills preferring such work to the farm drudgery." Some of the mill workers echoed these sentiments: "On the farm we received nothing for our work, save when father could give us a little, and we had much more fatiguing work to do."⁸ Later Belding Company publicity and recruiting brochures became quite extravagant in their claims:

[Silk mill work]...is one of the most desirable fields of labor in the entire West and...when compared for hours of labor, remuneration, and the comforts of life...with the drudgery and privation experienced by the large majority of school teachers, stenographers, and music teachers, it must be admitted that the silk mill girls...have by far the best of it.⁹

Readers need not agree that silk mill work, or any kind of factory work was "desirable." The long hours put in at all three firms were clearly fatiguing. Wages at best were only

"average women's wages", but the brochure accurately pointed out that most women had limited choices.

Factory work was not genteel, but in these three settings, it was relatively clean and safe, provided a predominantly female social environment and avoided the stigma of personal service. Under these conditions, rural and immigrant women and men who had no previous industrial experience willingly accepted factory jobs, and industrial labor became part of village life. The next chapter will examine management philosophy, social interaction on the job, and patterns of conflict and accomodation experienced in these three village industries.

CHAPTER V: INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Social systems, including those in industry, are composed of a variety of elements--ideological, structural and behavioral. The character of industrial relations is a product of the interaction of these elements: of the ideas or philosophy which guide managerial and employee actions; of the formal organization of work and discipline on the job; of the informal patterns which characterize interaction among managers, workers and the community at large. The distribution of social power, the emergence of conflict and the means of resolving it are conditioned by this complex of factors.

Knowledge about the details of day-to-day interaction among workers, managers and the community in these three village factories is far from complete. In the absence of such detailed information, conclusions must necessarily be tentative. Nevertheless, general knowledge about organization in the textile industry, U. S. census data, state inspectors' reports, interviews and company documents offer scattered insights. In addition, each of these three companies experienced specific episodes which attracted the attention of local newspapers and which provide a record of selected aspects of industrial relations. Together the evidence yields some understanding of the philosophy, structure and exercise of power at these three locations. After providing a brief overview of those aspects of industrial relations that Belding Brothers, Cooper-Wells and Warren

Featherbone had in common, this chapter will examine each company in detail and discuss some of the factors which modified the formal distribution of power in these village industries.

Each of these factories followed the standard hierarchical pattern common in the textile industry. Owners-/stockholders elected officers and directors, who in turn selected the general manager and plant superintendent. These officials jointly determined major policies, sometimes including department heads in decisions regarding production and personnel. Managers determined wages and hours unilaterally within the context of economics, local custom and law. According to one trade journal, ideally each level of employees should have only one boss--one person who gives orders or reprimands. "The manager should deal directly with the superintendent only; the superintendent directly with the foreman of each department; each foreman directly with the help under his charge."¹ In these companies, there were no formal methods for workers to participate in decision-making; no collective bargaining over wages, hours or working conditions; and no pre-existing artisan tradition to resist industrial discipline.²

All three companies were primarily family businesses in which most if not all of the stock was owned by family members. The owners/founders or their sons usually served as president until their deaths or retirements. Direct personal contact and continuity of management personnel were

hallmarks in all these firms. Throughout the forty-year period of this study, the owners were well-known by sight, and themselves knew many employees by sight and name. Plant superintendents and department heads also tended to hold their jobs for a long time, and acquired informal reputations among the workers, who characterized them variously as friendly, "good" bosses, sneaky, "no nonsense" people. Social science research suggests that face-to-face association plays an important role in maintaining feelings of "belonging" in a large enterprise, decreasing alienation so that people are more likely to feel that those in authority understand and listen to their concerns. Such "personal" involvement in supervision and claims of "interest" in employees' well-being, while not necessarily hypocritical, serve to legitimize management authority.³

The workers developed their own informal social networks, since they lived together in the same small community, and knew nearly everyone by name and face. Co-workers were likely to be neighbors, relatives, residents in the same boarding house or members of the same church. The workers also developed a "style" or "work culture," in response to the limitations and opportunities of their jobs. Although they adapted to the requirements of factory work, they considered some aspects of their jobs oppressive. They evolved their own definitions of justice and inequity, of fair treatment and rewards for labor, and a sense of pride in their skill and economic achievement.⁴

Philosophy and Practice at Belding Brothers

Belding Brothers and Company was unusual in publicizing its philosophy regarding wages and industrial relations. It seemed to be very conscious of contemporary criticisms of capitalist industry and persistent in offering its own views on industrial relations in a series of brochures, in advertising copy and in interviews. According to this philosophy, treating workers "well" suited both justice and good business practices. From this point of view, fair management yielded a reward in loyal, active workers. A 1907 Belding Brothers and Company Souvenir booklet remarked:

...experience had taught them that highly intelligent, contented and well-paid employees will produce goods of superior quality, and are in the long run the most economical, because such treatment inspires an active interest in the success of the establishment.²

The company made no claims to altruism, only to justice and good business. In 1917, Frederick Howard, mill superintendent said:

We do not claim to be philanthropists. We are only doing what common sense and good business judgement dictates....Our idea is covered in the sentiment of seeing the other fellow's side of the question, in other words, what would suit us if we were in their place.³

Taking advantage of the current interest in corporate welfare, a 1918 advertising campaign addressed the fifteen million readers of leading women's magazines in an effort to gain "friendship for Belding Silks among clubwomen." Using the slogan, "The Silks with Happiness Woven into Them," these presentations featured silk workers' opportunities for

leisure and play, and "the very practical...welfare programs of the House of Belding." In order to show that "Belding girls live well-balanced lives," the advertisements included portraits of silk workers relaxing in the dormitory parlors, playing tennis and boating on the river. There were also photos of the new Alvah N. Belding Memorial Library, a recent corporate gift to the city.⁷

These advertisements referred to the Belding company's "practical welfare programs," however, besides providing housing and a few recreation activities, the company did little that fits the definition of "welfare capitalism." There was no school, store, welfare worker, doctor, profit-sharing plan, newspaper or "Americanization" program. The company housing seems to have been a straightforward recruiting device, common in small communities where housing was limited. It was probably inspired by the Belding brothers' observations of textile villages in their home state, Massachusetts. There is no evidence that their philosophy was a response to any particular labor problem of absenteeism, high labor turnover or fear of unionization--which seemed to have inspired much of the welfare capitalism of the 1910-1930 period.⁸ Young women in small towns like Belding did not capriciously quit their jobs with the town's major employer; labor organizers were unlikely to expend a lot of time and energy in Belding. It is best to take the Belding Brothers at their word, they were inspired by justice and good business.

Company spokesmen made it clear that they wanted only workers who came for "business" and not for a "good time." That's why the boarding houses had a ten p.m. lights out policy. The investment in housing would be repaid only by the effort and attention of well-rested workers. Healthy, contented, energetic and serious workers supported the company's view that employers and employees had common, not competing interests.

The young ladies who earn the most money are the cheapest labor for the company to employ...the young lady who is doing the most for herself is at the same time doing the most to promote her employer's interests. It is nothing more or less than a partnership, in which both are interested in producing the best results.⁹

It was not of course an equal partnership, but one in which the owners and the superintendents unilaterally set standards, wages and hours.

Although the Belding brothers visited Belding frequently, it had not been their home since about 1865. Daily operations and policies were determined by Frederick A. Washburn, who was the superintendent of the first mill from 1885 to 1920, and by Frederick W. Howard, superintendent of the other three mills from 1890 to 1928. In the early twentieth century, superintendent Howard was nicknamed "Pappy" or "Daddy" Howard, suggesting both affection and paternal authority. Both men walked through the mills every day, speaking to supervisors and workers, especially to those who had worked there a long time or who lived in company dormitories.¹⁰

Although these men adopted a friendly, non-punitive style, it was still their responsibility to enforce industrial discipline. They required regular attendance, attention to the job, and the achievement of a certain skill level. Workers were fired ("let go") if they didn't show up for work regularly, if they couldn't perform a job skillfully, or if they habitually neglected their machines and produced damaged goods. Lower level supervisors varied in reputation--some were considered forbidding and aloof, others inspired affection. Kinship ties between supervisors and workers sometimes caused charges of favoritism, but were not major problems. Untypically for their time and industry, the Belding mills did not levy fines for mistakes or tardiness. Formal mill hierarchy was modified by the need for weavers to exercise initiative in arranging their own work to best advantage. Within limits, weavers were encouraged to "be their own bosses," in order to achieve maximum quality and output. Stupid or inattentive weavers were very costly. In general, former silk workers remember their bosses as kind people who "didn't feel themselves above the girls." None recalled incidents or fear of sexual harassment, and many recalled specific examples of kindness or solicitude. The company had no welfare workers nor did it monitor behavior outside working hours, except to enforce dormitory rules for the one-fourth to one-third of their employees who resided there.¹¹

Former silk workers felt that working at the Belding

mills offered them some flexibility in meeting their own needs. People often worked in the same room with friends or relatives, and enjoyed conversation while at work. They had opportunities to work in different departments, and most enjoyed the variety. The company routinely excused them for doctor's appointments or if they were ill. High school girls and boys could work before and after school, on Saturdays and during summer vacations. Married women moved in and out of the mills, according to their family's needs and the demand for labor. Some women earned extra money doing work at home, such as spooling. The company supplied the machine and paid piecework rates.¹²

In contrast to the frequent layoffs common in some branches of the textile industry, these silk mills provided steady work. By limiting themselves to staple items, the Belding mills maintained production throughout the year, although demand and output were the greatest in the spring and fall. Work interruptions were not seasonal, but were caused by repairs, vacations, and periods of general economic disturbance, such as the 1894 depression and the disruptions caused by the First World War.¹³ Even when business was not going well, as in most of 1915, the company promised to try to maintain full operations at the Belding mills.

We will cut our expenses at every other point before we cut labor hours, and we will cut hours at every other point before we cut them in Belding. The Belding mills and Belding laborers will be looked after in preference to all others.¹⁴

The company seems to have kept this promise. Such reliable

employment was extremely attractive, and Belding's workers were pleased to know that if they did good work, their jobs were guaranteed.

However, generally good conditions in the industry and in the community did not prevent the emergence of labor-management tensions. Long hours, monotony, economic need and the chronic powerlessness of factory work were facts of life that placed even Belding's "happy and contented" workers under considerable stress. The company repeatedly asserted that its unilaterally determined policies were mutually beneficial to workers and the firm, but employees did not always agree. Suggesting this underlying tension are three incidents, in 1900, 1905, and again in 1920, when groups of silk workers walked out of the mills in protest over wage rates. Details are sketchy but these episodes underline aspects of workers' consciousness and of the company's management style. In each incident, workers demanded a wage increase and the company refused.

In the first instance, in 1900, all thirty one-ounce spoolers in Belding Brothers Mill #1 walked out, protesting that an announced change from hourly rates to piece work would reduce their pay. They demanded a return to hourly rates and a ten cents an hour raise with no production minimum. Superintendent Howard dismissed their grievance, calling it an overreaction and misunderstanding. According to Howard, only two of the thirty were changed to piece work, with the personal assurance that they would not re-

ceive less than they had previously earned at hourly rates. Howard defended the company's policy and denied charges that the company was unfair.

This company always has and does now pay good wages, treats every employee fairly and with consideration from every point of view. The statement that girls are employed at fifty or sixty cents per day, cannot earn enough to live on, etc., are wholly false.¹⁶

The State Factory Inspector's Report suggests that in 1900, the average daily wage in the Belding thread mill was about 83 cents, a modest sum, even at that time. Nevertheless, Howard refused to alter the posted rate change and within a few days all but three of the spoolers returned to work, presumably at the new rate of pay.¹⁶

Wages had probably risen slightly by 1905, to an average of close to 90 cents a day, based on a sample taken by a factory inspector.¹⁷ However, a number of spoolers still felt this was inadequate. In 1905, sixteen spoolers at the other thread mill, the Richardson, staged a walkout to reinforce their demand for a wage increase. Responding in much the same way as Howard, Superintendent Washburn expressed regret at their discontent and invited them to return to work. According to the newspaper, only one of the sixteen strikers returned. It's hard to interpret the fifteen refusals. Were they angry, embarrassed at losing a confrontation, ostracized by other workers? The Belding Banner labelled this "A Foolish Strike," arguing that the strikers' average wage was more than a dollar a day, and ten of them boarded at the company boarding house, paying only

\$2.00 a week. The newspaper obviously considered a dollar a day to be enough, but it also overestimated the average wage, which was closer to 90 cents.¹⁶

The largest strike, in 1920, lasted nearly a week and involved the best paid and most highly skilled women workers, the weavers. The most skilled weaver ran four looms and could earn \$58.00 in two weeks while room and board cost only \$6.88. They petitioned for an increase in the piece rate from seven cents to nine cents a yard. This would have raised their wages approximately \$1.00 a day. When the management refused, 120 weavers walked out, leaving only a few on the job. The few girls and older women who remained at work were labelled "slackers" when they came out of the mills at the end of the workday. In spite of their apparent unity of purpose, these strikers were also defeated. Superintendent Howard invited them return to work at existing rates or "pick up their pay." He attributed the incident to a "misunderstanding...in regard to a new method of measuring the cloth" and said the company would consider the question of an advance "later."¹⁷

These events provide a number of insights into relations between the Belding company and its employees. First, they indicate that some tensions did exist, that the workers were not completely convinced that that company saw "the other fellow's side of the question." On the other hand, there also seemed to be an expectation that if their wishes were known, they would be granted, or at least they did not

fear reprisals. Second, these events reveal some aspects of work culture. Workers defined their own interests, agreed among themselves on a "fair" wage, and achieved enough solidarity to join together in common action, even briefly. In one instance, they even chided those who remained at work for undercutting this solidarity. However, in no case did workers from other departments or other mills join a walk-out, or even offer moral support. This lack of support implies a low level of class consciousness and solidarity among other Belding workers. Third, the company tried to discredit the walkouts and justify its policies. It did not "bad mouth" the workers, but suggested there was a "misunderstanding." The company implicitly acknowledged a responsibility to pay decent wages and to respond to legitimate grievances by a majority of workers. As far as can be determined, there was no retaliation against the strikers, all of whom were invited back to work, and who continued to live in company boarding houses, even during the strikes. There were no lockouts and no blacklists. Finally, the superintendents' responses demonstrate the company's conviction that it was their prerogative to run the mills as they saw fit, and that they had the power to do so.

Given that power, the company's responses were quite restrained. Perhaps the company judged that there was little widespread dissatisfaction, and that strong measures were unnecessary. The workers had few options. The strikes were spontaneous attempts to exert some control over their

working conditions and were not aided by any labor organization. No other employees joined them. The spoolers were vulnerable to replacement, since there were relatively few of them and their jobs could be learned quickly. The solidarity of the fifteen spoolers in 1905 did not earn them a wage increase. Whether in anger or embarrassment, they quit their jobs, rather than continue under the old rules. In theory, the weavers were in a much stronger bargaining position. It would take a lot longer to train 100 new weavers, but they also failed.

The walkouts seem to have had no effect on working conditions and a negative impact on workers' consciousness and power. They made so little impact on the community that they practically disappeared from the town's memory. By 1920, the newspaper was unaware of the earlier strikes and erroneously labelled the weaver's strike "the first walkout ever in the history of the local silk mills."²⁰ Even the silk workers themselves forgot them. None of the former silk workers interviewed remembered them, even though they were all in town (not necessarily working) during at least one of the strikes. These incidents are the only recorded evidence of concerted resistance to corporate authority. Except for these events, labor-management tensions in Belding were dealt with on an individual not a group basis.

A combination of factors militated against the emergence of a strong adversarial relation between silk workers and their employers in Belding. Most obvious were the

community's dependence on the mills, the workers' vulnerability to replacement and the absence of comparable alternative employment. These factors could have prevented even the weavers from pressing their advantage. Their mutual interdependence could also have inspired caution both in the company and the strikers. Furthermore, since the workers had no organizational support, perhaps the company felt so secure in its control that it judged that threats and retaliation were unnecessary to enforce its authority. The fact that all the strikes involved only women workers was also a consideration. As indicated in this passage from a recruitment brochure, the company repeatedly stressed that their workers were "ladies."

Here the young women employed in the mills are required to be ladies in the fullest sense of the word, and they are received and treated by the people of the city as such.²¹

The women welcomed such a characterization and the lady image discouraged activism. Society in general tended to regard women as secondary, temporary workers. Employers, the state and many workers expected women's wages to be smaller than men's, and insufficient to support a family. Even among reformers, there was often more emphasis on preserving women's capacity to fulfill domestic roles, than in guaranteeing secure, well paid employment. There was little societal pressure to raise women's wages above, or even up to, the amount needed to support one person.²²

In addition, there was general acceptance of the idea that private enterprise and gain could coexist with humane

social relations between workers and employers. Communities accepted economic inequality, but also expected employers to demonstrate a paternalistic regard for their employees' well-being. Belding Brothers and Company acknowledged a moral obligation to treat workers fairly. The Belding newspaper's label for the 1905 walkout as "A Foolish Strike" apparently expressed the feelings of some in the village that the strike was inappropriate.²³ Granted a measure of respect and consideration, steady work and moderate wages, many felt that the mills had indeed met their obligations. There was no public demand for economic democracy. In such a setting, the concept of worker power scarcely existed, much less its formal institutionalization. The kind of face-to-face knowledge typical of village life encouraged the perception that managers were primarily individuals and neighbors, not representatives of a hostile, abstract economic power. In such a setting, young female employees were especially unlikely to continue resistance. The Belding silk workers had no local tradition, ideology, labor organization or previous experience to guide them in a confrontation with their employers.

Philosophy and Practice at Cooper-Wells

Compared to Belding Brothers and Company, Cooper-Wells made few public statements regarding its management philosophy. There were no publicity or recruiting brochures, no casual interviews with visiting reporters. The character of

industrial relations at Cooper-Wells must be gleaned from general data regarding material working conditions, from state factory inspectors' reports, from interviews with city residents and from newspaper accounts of a brief strike in 1905. This was the only recorded job action at this mill, and it involved only women workers. Nevertheless, this incident reveals important details about conditions in the mill and provides insights into the values, expectations and distribution of social power in this industrializing mid-western community.

The strike began on a warm Friday afternoon in April, when about 200 women, "some of them young and some of them older," refused to continue working. They walked out because management would not let them open the windows from the bottom. At the time, the mill employed about 430 people, approximately 260 women and 170 men. According to local accounts, which dubbed the walkout a "Fresh Air Strike", the dispute was directly related to physical conditions in the current mill, which had been constructed in 1903, only two years earlier.²⁴

Michigan Bureau of Labor inspectors who examined this new mill in 1904, judged it to be "one of the most up-to-date hosiery mills in the United States." The 1905 Report complimented Cooper-Wells and Company:

They employ only the highest grade of skilled workers and give great care and attention to the questions of light, heating, ventilation, and fine drinking water, as well as other small matters that pertain to the comfort and health of their employees...[A] rest room is equipped with chairs

and couches and a medicine cabinet.²⁰

Despite this evaluation, the mill had some drawbacks. In this new building, only every other window could be opened; alternate windows lacked weights and pulleys and were nailed shut. Ventilation was further restricted because the company permitted the windows to be opened only from the top. Apparently in an effort to prevent workers from looking out the windows, all lower sashes had frosted glass. Therefore opening the lower sashes would defeat the purpose of the frosting.

The workers were dissatisfied with this arrangement. They had probably opened all the windows in the old mill, which had been only forty feet wide. This new building was sixty-seven feet wide and had thirteen foot ceilings. Opening windows only from the top provided little air circulation at the level of the workers. They reported that they had survived the previous summer only because they had opened the bottom windows about six inches, in spite of company policy. They said they needed a draft at the level of the machines to stir the "cloud of lint that hangs about the cotton machines." On other warm days earlier in April 1905, they had raised the lower sashes as they had the year before. However, this option was no longer available because a supervisor had recently had them nailed shut. He had done this because he said he had found one girl "flirting" from one of these windows. Deprived of their customary air, 200 knitters, loopers, menders and transfer girls on

the second floor walked out. According to local accounts, Lena Herman, Lizzie Mielke and Frances Guardokus initiated the walkout. All but six women on the second floor joined them and left the factory cheering.²⁴

That same afternoon, Cooper-Wells tried to discredit the strikers' claim that the open windows were needed. Management invited five citizens, including the mayor, two doctors and two clergymen, to inspect the mill and "look into the matter of proper ventilation." Only two were available, Dr. Edward Witt and Rev. Henry Roblee, and they expressed the opinion that "the place seemed thoroughly aired."²⁵ The strikers were not surprised that they had found the room to be pleasant when no one was in it and the machines had not been running. However a spokeswoman insisted that it was a hardship to work in a room containing "some 300 people working side by side with a dust and lint producing material like cotton and no air circulating except at the top of the room." The strikers also rejected management claims that it was necessary to close the lower sashes because the workers spent a lot a time flirting from the windows. They said they had no objection to the company firing girls who flirted from the windows, because "they didn't do that anyway."²⁶

Company spokesmen took an immediate hard line in response to the walkout. That same Friday afternoon, managers announced that they would shut down the mill "indefinitely" or until the strikers "agreed...to comply with the

rules." Furthermore, they stated that the "ring leaders" would not be taken back. On Saturday, the workers were locked out. Charles Gess, a foreman, told them that they could not return to work before Tuesday. Even then, only those who signed a contract promising to abide by company rules would be admitted, and the "ring leaders" would be excluded. Later statements continued this tone. Spokesmen noted that the warehouses were full and the mill could easily afford to remain closed for a while. They pointed out that although they preferred that "home people have their old positions," they could easily replace the strikers. This was not an idle threat. Six weeks earlier, a knitting company in Elkhart, Indiana, only forty miles to the south, had gone out of business and laid off 200 employees, many of whom were probably available.²⁷

The strikers did not seem to have been intimidated by the lockout or by the threat to replace them. Some had no qualms about maintaining a lady-like image and threatened "hair pulling and head breaking...if any strike breakers come in here." On Saturday, a hurriedly called meeting drew about ninety women who signed a promise that they would not sign the new rules, nor would they return to work unless the company took back all the strikers, even those the company wanted to blacklist. In Monday's paper, Frank Crockett, a new reporter for The Evening Press, who had helped the strikers compose their pledge, praised the "girls'" "enthusiastic organization" which permitted them to "present a

solid front in the fight for better ventilation." On Sunday, nearly 200 workers had assembled at a local hall, where they listened to speakers and gathered more signatures to their document of resistance and solidarity. According to the newspaper in the neighboring town of Buchanan, they were united by the slogan "All the fresh air we can get or we don't go back to work."³⁰

Among the speakers at the Sunday meeting was John V. Starr, a former mayor of St. Joseph. He urged the women to practice moderation and justice. "If this is done, I believe the good citizens of St. Joseph will see that there is fair play and that the rights of the girls are safe guarded." The workers adopted his suggestion that they select a committee to arbitrate the conflict with Cooper-Wells and Company. The citizens who served in this capacity were Father Esper, pastor of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Dr. R. Clark Allen, physician, Dr. Charles E. Burchfield, dentist, and Fred A. Potter, City Supervisor and proprietor of a drug store.³¹

These individuals, as well as some others in the community seemed to agree that the demand for "the right to breathe" was not unreasonable. Employees of the Truscott Boat Company, a local manufacturer of pleasure boats, offered financial aid to the strikers. According to The Evening Press, "many assurances from businessmen and other citizens of sympathy for the girls in their fresh air fight has encouraged them to continue the struggle." However, the

paper offered no proof or further examples of such support.

One group whose support was conspicuously absent was that of the men and women who worked in other departments at Cooper-Wells. On Monday, May 1, when the second floor knitters, loopers, transfer girls and menders were locked out, about 150 people, mostly men, went to work in the finishing, ribbing, dying, bordering and shipping departments. By this time, about thirty of the strikers had themselves agreed to return to work on company terms.³²

Although the strike had begun only on Friday afternoon, it quickly escalated from a relatively minor dispute over open vs. closed windows to a classic management-labor power confrontation. Speaking for the company, J. Ogden Wells, son of the owner and founder, said:

It's simply a question of who will run the mill.
We can't afford to have our help dictate to us.
All the girls want is to rubber out the window and
that means a money loss to us in that they can't
run the machines and rubber at the same time.³³

After initially denying that there was any problem, management relented and agreed to changes to make ventilation "satisfactory", and dropped its threat to blacklist the initiators of the walkout. The question of ventilation was less important to the company than establishing the principle of management prerogative.

In exchange for these "concessions," the company insisted that strikers agree in writing to a list of eight work rules. Company representatives said that these rules had been in effect for some time. They had not required

employees to formally acknowledge them, because before the strike, they had had "confidence" in their help. The strike had destroyed that confidence. Therefore, strikers, but not other employees, would now have to give formal consent to these rules.³⁴ The rules were as follows:

WORK RULES - Cooper-Wells & Co. - St. Joseph, Mich.

1. Hours of work will be from 7 o'clock to 12 and from 1 to 6. Employees must be in their places ready to begin work at 7 and at 1.
2. Employees must not destroy any property belonging to the company not carry any stocking, waste or other material into the toilet rooms.
3. Employees must not visit one another during working hours nor shall they visit other departments during the noon hour.
4. Employees must give two weeks notice before leaving voluntarily or forfeit one week's pay.
5. It is strictly forbidden that employees stay away from work without permission of their overseer; in case of sickness word must be sent.
6. Any employee attempting to incite a strike or create a disturbance while in the employ of Cooper, Wells & Co. will be discharged at once.
7. Employees must obey all orders of the overseer or superintendent.
8. Any employee not strictly obeying these orders is liable to be discharged.

This was the company's position when the worker-selected citizen's group met with Cooper-Wells' officials on Monday, May 1. The company was not really concerned about windows or ventilation, but about industrial discipline and management rights. The work rules specified working hours, prohibited vandalism and theft, restricted movement and conversation within the mill, required regular attendance at

work except when ill, and required employees to give two weeks notice before quitting. The company made no comparable guarantee of two weeks' notice before layoffs. According to these rules, Cooper-Wells could discharge any employee who attempted to incite a strike, or who disobeyed any rule or order of a supervisor. It could hardly have been more sweeping in its demands.

These rules are quite similar to a model list of "Knitting Mill Rules" published in a 1899 trade journal, Textile World and Industrial Record. The journal argued that posting rules increased the quality and quantity of production and avoided "the disagreeable necessity of frequent verbal corrections." These 1899 rules not only prohibited visitors, eating, smoking and spitting, but also "laughing, talking and singing." Even when machines were stopped for repairs, workers were forbidden to gather at windows. Violators could be fined from ten cents to twenty-five cents, or even dismissed. Clearly, factory life was not supposed to be enjoyable.⁵⁰

Cooper-Wells' management clearly understood the broad issues involved in the strike, but Father Esper and Supervisor Potter, who mediated the dispute, indicated no awareness of them. Because the company agreed to open all the windows from the top, instead of opening only alternate windows, Esper and Potter announced, "Girls, you have won the strike, for we have a concession from the company--they will accede to your demand for more fresh air." While it is true that

the strikers had said they wanted "only the right to breathe," they were also seeking recognition for the right to decide how much fresh air was enough, i.e., a say in working conditions. The "work rules" explicitly denied such a right. And although the proffered settlement promised "more" fresh air, it was not at the level of the workers, but at the ceiling. Esper and Potter were satisfied with this offer. After their visit to the mill on Monday, they reported that it was "well-ventilated," clean, orderly and in "first-class condition," echoing the opinion of the state factory inspector who described it as "one of the most up-to-date hosiery mills in the United States, [giving] great care and attention to the question of light, heating and ventilation."³⁶

The workers were not disputing the condition of the mill, except with regard to fresh air. They must have been disappointed when even their own representatives failed to make a distinction between adequate ventilation in an empty, idle mill, and one in which two hundred people are operating machines. Nevertheless, there is no record of a public dissent. The strikers agreed to call off the strike if none were blacklisted and all were allowed to return to their jobs.³⁷

When the mill reopened all departments on Tuesday, May 2, one local newspaper account was euphoric:

The fair strikers have returned to their duties at the knitting factory. They are happy. The company officials are pleased to have them return. They also are happy. Business men and others

indirectly interested are happy, too. Everybody is thus made happy and the whistle of the mill sounds better than ever.

It is unlikely that all parties were as "happy" as this indicates. All second-floor workers, except the six who had not struck, were asked to sign the work rules. Violating the pledges made only two days earlier, one hundred eighty-four strikers signed them. Although their opinions have not been recorded, the six strikers who did not return to work may have understood the underlying meaning of the conflict and of its apparent resolution. Five of these, Frances Guardokus (identified in the newspaper as one of the initiators), Stella Showers, Cora Morden, Maud Van Brunt, and Helen Langer, came to the mill and publicly refused to sign the work rules.³⁰

These few refusals suggest that not all the participants agreed that the "girls" had won. The settlement was not a total victory; it included several negative aspects from the workers' point of view. First, they did not get exactly what they had sought, the right to regulate the windows as they wished and a breeze at the level of the machines. The company did promise to make ventilation "satisfactory," without specifying who would define "satisfactory," management or workers. A newspaper from a nearby town reported that on really hot days, the windows could be opened at the bottom, and if necessary, the company would also cut holes in the floor to increase circulation.³¹ These extra details were not reported in St. Joseph papers.

Second, company threats to blacklist the "ringleaders" probably discouraged others from expressing dissatisfaction in the future. Third, the price for the "concessions" of open windows and no blacklist was written agreement to a sweeping list of rules, which formalized the near-absolute authority of management over the actions of their employees on the job. From the company's point of view, things could hardly have worked out better.

Work culture had identified unacceptable working conditions and inspired collective protest. Standing together, immigrant and native women of various ages had won modest improvements in their working conditions. They had received a certain degree of support and sympathy from some segments of the community, but were basically on their own, lacking a formal organization and history of united action. The strike revealed a lack of solidarity among the workers in different parts of the mill, and among workers throughout the town. No other departments came to the aid of the second-floor workers, and except for the workers at Truscott Boat, there is no record of working class support, even from the dozen or so trade unions that participated in St. Joseph's Labor Day observances.⁴⁰

The working class may have had little reaction, but this, the only local strike reported in the St. Joseph press between 1880 and 1920, caused quite a stir among other groups. Newspaper accounts suggest a range of community attitudes towards the dispute--from blunt criticism of the

strikers, to calm objectivity, to open support. For example, on the first day of the strike, The Evening Press was openly critical. Following the headline, "Imperfect Ventilation Given as Excuse," the unnamed writer attributed the walkout to "an acute attack of spring fever." "Some half dozen girls...walked out...and forced about 200 others to join them." He dismissed the girls' claim that they needed more air because "a committee of prominent citizens" had "expressed their opinion that the place seemed thoroughly aired." The author sympathized with the company's efforts to prevent window gazing by using frosted glass and opening only the upper sashes. The article concluded:

The management has always been kind and considerate in its treatment of employees extending to them many little courtesies unthought of in other factories so in the light of all this it seems all the more wanton that these same employees should cripple the mill at one of its busiest seasons.

Although totally vague about Cooper-Wells' "many little courtesies," there is no question about the writer's own attitude--the strikers are "wanton," and the company has more than met its obligations.⁴¹

However, The Evening Press almost immediately changed its tone. The Monday edition provided more details about the walkout, included interviews with strikers and omitted any criticism of the strikers or expressions of support for the company's point of view. The paper went so far as to praise the strikers' "brilliant" organization "in the fight for better ventilation." In the face of the obvious tension associated with the walkout, The Press injected a light note

into the strike coverage by that announcing that two strikers had taken advantage of this time off to get married. "If this keeps up, Cooper, Wells and Co. will find that the strike must continue indefinitely for there will be no more girls to come back."⁴²

A different author and/or a response to sympathetic town opinion could have caused this change in tone. The April 28 article may have been written by the editor, Elmer Sheridan, while the later ones were the work of Frank Crockett. A competing newspaper identified Crockett as "the new Press reporter," who was one of only two men present at the Saturday night strikers' meeting and the author of the workers' solidarity pledge. Crockett may have been genuinely on the strikers' side, protecting his special relationship with them, reflecting sympathetic public opinion, or simply trying to sell more newspapers. On April 30, a former mayor had promised the strikers that "the good citizens of St. Joseph" would "see that the rights of the girls are safeguarded." This kind of public attention might also have influenced the Press's reporting.⁴³

Strike coverage in the other daily paper, the St. Joseph Evening Herald, was detailed and informative, but also included personal judgements and insights into local attitudes. According to these articles, the strike was an uncomfortable and unjustified occurrence.

It is unfortunate that a thing of this sort should happen....It has been demonstrated beyond all reasonable doubt that the Cooper, Wells, and Co. factory is the best equipped and best ventilated

institution in the country.

After reporting that the girls and women had left the factory cheering, the Herald remarked: "It seems better, however to hurrah for steady employment than for a season of idleness."⁴⁴

These statements probably reflected the views of at least one group in St. Joseph, the "boosters." Leonard J. Merchant, the owner and editor of the St. Joseph Evening Herald and of the St. Joseph Saturday Herald, was one of their number. Merchant had a long and active record of encouraging local industrial development. In 1877, he had proposed the formation of a Village Improvement Association which was instrumental in founding the Cooper-Wells mill. He regularly promoted St. Joseph in his newspapers. For example, the May 2, 1903 St. Joseph Saturday Herald praised St. Joseph's "natural resources and transportation facilities," its healthy climate, and steady industrial employment. "The position held by our city is such that our citizens can have a feeling of pride for the place they call home." Although he had no direct financial connection with the hosiery mill, he was a St. Joseph booster and clearly proud of the company he had helped establish.⁴⁵

However, Merchant's enthusiasm for industry did not extend to support for labor organizations. Earlier newspaper articles indicated a hostility to such associations. For example, in 1903, the St. Joseph Saturday Herald reported that labor troubles might force some Chicago factor-

ies to close, offering "a good chance for St. Joseph" to acquire new industry. Quoting The Chicago Tribune,

Factories, clothing establishments and small industries are being driven out of Chicago by the arbitrary exactions of the labor organizations in the matter of wages and hours, constant strikes, and intolerable interference in the management of the plants.⁴⁶

Paralleling the view of courts which defined labor unions as "conspiracies in restraint of trade," The St. Joseph Saturday Herald saw "labor oppression" as an obstacle to industrial progress and prosperity. In addition to its "natural resources and transportation facilities" and its healthy climate, part of St. Joseph's appeal was its freedom from such "interference" by labor organizations. From management's point of view, St. Joseph "labor organizations" did not seem to have been particularly troublesome. The St. Joseph newspapers reported no strikes by the traditional craft and transportation unions in St. Joseph between 1880 and 1920. The walkout by Cooper-Wells' knitters, loopers, menders and transfer girls threatened this image and St. Joseph's advantage over Chicago. Presumably, many in the community shared these views.

Since private citizens became directly involved in resolving the crisis, this Cooper-Wells' dispute seemed to have been more serious than the walkouts in Belding. St. Joseph's proximity to Chicago may have made some over react to a minor event, but this walkout also differed from the Belding occurrences in several ways. First, it involved a larger percentage of the mill's workforce, three-fourths of

the women, and nearly half of the total. The largest strike in Belding involved only fifteen percent of its workforce, and the others, only five percent or less. Second, the paternalistic style and claims of interest in their employees that prevailed at Belding Brothers were less in evidence at Cooper-Wells. The St. Joseph hosiery mill had no long-standing public policy of friendly, paternal relations with its workers; it made no claims to be concerned with worker welfare, although it originally insisted that ventilation was good. It locked-out the workers, threatened to blacklist strikers and to hire strikebreakers. It told the workers, "you need us more than we need you; the warehouses are full and you can be replaced." J. Ogden Wells explicitly described the strike as a power struggle, not as in Belding, a "misunderstanding." Such blunt talk made some St. Joseph citizens uncomfortable enough to intervene. Of course the Belding walkouts were also power conflicts, but that fact was veiled rather than trumpeted. In Belding, the public stayed out of the way. The Belding public may have considered worker resistance "unthinkable," and therefore did not take the walk-outs seriously, or it may have simply been confident that the two parties could sort things out because of a long tradition of mutual respect and communication.

Another reason "outsiders" may have chosen to mediate at Cooper-Wells was that the hosiery strike involved an issue of worker well-being, whereas the Belding walkouts

concerned only wages. Even citizens who were hostile toward "labor organizations" and opposed strikes over wages, might have been willing to support a "fresh air strike." In all of these small cities, wages were more likely to be defined as a management prerogative, whereas basically decent working conditions might have been a legitimate topic for community concern.

Despite its hard line, Cooper-Wells softened a little at the end, and compromised on the windows in order to assure the public that its workers were being treated properly. Apparently even immigrants and girls who were not "ladies" deserved some consideration. Neither Cooper-Wells nor the city of St. Joseph wanted the image of tyrant and oppressor of women workers. At the same time, they wanted no ambiguity about where the power lay.

Philosophy and Practice at Warren Featherbone

At Warren Featherbone as at the other two companies, factory inspectors' Reports, interviews and newspaper accounts form the main sources of data on day-to-day interaction between employer and employees. In addition, some company records are available. On their annual visits, Michigan state factory inspectors apparently found much to admire, praising management in enthusiastic tones. The 1892 Report acknowledged that wages were "small", but added that the firm treats "the help well," allowing "many liberties, the girls going and coming almost at will." According to

the 1903 Report, "The management of this plant spare no pains to insure the health and comfort of their employees, particularly is this noticeable regarding the women and girls under their charge." In 1911, an inspector "found the conditions in Three Oaks unusually satisfactory....It is quite evident that an important consideration of The Warren Featherbone Company is that those in their employ shall be well treated and well cared for in every way." The inspector praised Warren for obeying the law regarding the employment of women and children, but unfortunately, provided little specific information about labor relations.⁴⁷

Details from interviews and company documents are less congratulatory, but do not contradict this generally positive image. Activities that were prohibited in the model rules published in the 1899 Textile World Record, such as conversation, singing and snacking at work, were permitted at Warren's. Payroll books for portions of the years 1890-1914 indicate that Warren's, who paid many employees a hourly wage, kept meticulous records of time on the job, eg. 57.3 hours. Suggesting a tolerance for occasional tardiness, or for brief absences, people who worked an hour or less than the full 54 or 60 hour week often received full pay, indicated by the note FULL in the "wages" column. In the textile industry as a whole, absenteeism and high labor turnover rates were chronic problems, whereas Warren's workforce appears to have been steady and reliable. The population was not very mobile, and there were few employment

alternatives. Their regular work habits and the relatively short labor supply relieved these workers of the fear of being fired for minor rule infractions. Women workers could not remember anyone being fired, and could not suggest what actions would be cause for termination. However, a male Featherbone employee said that in the 1930's, men and boys were "bawled out" for being late, and were sometimes fired for "horseplay" and for refusing to work overtime. State law prohibited overtime for female workers.⁴⁸

The Warren Featherbone Company initiated and supported a variety of employee activities and provided some employee benefits that fit the general definition of "welfare capitalism." For example, in 1897 the company provided a periodical reading room that was open to employees at noon and to the public in the evenings. In 1906, The Women's Missionary Society held a benefit cantata in the Featherbone Warehouse. Later, when the company rented the local opera house, The Acorn, for its business, Warren employees hosted a community Halloween costume party there. Dancing, food, games and prizes attracted 600 guests. The company greenhouse sent flowers to workers who were ill and to those who had had a death in the family. In 1911, reading and smoking rooms in the opera house served as "clubrooms" for Warren employees. The "Warren Employees' Welfare Association" was intended to "stimulate a feeling of goodfellowship and co operation among its members, afford wholesome amusement and recreation."⁴⁹ It seems that Edward Warren agreed with the

attitude expressed by the State Commissioner of Labor in a letter to him in October 1911:

[Employers'] relation to their employees is one of mutual obligation and...their desire for loyal and intelligent service on the one hand calls for appreciative and considerate treatment on the other."⁰

In 1914, the Warren Company offered a tangible benefit to its employees by providing accident and life insurance. The company paid one-third of the premium for employees in their first year, two-thirds for second year workers and the full premium after that. Later, the company annually gave each employee one share of company stock for every five years of service."¹

In spite of the fact that it was the national headquarters of the Warren Featherbone Company, Three Oaks remained a very small village that was primarily a marketing and service center for farmers. In 1925, the Berrien County Record described Three Oaks as a place where "the community spirit fully is alive....The troubles and sorrows of the humble citizen are...part of the thought and friendly helpfulness of the town."² This gushy boosterism no doubt exaggerated the strength of Three Oaks' community spirit, but it was probably accurate in describing the highly personal nature of social interaction in the village. Work, neighboring, church membership and kinship involved dealing with many of the same individuals. For better or worse, most residents were well known by all; there were no strangers.

These villagers valued social patterns that included, rather than excluded others. Work culture at Warren's included informal standards of behavior for supervisors and co-workers that judged people by their friendliness and fairness. One unpopular forelady was known to bring candy to work, but never shared it, eating it all herself when she thought no one was looking. Another foreman had the habit of "sneaking up" on workers, trying to catch them in some mistake or misbehavior. Workers appreciated supervisors who helped them earn more and who distributed higher paying jobs equitably, and not just to "favorites." One long-time Featherbone employee contrasted the humane pace of work at Warren's with her later experience at another factory, where "you had to make money" all the time. They were willing to put in a day's work, but did not want constant pressure to maintain top speed. They resented workers who "ruined" jobs by producing so much that the company lowered piece-work rates. Workroom sociability sometimes continued in off work hours, when workers took turns hosting gatherings in their homes.²³

Unlike the other two firms, there is no record of a strike or walkout at Warren Featherbone, and only two recorded conflicts concerning employer-employee relations, one in the late nineteenth century and one during the First World War. In the first incident, the company responded to rumors that it was mismeasuring output and therefore underpaying its workers. In the second instance, homeworkers

were unwilling to work, frustrating company efforts to meet high demand.™

In 1897 and 1898, the firm was plagued by "malicious stories" that it was "cheating the girls in the measurement of their cord" (lengths of Featherbone). In March 1897, Warren asked a "number of disinterested well known business men" to investigate these charges by examining the measuring reel. A 200-yard machine-measured length of cord measured 199 2/3 yards when they measured it by hand with a yard-stick. These ten unofficial "inspectors" concluded:

The measuring reels are as true and correct as it is possible in our opinion to make a machine that will measure in large quantities and rapidly....We unhesitatingly pronounce them as nearly perfect as possible and any statement that the company is taking dishonest measurement is without foundation and is untrue.™

In spite of these assurances, the charges seem to have continued. In a December 1898 statement, Warren referred to these "false reports", observing that they had made employees dissatisfied and had "strained relations between the promoters and the community....While the Co. can prove every such accusation false, the frequency of such is, to say the least, annoying." Warren pleaded "'Not Guilty' to all charges of unfairness, irregularity, and having anything but the best interest of Three Oaks at heart." In support of his claims, Warren pointed out that he kept the factory in Three Oaks,

an inland and unknown town,...contrary to best business interests and against the wishes of outside directors, because it was his home and he desired to give it the benefit of his labors.

He pointed out that the company had developed without any local capital investment (other than his own) and had struggled for many years before becoming profitable. While the company had imposed no direct costs on the village, it had greatly contributed to village development by spending \$558,000 on labor and supplies in the village since 1886 and by stimulating local commerce, construction and transportation. Warren considered that these facts established his credibility. He denied the charges and attributed such stories to jealousy over the company's recent successes.⁶⁶

Disputes over the measurement of output were common in this type of production. While it is possible, it is unlikely that ten citizens and the man who operated the reel would conspire to cheat the operatives. Since the same device was used to measure goods for sale, false measurements would have irritated customers as well as operatives. The rumors were not traced to the workers directly involved, and may indeed have reflected personal hostility or suspicion, rather than a specific grievance. It is probable that the Warren family had made some enemies because of its adamant opposition to having a saloon in Three Oaks. In any event, the subject never reappeared in the local paper.⁶⁷

The second situation occurred during the First World War, when the company was behind in several orders, especially on items made at home by "outside" workers. The minutes of a September 11, 1918 staff meeting reveal management's frustration and the surprising independence of these

village women workers. Despite the current pressing situation, some of their most productive employees refused homework because of "vacations, getting the children ready for school and canning." Others were willing to work, but refused this particular task, preferring other jobs. In frustration, the staff planned to rent a building in a neighboring town and hire workers who were less selective about what they would do and when. Edward Kirk Warren, the founder and owner of the company, was annoyed at this lack of local support and failure to appreciate the employment benefits offered by his firm.™

It is no accident that this self-assertion occurred during the war, since this was a period both when orders were up and when employment alternatives at substantially higher wages were available in nearby towns. Road improvements, bus service and car pooling broadened the options of many in Three Oaks. One company which experienced a real boom during this time was Clark Equipment, a Buchanan manufacturer of truck axles, only about fifteen miles away. Although Clark employed men, not women, a family in which a male worked at Clark's could more easily do without a woman's wage from Warren's. Like the St. Joseph hosiery workers who preferred to pick berries in the summer, even if they risked their chances of later employment at Cooper-Wells, these Three Oaks women followed their own priorities when they could. The First World War created widespread conditions in which workers became "uppity." However, these

Three Oaks' women were not involved in any group action, or a class-conscious assertion of "workers' rights" versus company power. Their independence was a personal and individual expression of autonomy, apparently unrelated to any theoretical analysis or group decision.¶¶

The women and men who worked at Warren Featherbone had no more formal say in determining the conditions and terms of their employment than did the workers at Cooper-Wells or at Belding Brothers. They needed and expected to work, and knew that wages there were modest. The work was also convenient, steady and non-threatening. Bosses and co-workers were neighbors, not strangers. Power and hierarchy was personal, not remote and anonymous. In such a social setting, formal rules are often supplemented by a series of informal arrangements which balance the company's need for workers with the workers need for wages and for conditions which meet their social and domestic requirements. Thus Warren Featherbone didn't pay much, but neither did it hassle its employees to produce the maximum. The company also allowed brief absences from work and let people enjoy some conversation and friendliness on the job. This informal system appears to have broken down somewhat in 1918 with regard to the homeworkers. It seems that until then, the company could get enough workers when it really needed them. In exchange, the company had been committed to keeping production in Three Oaks. When these women refused work for what the company saw as frivolous reasons, the company

viewed it as a breach of contract and in turn threatened to drop its end of the bargain by starting production elsewhere. Except for these few incidents, Warren Featherbone and its employees maintained a reasonably satisfactory relationship.

However, even if major differences had developed, Warren family economic interests were so great in Three Oaks that open confrontation was unlikely. In addition to the factory, Warren owned a bank, the only newspaper (after 1898), a department store and several farms in the area. Everyone knew that Warren had put Three Oaks on the map, and that no one else was likely to commit such large sums of money or offer so many jobs. Even if Three Oaks had been less dependent on Warren family investments, workers who were dissatisfied were more likely to gossip, complain or simply leave, instead of organizing for change. Collective resistance was unlikely because the village lacked institutions or traditions which would support such activity.⁴⁰

Conclusion

This detailed investigation of three companies yields a composite picture of some of the structural and ideological dimensions of industrial relations in three small Michigan towns between 1880 and 1920. Residents in these villages shared a belief in the legitimacy of authority, a general conviction that even in industry, such authority was necessary and beneficial. The hierarchical organization of pro-

duction was congruent with such an assumption. According to this model, male directors and managers determined the pace and manner of production, as well as wages and personnel practices. All three of the companies in this study formally adhered to this system. However, in many places, including these, this model was subtly but significantly altered in practice.

In his investigation of New England textile mills in the period 1812-1840, Jonathan Prude observed that wages, hours and workload were established unilaterally in both the large and the small mills. However, the small, less well-known mills, which were located in rural areas and paid lower wages, seldom used fines, firings or blacklists to enforce discipline. It seems that what the smaller mills couldn't offer in wages, they "made up for" in tolerance, accepting a degree of tardiness and drinking, for example, that may have resulted in firings and blacklisting at mills where the labor supply was more abundant. Their need for workers apparently limited the degree of coercion they could practice.⁴¹

Similar labor supply conditions in the twentieth century suggest that formal authority was modified in rural industries by the subtle power dynamics that existed between workers and managers in many small industrial settings. For example, a 1904 article which outlined the formal hierarchical organization of a mill (manager, superintendent, foremen, help) also warned that authority was not absolute.

Each person should have only one "boss," "only one person from whom each is required to take orders respecting his work, or by whom he will be reprimanded for bad work or inefficient service." Foremen should be able to hire and discharge workers in their own departments, and be held responsible for the quantity and quality of work. However, one could secure "the very best service from the help [only] by using them right, respecting their feelings, treating them fairly and impartially without any favoritism." The author warned that speaking angrily and humiliating workers would not serve the best interests of the employer. Instead of intimidating workers, the author recommended allowing dancing in the mill during noon hour, and sponsoring baseball teams, picnics and other entertainment in order to secure "better service from their employees."⁴²

Even when companies unilaterally established rules, it was not always easy to enforce them. Achieving prompt and regular attendance at work seems to have been especially difficult. In 1905, one troubled supervisor wrote to the Textile World Record:

What are the best methods to follow in order to maintain strict discipline over female employees of a knitting mill in a place where help is scarce and therefore independent, and where it is not policy to discharge them in order to maintain proper discipline? Our female help are in the habit of coming to their work late both in the morning and at noon, especially the piece workers, who think they are the only losers by being late at their work.

The editor responded that although he had once fired an operator who came late because of the influence she had on

others, who also stayed "in town shopping," he did not recommend firing. He preferred to post rules and

talk the matter over with them in a kindly way,...-
calling attention to the prompt girls who earned
the best wages. I try to show them...that their
loss of time...restricts production and...affects
all succeeding departments in the mill.

Combining the carrot and the stick, he suggested closing the door, "shortly after the mill starts," and forcing late comers to "report at the office." He echoed the proposal that allowing dancing in the mill during the noon hour might encourage those who went home for lunch to "hurry back to take part in this recreation."⁴³

Other mills also had problems with attendance. In 1906, a New England writer complained that recent hot weather had increased absenteeism. His machines were idle and orders unfilled, while the "happy mill operatives" were on their way to the beach with money in their pockets. Spinners at that mill had recently struck for higher wages, but stayed out until the next day, even when the company agreed to a wage increase.⁴⁴

Another article discussed the special difficulties of "controlling" operatives in a knitting mill. Knitters posed a challenge because they tended to be young and because it took from three to six months to learn the work.

It is poor policy to discharge [an expert operator] for breaking some of the rules and be obliged to get a new girl in her place....The operators know this also, and know they will not be discharged for any slight offense, and for this reason they are apt to take greater liberties than the help in other departments, who know if they are discharged the foreman can fill their places

at once.⁶⁶

This modification of the formal power structure also appears in the Textile World Record's advice to foremen. Although they had the power to hire and fire in most mills, they were told to adjust their actions to existing conditions. If labor is in short supply, they must "overlook the faults of the good operators." Nor should they "give somebody a call down...every time they pass down an aisle." The writer warned that such behavior

makes him unpopular with the help; they soon get so used to being found fault with that they don't pay any attention....I know of more than one instance where the help simply refused to work until the foreman was discharged....The proper way to manage help...is to for the foreman to treat each [worker] as he would like to be treated.⁶⁷

The foreman should not only know the job thoroughly, he should also know the abilities of each worker, and put the best workers on the finest goods. He should encourage all to increase their skill so they can earn more.

He must keep himself aloof, tolerate no undue familiarity and yet appear to be democratic and well-disposed toward all. Favorites he should have none. Absolute impartiality is the only safe course.⁶⁸

This catalogue of pitfalls awaiting the unwary overseer suggests the complexity of exercising power, even in a formally hierarchical system.

The details reported in this chapter indicate that the companies in this study were aware of and attempted to address some of the issues relating to the distribution of power in an industrial setting. Belding Brothers and Com-

pany and Warren Featherbone and Company made deliberate efforts to be friendly and accomodating to their workers, and sponsored several modest recreational activities. There is no evidence that the Cooper-Wells hosiery mill attempted such gestures until it constructed a dormitory in 1919. Alone among the three companies, it adopted rigid written rules that asserted management prerogatives, but in view of the discussions in the national literature, it is doubtful that they were strictly enforced.

The national literature and these Michigan examples indicate that labor supply is a structural variable that can modify the power of formal authority in industry. The labor supply available to each of the companies in this study was limited to a greater or lesser degree, by the size of its village, by the general state of the economy and by its own varying need for workers. There seems to have been no extended period of time when these firms were so flushed with operatives that they could afford to indulge in harsh and arbitrary methods of enforcing industrial discipline.

Ideological and behavioral factors also tended to moderate the exercise of management prerogatives in these villages. These factors included the ideology of mutual benefit, the concept that women workers deserved some special consideration and the relatively high level of obedience and cooperation found in these village factories. All three employers were restrained by the necessity of maintaining an appearance of fairness in order to retain a moral leadership

role in their communities. They could not contradict this status by openly abusing or mistreating their workers. This was especially true because so many of their employees were young women, toward whom the culture expected a certain degree of chivalry. In small town factories, supervisors at all levels had less freedom to intimidate workers who were the daughters, nieces, cousins and school mates of their neighbors and associates. In addition, the small-town settings and their relatively stable populations tended to reduce labor turnover and limit the "casual" attendance patterns that plagued many urban factories. These workers did not always do as the bosses wished, but they were loathe to annoy by irregular attendance, the foremen in the only factory in town.

These factors also influenced the character of "homework" in Belding, St. Joseph and Three Oaks, making it more like the traditional putting-out system of the early nineteenth century, than the sweatshop style of turn of the century New York City. Originally, homework was a part-time occupation of a surplus agricultural population. Wages were low, but the work involved no transportation costs, and could be fitted in around other duties. The main economic activity of these households was agriculture, not manufacturing. In urban areas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, homework, or outside work, took on a very different character. Entire families often depended upon it as their sole source of income and it became identi-

fied with the abuses referred to collectively as the "sweating system."⁴⁰

In New York City, where high rents and intense competition made it almost necessary for some workers to provide their own workplaces, heat and light, the clothing industry was particularly dependent on homeworkers. Most of the workers involved in this system were immigrant women and children. Their lives were made miserable by wage-cutting, underpayment, and non-payment of wages. They were hired by contractors who had negotiated with a manufacturer a total price for a number of collars, cuffs or sleeves, and who paid them piece-work rates. The contractors' profits depended on getting the work done as cheaply as possible. Piece rates were often so low and competition so great that fifteen-hour work days were common, and still one was not guaranteed enough to live on. Moreover, work was not steady, and underemployment (insufficient work and income) was a severe problem. Makers of women's clothing suffered extreme fluctuations in demand. Spring and fall were busy, but there was very little work in winter or summer. In addition, outside workers had to spend time without pay, seeking, picking up and delivering work. Such irregular and desperate conditions contributed to the eventual prohibition of homework in the textile trade.⁴¹

These conditions did not apply to homework in the three villages in this study. There was no shortage of space to force production into crowded settings. Much of the work

was not suitable to home production, because it required the use of large machines. Homeworkers performed only a small percentage of the production and were not required to provide their own materials or machines. Piece-work rates were low, but these workers did not have to look for work, or pick up and deliver it and they had the advantages of a flexible work schedule. Some homeworkers in these three villages may have needed money very badly and may have worked long hours. But they were in much stronger positions vis-a-vis their employers than the typical urban immigrant textile worker. Homeworkers were available, but not so abundant that their numbers drove rates below subsistence levels. Nor did it appear that entire families were totally dependent on this source of income. Public reactions to strikes suggest the existence of community standards of justice which offered further protection. Unlike anonymous contractors in large cities, these employers were known to all and could not withhold pay or otherwise cheat without risking public outcry.

In all three villages, people without previous industrial experience entered factories in which the formal hierarchy gave them little power, but in which informal forces created a pattern of give and take. By the late nineteenth century, even beginning factory workers knew approximately what to expect, since they knew in general what a "factory" was. They knew they would have to conform to time discipline and meet production standards. They accepted these

conditions in exchange for wages and for the convenience and security of local employment. The companies dictated wages and workloads, but like the small mills studied by Prude, also made efforts to maintain personal contacts among their employees and to accomodate some non-monetary worker preferences in response to local conditions.

The story of the interaction between the companies and the workers indicates both that the officials were confident of their authority and that workers felt they could exert personal and moral pressure on management. In each town, the employer was involved in the community in many ways, not just in one factory. Frequent personal contacts and opportunities for casual conversation and recognition increased feelings of mutuality. The companies were moderate in exercising their authority, and the workers expressed little overt resistance. Workroom camaraderie and the feeling that they belonged to an enterprise which was important to the entire community contributed to creating relatively obedient workforces at each company. Strikes, walkouts, summer berry picking and refusals to do more or to do certain kinds of homework indicate that workers in various departments had evolved their own standards of legitimate and illegitimate corporate authority. These incidents show that they were willing to publicly protest when they felt those boundaries had been exceeded, and to try to re-establish an equilibrium more to their liking. In general these strikes were conservative attempts to forestall changes in their working

conditions. Although these episodes assert personal and group autonomy, they show no evidence of a theoretically informed working class consciousness or challenge to capitalist authority as such. Individuals who were truly dissatisfied probably left, like the Belding and St. Joseph strikers who refused to return to work on company terms. Although operating in a structure which, within the limits of law, gave all authority to management, it is clear that informal and ideological factors also were significant in determining worker and management attitudes and behavior in these three industries.

CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION

Contrary to the image of small towns as dying or inactive places, many small towns were part of the current of industrialization that swept the United States between 1880 and 1920.¹ The institutions, values, and behavior that are called "modernization" were widely distributed, not exclusive to large metropolitan areas. There were thousands of lively towns which eagerly sought industry and change, and which produced from one-third to one-quarter of the manufactured goods in America. This study has examined three village factories, Belding Brothers and Company, Cooper-Wells and Company, and Warren Featherbone Company in order to analyze the interaction of forces which shaped the character of industrial experience in such places.

The small-town setting appears to have had an ambivalent effect on corporate power. On the one hand, these firms were very influential because they were the chief industries in their communities and had so little competition. On the other hand, the exercise of power was restrained by face-to-face contacts and by their desire to retain the good will and good opinion of the community. It was assumed that each firm would act in its own interest, but each was supposed to consider the general welfare as well. Cooper-Wells threatened to hire strike-breakers, but quickly added that it preferred that local people keep their jobs. Warren Featherbone Company had to justify the temporary operation of plants outside Three Oaks, because of the

housing shortage. Belding Brothers and Company claimed to favor their Belding mills over those in other cities during slack work periods. All three companies from time to time publically justified their treatment of workers as "fair," defending their reputations against potential criticism.

In varying degrees, the owners of each company contributed time and money to furthering the prosperity of each town in addition to managing their own factories. There is substantial evidence that these owners possessed a sense of duty and obligation toward others, yet it is often impossible to separate their economic self-interest from community development. Their support for improved material conditions and public services fits their roles as "modernizers," and in most instances, served both immediate business needs and corporate "image" needs. They preferred to be associated with "progressive," rather than "backward" communities. As Lewis Atherton pointed out, "Every country town had an inner circle whose own personal interests were so tightly interwoven with those of the community at large that one cannot determine where self-interest ended and public spirit began."²

Such corporate leadership could be seen as an anachronism, a throw back to early nineteenth century paternalism in the style of Rockdale and Lowell. It could also be seen as a cynical strategy to diffuse labor discontent and forestall unionization, a community-wide version of "welfare capitalism," a control device masquerading as benevolence.³ John

S. Ellsworth, a sociologist who studied social organization in a New England village factory, has suggested an additional perspective. In this factory, the workers believed that "community responsibility" was a corporate objective. This concept included the idea that the company should provide employment for local people and should otherwise contribute to the town's welfare.⁴ Evidence suggests that the companies and towns in this study ascribed to a similar conception of "corporate responsibility." The companies, residents and workers might not always agree that this duty had been fulfilled, but it appears that they all agreed that some such duty existed. In a sense, the companies and their towns were like members of a family, bound together and obligated to support each other, whether they wanted to or not. To the degree that these local companies were perceived as fulfilling these community obligations, people were loathe to criticize, oppose or challenge them. According to Atherton, "Common citizens might grumble at high-handed acts or impugn the motives behind the program of a local capitalist, but criticism broke into the open only when such a man overstepped the recognized limits of his power."⁵

Living and working conditions for the workers in these three companies were quite unlike those experienced by a slightly earlier generation of factory workers in Troy and Cohoes, New York. According to Daniel Walkowitz, the lives of iron and textile workers between 1855 and 1884 were

marked by "meager wages, unsanitary and cramped living conditions, and child labor....Technology constantly threatened to reduce skills, intensify labor, or absorb jobs completely, and depressions, company paternalism, seasonal employment, and other such conditions kept most families in a continual state of dependence."⁴ In contrast, the workers at these three companies experienced regular employment and material working conditions that were among the best in the textile industry. Wages were only average, but child labor was minimal and housing was comfortable, neither cramped nor unsanitary. The forces that created dense populations within walking distance of urban factories did not exist in small towns. The combination of new plants on large lots, state inspection and insurance concerns as much as any humanitarian concerns supported above-average factory conditions. All three companies deliberately tried to avoid fluctuations in employment. There were some seasonal variations in volume and type of output, but the production and marketing strategies of all of these firms were geared toward maintaining steady year-round employment. In pursuing their corporate goals of long-term stability and strength, they concentrated on the manufacture of staple items, for which demand was relatively steady, and avoided specialty products, which offered both the promise of greater immediate profits and greater risks. Until the 1930's, these workers had few episodes of unemployment.

The preceding discussion of corporate action provides

only part of the equation that shaped village industrial experience. Workers' values, goals and behavior provide the other major dimension.

These factory workers had not been participants in a pre-industrial artisan culture. Although they did not have previous industrial experience, in general they knew about and accepted the time and work discipline of factory production. There is no evidence of the high rates of labor turnover and absenteeism reported in so many urban factories, and in many village ones as well. Only a handful of incidents of conflict between workers and management have been recorded. There were no unions among these workers, some of whom volunteered anti-union remarks during interviews.

Interviews and behavior show great similarity with the attitudes reported by John Bodnar in Workers' World, a study based on hundreds of interviews with workers in Pennsylvania industrial towns. These interviews indicate a continuity in values from 1890 to 1940, during which the family not the workplace or the economic system was the center of worker consciousness and aspirations.⁷ In his study of Troy and Cohoes workers in the decades before 1890, Walkowitz similarly observed that although national economic pressures exerted great influence on workers' experiences, "a narrowly privatized and local vision also persisted within large segments of the working class."⁸

Bodnar found that workers had limited social aspira-

tions, not bourgeois goals of individual upward mobility. They "took what came," aware of the improbability of changing their status. Most families supported this social conservatism. Kinship provided access to industrial jobs; families socialized children to seek steady factory work, and seldom criticized capitalism. Family members were encouraged to sacrifice individual wishes in favor of immediate family needs. Social equality and social idealism were personal goals that took second place to job security, the sine qua non of family survival. During this period, "Families generally searched for ways to make ends meet, achieved little in the way of savings, sent their children to work early in life, and valued steady employment."⁹

The values and goals of these Michigan village factory workers seem quite similar to those studied by Bodnar. There were some instances of upward mobility, but most workers were primarily concerned with supporting themselves or contributing to the family. Employment for them was a job, not a stage in a career path. The predominance of women among these workers reinforces the conservative dimension of employment. Their situations were similar to those of the wage-earning urban women described by Tentler. Her evidence suggests that wage labor offered these women work-room sociability and greater social freedom, but little opportunity for individual mobility. For most of the women, low wages, subordinate work roles, and continuing family responsibilities reinforced traditional roles.¹⁰ Although

wages at these three companies were reliable and a little above average for women, most workers were in subordinate roles and retained strong family connections. Nearly all of the workers at Cooper-Wells and Warren Featherbone lived with their families. They needed work and took whatever job was available. Most of the Belding workers had migrated to the village in search of jobs, but still maintained family contacts, often sharing dormitory rooms with a sister or cousin, and contributing to family income.

Nor did these village workers seek control over the workplace or an alternative to capitalism. These broader issues were not salient (meaningful in a psychological sense) for them. They resisted "unfair" wages and the arbitrary exercise of power, but not the principle of capitalist authority itself. Working-class consciousness was not a factor in their lives. The few recorded walkouts included only those workers who were directly affected by a particular company policy. Strikers demonstrated solidarity with co-workers based on their common grievance, but they received no support from workers in "unaffected" departments. At Cooper-Wells, only those who worked in the stuffy rooms went on strike. At Belding Brothers, the weavers and the spoolers were alone. A family-oriented culture would support such behavior with the judgement, "It doesn't affect you, so stay out of it."

Bodnar likewise found little evidence that workers sought control over the workplace or major changes in capi-

talism. He argues that most people were powerless to influence the larger society, and they knew it. Instead, workers concentrated on achieving family security. For most workers, union organization, efforts to control the production process, and opposition to capitalism were means of achieving family security, not ends in themselves. Workers were not radical, not because they expected individual mobility, but because they accepted the priority of family survival, which required participation in and obedience to, the industrial order. From this perspective, labor protests in the 1930's were conservative because workers' values had been conservative, not because any previous radicalism had been defused by the New Deal, or defeated by the depression.¹¹

Certainly these Michigan factory workers also had conservative goals. The steady wages they earned fit perfectly with many workers' aspirations to contribute to family survival. Although these jobs would not provide upward mobility, they would provide a reliable living. The greeting used by factory workers in a small town in Illinois, "You working?" suggests workers' preoccupation with irregular employment, a problem that was minimal for these Michigan workers.¹² These factories demanded obedience, but neither these workers' ages, sex nor skill level had led them to expect autonomy on the job. The general culture considered obedience an appropriate trait for young women and even adult men had to take orders at work. Furthermore, frequent personal contact with managers who recognized them

and expressed friendly interest in them, helped bridge the social distance between bosses and workers, and softened the exercise of authority.¹⁵ Under these conditions, it is not surprising that many found these village factories, "good places to work," and regretted it when the factories closed, ending an era in their towns' lives. Further research is needed to determine whether these conditions were typical of Midwestern village factories during this era.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER I

¹The literature on this subject is voluminous. For an analytical survey of recent work, see David Montgomery, "To Study the People: The American Working Class," Labor History, 21 (Fall 1980), pp. 485-512. See also "Annual Bibliography on American Labor History" and "Books Reviewed" in Labor History.

²For example, Thomas R. Navin, The Whitin Machine Works Since 1831: A Textile Machinery Company in an Industrial Village (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950); Anthony F. C. Wallace, Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); Thomas R. Winpenny, Industrial Progress and Human Welfare (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1982). However, many company mining towns and southern mill towns were as strife-torn and unpleasant as some eastern cities.

³Primary sources consulted for this study include company records and official publications, federal and state censuses, state factory inspectors' reports, trade publications, local newspapers, photographs and personal observations, and interviews with village residents.

⁴Amos H. Hawley, The Population of Michigan 1840 to 1960: An Analysis of Growth, Distribution and Composition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949), pp. 97, 101. For general background on these towns, see E. E. Branch, History of Ionia County, Michigan: Her People, Industries, and Institutions, Vol. I (Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen and Co., 1916), pp. 227-240; Orville W. Coolidge, A Twentieth Century History of Berrien County, Michigan (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 171-183, 267-273, 318-319, 1001-1004.

⁵Rolla M. Tryon, Household Manufactures in the United States, 1640-1860 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1917), especially pp. 242 ff.; also Stuart Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth, 1607-1861 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 74-91.

⁶See Hannah Josephson, Golden Threads: New England's Mill Girls and Magnates (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1949); Constance M. Green, Holyoke, Massachusetts: A Case Study of the Industrial Revolution in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939); Michael H. Frisch, Town into City: Springfield, Massachusetts, 1854-1921 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963).

⁷One of the most detailed studies of manufacturing in the Midwest is Margaret Walsh, The Manufacturing Frontier: Pioneer Industry in Antebellum Wisconsin, 1830-1860 (Madison, Wisconsin: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1972). On a county-by-county basis, Walsh documents widespread manufacturing in Wisconsin, consisting mostly of primary processing industries. These included planing and sawing lumber, milling flour, brewing, tanning leather and curing meat. For comparable development in Michigan, see Willis F. Dunbar, Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State, rev. by George S. May (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), Chapter 21, "The Growth of Manufacturing," pp. 459-483; Sidney Glazer, "The Beginnings of the Economic Revolution in Michigan," Michigan History, 34 (Sept. 1950), pp. 193-202. See also, Willis Frederick Dunbar, How It Was in Hartford: An Affectionate Account of a Michigan Small Town in the Early Years of the Twentieth Century (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968).

⁸Alice E. Smith, Millstone and Saw: The Origins of Neenah-Menasha (Madison, Wisconsin: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1967); Charles N. Glaab and Lawrence H. Larsen, Factories in the Valley: Neenah-Menasha, 1870-1910 (Madison, Wisconsin: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1969), especially Chapters 1 and 2.

⁹Lewis Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1954), pp. 330-349; Richard Lingeman, Small Town America: A Narrative History, 1620-the Present (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), esp. pp. 359-363; Carl Abbott, Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), esp. pp. 198-209.

¹⁰U.S. Bureau of the Census. Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890, Vol I, Compendium (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O.), p. xlviii.

¹¹Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Vol. I, Population, p. 53; Vol. IV, Occupations, p. 34.

¹²Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Vol. VIII, Manufactures, p. 118.

¹³For a discussion of Michigan's dominant role in the automobile industry in the early twentieth century, see George S. May, A Most Unique Machine: The Michigan Origins of the American Automobile Industry (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), pp. 331-345; and G. T. Bloomfield, "Shaping the Character of a City: The Automobile Industry and Detroit, 1900-1920," Michigan Quarterly Review, 25 (Spring 1986), pp. 167-181. For Michigan

during World War I, see Dunbar, rev. by May, pp. 540-541. For a general discussion of the Michigan economy, see Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Vol. IX, pp. 547-562; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Vol. IX, pp. 669-685.

¹⁴Definition of "factory" from Marvin Mark Fisher, Workshops in the Wilderness (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 14.

¹⁵In 1920, in these thirteen southwestern Michigan counties, there were five cities larger than 10,000: Grand Rapids (137,6340), Kalamazoo (48,487), Battle Creek (36,164), Benton Harbor (12,233), Holland (12,183). In the fifteen counties in southeastern Michigan, there were fifteen such cities, including Detroit (993,678). Hawley, pp.96-111.

¹⁶National Industrial Conference Board, A Graphic Analysis of the Census of Manufactures of the United States, 1849-1919 (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1923), pp. 98-101.

¹⁷Atherton, pp. 330-338.

CHAPTER II

¹The major sources on Belding are John S. Schenck, History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties, Michigan (Philadelphia: D. W. Ensign & Co., 1881), pp. 284-287, and E. E. Branch (ed.), History of Ionia County, Michigan (Indianapolis: B.B. Bowen and Company, Inc., 1916), Vol. I, pp. 227-245. The earliest surviving Belding newspaper is the Belding Home News (1879-1882). There are no surviving issues for 1883-1888. Certain issues of the Belding Banner were especially helpful: "Souvenir Edition," 18 May 1905; "Industrial Edition," 27 June 1912.

²U.S. Census. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Vol. VI, Agriculture, p. 783.

³J. Harold Stevens, "The Influence of New England in Michigan," Michigan History, 19 (Autumn 1935), pp. 321-353. Morris C. Taber, "New England Influence in South Central Michigan," Michigan History, 45 (December 1961), pp. 305-336.

⁴Dunbar, rev. by May, pp. 200-201, 289.

⁵The sources mentioned in Endnote 1 also discuss Belding Brothers and Company. Several company publications are available in the Alvah N. Belding Memorial Library in

Belding, Michigan.

*Sources disagree on the date. Family members may have arrived at different times. Schenck, p. 284, and Branch, p. 228, say 1855; Belding Home News, 7 August 1879, says 1857; Belding Banner, 27 June 1912, says 1858.

⁷Belding Home News, 7 August 1879.

*This is the spelling used by Schenck, p. 285, and Branch, p. 228. Other spellings: Patterson's Mills, Belding Banner, 27 June 1912; Patterson Mills, Ionia Sentinel, 23 September 1871. Patterson sold the mill in 1862.

⁹Belding Home News, 7 August 1897; Branch, p. 231; Belding Banner, 27 June 1912; Belding Brothers and Company, 1863-1925 (New York: Edward B. Smith & Co., 1925), p. 10. The most detailed source on these early days is O. D. Foster, "Keeping Out of the 'Red Ink' for 61 years out of 62," Forbes, 15 December 1925, pp. 9-11, 42, 44. Alone of all the sources, Foster says that David, rather than Milo, sent them their first stock.

¹⁰Foster, p. 9.

¹¹Belding Banner, 27 June 1912; Branch, p. 231; Foster, p. 10.

¹²Foster, p. 10.

¹³Belding Home News, 7 August 1879; Foster, p. 10.

¹⁴Belding Home News, 7 August 1879, 19 February 1880; Belding Banner, 25 July 1895, 20 February 1896, 5 October 1911.

¹⁵Foster, pp. 10-11; Belding Brothers and Company, 1863-1925, p. 10.

¹⁶Statistics of the State of Michigan. Collected for the Ninth Census of the United States, June 1900, Lansing, Michigan, p. 42.

¹⁷Branch, p. 229.

¹⁸Belding Home News, 7 August 1879.

¹⁹Ionia Sentinel, 23 September 1871.

²⁰Belding Home News, 7 August 1879.

²¹Helen Cusack, "When Pine Was King Lumber Story," Belding Banner-News, Special 1972 Labor Day Edition.

- ²²Belding Home News, 11 June 1880.
- ²³Belding Home News, 31 July and 28 August 1879.
- ²⁴Cusack, "When Pine Was King," Belding Banner-News, Labor Day, 1972.
- ²⁵Belding Home News, 24 July 1879.
- ²⁶Belding Home News, 18 September 1879; Schenck, p. 287.
- ²⁷Belding Home News, 24 July 1879.
- ²⁸U.S. Bureau of the Census, Compendium of the Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890, Part I, Population, p. 241.
- ²⁹Belding Home News, 15 April 1880.
- ³⁰Souvenir, City of Belding, Michigan, with Special Reference to the Interests of Belding Brothers and Co., Silk Manufacturers (n.p.: n.p., [1907]), p. 3.
- ³¹Victor S. Clark, History of Manufactures in the United States, Vol. III, 1893-1928 (New York: Peter Smith, 1949), pp. 210-217.
- ³²Belding Heminway Company, Inc., the successor to Belding Brothers and Company, has a display of over twenty such awards in its New York Office. Personal correspondence, 29 January 1979.
- ³³Belding Banner, 18 April 1901. This interview was originally published in the Detroit Journal, which has not been preserved.
- ³⁴Margaret-Mary Love, A Geographic Study of the Belding Silk Industry, M.A. Thesis, Wayne State University, 1940.
- ³⁵D. C. Crawford, Atlas of Ionia County, Michigan (New York: J. B. Beers & Co., 1891), pp. 16-17, 20-21.
- ³⁶Confirming evidence in many sources, including Belding Banner, 18 May 1905, 5 October 1911, 9 May 1912, 27 June 1912; Belding Brothers and Company, 1863-1925.
- ³⁷Souvenir, [1907], pp. 8-11; Belding Banner, 27 June 1912, 10 April 1913; Belding Banner-News, 29 August 1957.
- ³⁸Belding Banner, 19 November 1908.
- ³⁹Belding Banner, 11 August 1915; Belding Banner-News, 30 July 1919.

- ⁴⁰Belding Banner, 10 May and 21 May 1900.
- ⁴¹Belding Banner, 24 August 1911.
- ⁴²Belding Banner, 19 August 1897.
- ⁴³Belding Banner, 19 April 1900.
- ⁴⁴Branch, p. 227.
- ⁴⁵Compendium of the Eleventh Census, 1890, Part I, Population, p. 241; Hawley, p. 101.
- ⁴⁶Belding Brothers and Company, 1863-1925, pp. 17-18.
- ⁴⁷Foster, p. 9.
- ⁴⁸Bruce Calvert, The Story of a Silk Mill (New York: Belding Brothers & Co., 1914), pp. 9-12, 29.
- ⁴⁹Belding Brothers and Company, 1863-1925, pp. 10-15; Belding Banner-News, Centennial Edition, 29 August 1957; G. R. Stevens, The Belding-Corticelli Story (Montreal: Belding Corticelli Ltd., 1951).
- ⁵⁰Moody's Manual of Investments and Security Rating Service (New York: The Moody Corporation, 1925), pp. 24-25; Belding Brothers and Company, 1863-1925, p. 7.
- ⁵¹"Take \$10,000,000 from \$100," Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record, 27 June 1925, p. 12; Foster, p. 43; Belding Brothers and Company, 1863-1925, pp. 7 and 17.
- ⁵²Belding Banner-News, 7 July 1932.
- ⁵³Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Vol. VI, Agriculture, p. 781.
- ⁵⁴Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Vol. II, Population, p. 934.
- ⁵⁵Dunbar, rev. by May, pp. 200-201.
- ⁵⁶There are only three published histories that deal with St. Joseph in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Franklin Ellis, History of Berrien and Van Buren Counties, Michigan (Philadelphia: D. W. Ensign & Co., 1880); Orville W. Coolidge, A Twentieth Century History of Berrien County, Michigan (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1906); L. Benjamin Reber, History of St. Joseph (St. Joseph, Michigan: St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce, [1924?]). Surviving issues of the St. Joseph newspapers were particularly helpful, especially "Industrial" and "Booster" editions, such as St. Joseph Traveler-Herald, 19

May 1883, 2 June 1883; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 15 November 1906, 4 November 1909.

¶For example, in 1846, shipments from the port of St. Joseph included 129,333 barrels of flour, 263,116 bushels of wheat, 1,500,000 board feet of lumber and 2721 casks of whiskey. Coolidge, pp. 180-183.

¶Coolidge, pp. 180-185.

¶Hawley, p. 49.

¶St. Joseph Traveler-Herald, 19 May 1883, 2 June 1883; Reber, pp. 62-80.

¶St. Joseph Evening Herald, 4 November 1909; Coolidge, pp. 46-47.

¶St. Joseph Traveler-Herald, 29 September 1877; St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 5 September 1903; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 23 October 1912.

¶Selected references include St. Joseph Herald, 30 January 1886, 18 June 1887, 21 January 1888, 12 January 1889; St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 22 February 1890, 9 August 1890, 17 January 1891, 8 October 1892; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 27 June 1907, 23 October 1909, 4 November 1909, 22 April 1912, 4 August 1914, 22 September 1915.

¶St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 5 September 1903; Ellis, p. 320.

¶St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 5 September 1903, 6 February 1892. Other variations of the name are used in the St. Joseph Traveler-Herald, 19 May 1883 and Ellis, p. 320. The original punctuation, Cooper, Wells and Company was later changed to Cooper-Wells. I have used the latter style throughout.

¶Cooper's last salary from the Methodist Church was \$1,147, paid in 1871. The source of the capital to begin the hosiery mill is still unknown. Methodist Episcopal Church, Minutes of the North-West Indiana Conference, October 12 to 17, 1892 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Printing and Publishing Company, 1892), pp. 77-79, Depauw University, The Archives of Indiana United Methodism. Also St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 6 February 1892; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 31 December 1903. When Willis and his brother Charles died in a fire in the Iroquois Theater in Chicago on December 30, 1903, the obituary in the St. Joseph paper was very complimentary. Besides expressing the opinion that Willis had transformed a "run down" company into "one of the largest and best run in the nation," the paper noted that his new employers had doubled his salary after the first five years,

from \$5000 to \$10,000 and required him to work only three days a week. See also, Kenosha Evening News [Wisconsin], 16 and 31 December 1903; 2, 4, 6 January 1904.

⁶⁷St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 6 February 1892; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 31 December 1903.

⁶⁸St. Joseph Traveler-Herald, 23 February 1884, 25 April and 18 July 1885; St. Joseph Herald, 18 June 1887; St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 11 January 1890; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 15 November 1906, 23 October 1912; Coolidge, pp. 189-191, 318-319.

⁶⁹St. Joseph Herald, 17 April 1886; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 7 January 1915; St. Joseph Herald-Press, 10 July 1919; The Herald-Press [St. Joseph], 3 and 4 May 1928. J. O. Wells died in his own garage of carbon monoxide poisoning, presumably accidentally. The Herald-Press [St. Joseph], 17, 22, 28, 31 December 1928; 2 and 3 January 1929.

⁷⁰Michigan, Bureau of Labor, Annual Report (Lansing, Michigan), 1907, pp. 512-513, hereafter cited as Report; Coolidge p. 318; St. Joseph Traveler-Herald, 19 May 1883; Benton Harbor News-Palladium, 8 June 1973; Sales brochures from Bill Wallis and the Fort Miami Heritage Society, St. Joseph, Michigan.

⁷¹St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 5 September 1903; Report, 1907, p. 512; The Herald-Press [St. Joseph], 24 June 1950; The Herald-Palladium (Benton Harbor-St. Joseph), 13 March 1975; "Hosiery and Underwear Brands Have Shown Steady Growth," Underwear and Hosiery Review, 25 (November 1942), pp. 135-160. Statement of Assets and Liabilities, Cooper-Wells and Company, St. Joseph, Michigan, December 24, 1917, Prepared by Mortimer A. Davis, Certified Public Accountant, Fort Miami Heritage Society, St. Joseph, Michigan.

⁷²Reports, 1900-1920.

⁷³St. Joseph Traveler-Herald, 19 May 1883.

⁷⁴Hawley, p. 97.

⁷⁵Reber, pp. 130-147. St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 7 January 1893; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 15 November 1906, 4 November 1909.

⁷⁶Hawley, p. 97.

⁷⁷There are few published histories that deal with the Three Oaks region or the Featherbone Company. Books include the county histories by Ellis and Coolidge, and The Region of Three Oaks (Three Oaks, Michigan: Edward K. Warren Foundation, 1939). Continuous runs of Three Oaks newspapers

are available only for years after 1891, and they contain little local news. Only scattered issues exist for the years before 1891, and none at all between December 8, 1881 and December 31, 1885.

70Ellis, pp. 333-337; Coolidge, pp. 1-2, 267-269.

71Three Oaks Press, 1 January 1897, 10 September 1897. Coolidge, p. 269, called it Chamberlain's Station; Region, pp. 127-137, called it Chamberlain's Siding.

80The Acorn [Three Oaks], 6 February 1919, pp. 12-13.

81Edward K. Warren, Letter to Munn and Company, New York, 11 December 1882, Warren Featherbone Collection, Regional History Collections, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, hereafter cited as WFC-RHC, WMU; Featherbone Magazinette, Autumn, 1901, pp. 24-26.

82Warren to Munn, 11 December 1882, WFC-RHC, WMU.

83Featherbone: A Novel Product and How It is Used (Three Oaks Michigan: Warren Featherbone Company, 1888), pp. 1-16.

84Quoted in Region, pp. 161-162.

85Region, p. 162.

86Region, pp. 162-165.

87Warren Featherbone Whip Company, Annual Report, 31 December 1887, WFC-RHC, WMU.

88Warren Featherbone Whip Company, "Answers to Questions Showing Condition of Business," 1892, Warren Featherbone Company Archives, Gainesville, Georgia, hereafter cited as WFC-A-GG.

89Warren Featherbone Whip Company, Record of Organization and Business Meeting, 1892, WFC-RHC, WMU.

90Edward Kirk Warren, Letter to Chappell and Earl, Attorneys, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 14 March 1907, WFC-A-GG.

91Region, p. 165.

92There are many samples in the WFC-RHC, WMU and in WFC-A-GG.

93U. S. Circuit Court, Northern District of Illinois, In Equity, Warren Featherbone Company v. Herbert DeCamp and James Anderson. Edward Kirk Warren Deposition, June 1906, pp. 580-593, 709-710, WFC-RHC, WMU. The transcript provides

many details about the company's early production and marketing experiences.

⁷⁴WFC v. DeCamp and Anderson, EKW Deposition, p. 580.

⁷⁵WFC v. DeCamp and Anderson, EKW Deposition, pp. 588, 643-644, 667.

⁷⁶WFC v. DeCamp and Anderson, Brief for Complainant, pp. 18-19, WFC-RHC, WMU.

⁷⁷See Sample Books, WFC-RHC, WMU, and WFCA-GG.

⁷⁸Copies in WFC-RHC, WMU and WFCA-GG.

⁷⁹Three Oaks Press, 8 December 1899; The Oaks [Three Oaks], 25 January 1902.

¹⁰⁰Three Oaks Press, 11 and 17 February 1898, 11 March 1898, 8 July 1898, 17 February 1899, 10 March 1899; The Acorn [Three Oaks], 12 July 1901.

¹⁰¹The Acorn [Three Oaks], 15 February 1901, 12 April 1901, 15 February 1902. Payroll Books for Porter, Indiana dated 1899, in WFC-RHC, WMU. Another indication of the company's prosperity was the construction of a new three-story brick office building in Three Oaks in 1904. The Acorn [Three Oaks], 19 August 1904.

¹⁰²WFC v. DeCamp and Anderson, EKW Deposition, p. 593; The Acorn [Three Oaks], 20 April 1906.

¹⁰³Featherbone Magazinet, Autumn, 1901.

¹⁰⁴For example, Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, 2nd ed. (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1957).

¹⁰⁵For example, Jane Fales, Dressmaking: A Manual for Schools and Colleges (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), pp. 361-363.

¹⁰⁶"The Boning That Revolutionized Dressmaking," Eight page reprint from The American Magazine, 1901, WFCA-GG.

¹⁰⁷Frederic W. Chamberlain, Fabulous Featherbone (Three Oaks, Michigan: The Warren Featherbone Company, 1946), pp. 1-15. Jeffrey Whalen, The Warren Featherbone Company Centennial, 1883-1983 (Gainesville, Georgia: Warren Featherbone Company Historical Committee).

¹⁰⁸Letter Books, WFC-RHC, WMU; The Acorn [Three Oaks], 31 October 1912, 2 January, 16 January, 30 January, 13 February 1913, 6 February 1919.

¹⁰⁷Three Oaks Press, 22 July 1898.

¹¹⁰The Acorn [Three Oaks], 6 February 1919.

¹¹¹The Acorn [Three Oaks], 6 February 1919; David J. Murrah, "From Corset Stays to Cattle Ranching: Charles K. Warren and the Muleshoe Ranch," The West Texas Historical Association Year Book, 51 (1975), pp. 3-12.

¹¹²The Acorn [Three Oaks], 1 February 1901, 15 March 1907, 13 March 1908, 18 March 1910, 3 March 1911.

¹¹³Three Oaks Press, 24 February 1899, 3 March and 17 March 1899.

¹¹⁴Three Oaks Press, 10 June and 17 June 1898.

¹¹⁵The Acorn [Three Oaks], 8 February 1907.

¹¹⁶The Acorn [Three Oaks], 31 July 1913, 27 May 1915, 9 November 1916, 9 January, 1 May, 5 June, 26 June, 10 July, 31 July 1919.

¹¹⁷Coolidge, p. 1003; The Acorn [Three Oaks], 6 February 1919.

¹¹⁸Three Oaks Press, 28 April, 2 June, 9 June 1899; Coolidge, p. 1003.

¹¹⁹The Acorn [Three Oaks], 1 November 1917, 18 July 1918; The Herald-Press [St. Joseph], 1 April 1918.

¹²⁰Region, p. 201.

¹²¹Region, pp. 201-204.

¹²²Edward K. Warren Collection, Michigan State University Archives.

¹²³Region, p.205; Warren Woods Reconnaissance Report, Unpublished report of Michigan Natural Areas Council, prepared by staff of the Cranbrook Institute of Science, March 1960.

¹²⁴Three Oaks Press, 27 March 1896.

¹²⁵Three Oaks Press, 10 March 1899.

¹²⁶Atherton, p. 23

¹²⁷Region, pp. 166-167.

¹²⁸Stuart Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth, 1607-1861: An Essay in Social Causation (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 74-91, 141-177, 208-215.

¹²⁹Richard Jensen, "Midwestern Transformation: From Traditional Pioneers to Modern Society," in Local History Today: Papers Presented at Four Regional Workshops for Local History Organizations in Indiana, June 1978-April, 1979 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1979), p. 9.

¹³⁰Richard D. Brown, Modernization: The Transformation of American Life, 1600-1865 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), p. 199.

CHAPTER III

¹Elizabeth Brandeis, "Labor Legislation," in John R. Commons and Associates, History of Labor in the United States, Vol. III (New York: Macmillan, 1935), pp. 397-697; Wendell D. MacDonald, "The Early History of Labor Statistics in the United States," Labor History, 13 (Spring 1972), pp. 267-278; Gustavus Adolphus Weber, "Labor Legislation in the United States," U.S. Bureau of Labor, Bulletin 54 (1904), pp. 1421-1486; William F. Willoughby, "The Inspection of Factories and Workshops in the United States," U.S. Bureau of Labor, Bulletin 12 (1897), pp. 549-568.

²See Reports, 1884-1920 and Public Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan. Lansing, Michigan. Hereafter cited as Michigan Public Acts. Michigan's Governor Begole explicitly stated that the Massachusetts bureau was the model for Michigan's. Report, 1884, p. 3.

³Michigan Public Acts, 1893, No. 126, Sec. 10.

⁴"Boiler Inspection," in the 1896 Report, pp. xi-xv, describes an November 6, 1895 explosion at the Detroit Journal which killed 33 and injured 12. Between January 1, 1883 and January 1896, there had been 102 boiler explosions in Michigan which killed 172 and injured 209. The 1901 Report, lists six explosions in 1900, which killed 8 and injured 8, pp. 241-242. The 1902 Report, pp. 141-146, lists seven explosions in 1901, which killed 32 and injured 60.

⁵Michigan Public Acts, 1893, No. 126; 1901, No. 113; 1909, No. 285.

⁶Reports, 1894-1920.

⁷Report, 1896, p. x, lists 253 accidents, including 43 fatalities and 98 explosions (boiler, gas, dynamite). The inspector noted that more injuries were reported this year because the lists included "slight" injuries which had been passed over in previous years.

⁸Reports, 1894-1920.

⁹Interview, Three Oaks, Lucille Long Roundy. In 1983 I interviewed ten former Featherbone employees and other village residents (listed in Bibliography) who had direct knowledge covering the years 1915-1956. Their length of service with the company varied from a few months to thirty years, and represents a wide range of occupations: winding, weaving, office work, shipping clerk, sewing, printing, making sample cards. These interviews corroborate written sources, add details and interpretative remarks. Interviewees are named in Endnotes only when their comments are unique or judgmental. General descriptions that corroborate written sources or repeat details provided by several informants are cited as Interviews, Three Oaks.

¹⁰Daniel Nelson, Managers and Workers: Origins of the New Factory System in the United States, 1880-1920 (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), pp. 25-26.

¹¹Belding Banner, 27 June 1912; Belding Banner-News, Centennial Edition, 29 August 1957. The description of the mills is also based on direct observation of the three remaining mills, on photographs and pamphlets in the Alvah N. Belding Memorial Library, Belding, Michigan and on the work of Dr. Charles Hyde of Wayne State University who has nominated the mills to the National Register of Historic Places. See also Souvenir, City of Belding, Michigan, with Special Reference to the Interests of Belding Brothers and Co., Silk Manufacturers (n.p.: n.p., [1907]), 34 pp.

¹²Souvenir, [1907], p. 7; Nelson, pp. 27-28; Ventilation and Heating: Principles and Application (Boston: B. F. Sturtevant Co., [1896]); Textile World, 14 (March 1898), pp. 35-37; Textile World Record, 33 (April 1907), pp. 132-133.

¹³Interviews, Belding. In 1979-1980 I interviewed fourteen former Belding silk workers and other village residents (named in Bibliography) who had direct knowledge covering the years 1910 to 1940. Their service at the mills varied from one summer to forty years. They represented all four mills and a variety of occupations, including winding, twisting, spooling, labelling and weaving. These interviews corroborate written sources and add details and interpretative remarks. Interviewees are named in Endnotes only when their comments are unique or judgmental. General descriptions that corroborate written sources or report details provided by several informants are cited as Interviews, Belding.

¹⁴Souvenir, [1907]), pp. 25-34; Belding Banner, 27 June 1912.

¹⁵Bruce Calvert, The Story of a Silk Mill (New York:

Belding Brothers and Co., [1914]), p. 9.

¹⁶Interviews, Belding. Photographs from Alvah N. Belding Memorial Library, Belding, Michigan.

¹⁷Grace Hutchins, Labor and Silk (New York: International Publishers Co. Inc., 1929), p. 116.

¹⁸Hannah Josephson, Golden Threads: New England's Mill Girls and Magnates (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949), p. 76; Tamara K. Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City (New York: Pantheon, 1978), pp. 155-156, 199-200.

¹⁹Interviews, Belding.

²⁰Nelson, pp. 17, 22; Calvert, p. 17.

²¹Photographs from Alvah N. Belding Memorial Library, Belding, Michigan. Interviews, Belding.

²²Nelson, pp. 27-28.

²³Belding Banner, 18 April 1901; U.S. Senate, 61st Congress, 2d. Session, Doc. No. 645, Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States, Vol. IV, The Silk Industry (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1910), pp. 179-180, 211; National Industrial Conference Board, Hours of Work as Related to Output and Health of Workers: Silk Manufacturing, Research Report No. 16 (Boston: N.I.C.B., 1919), p. 44, quotes cost of insurance per \$100 payroll: silk, \$.25; cotton and wool spinning and weaving \$.55; wool combing \$1.05.

²⁴Belding Banner, 18 December 1902.

²⁵Belding Banner, 9 May 1907.

²⁶For other complimentary assessments, see Report, 1903, pp. 465-471; 1905, p. 266; 1906, pp. 272, 397-399; Belding Banner, 18 April 1901, 9 August 1906, 14 October 1909, 1 August 1912, 16 December 1914, 26 September 1917.

²⁷Details regarding this 1903 mill are found in St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 5 September 1903. See Appendix, Table A-3 for specific employment data.

²⁸St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 5 September 1903.

²⁹St. Joseph Traveler-Herald, 19 May 1883.

³⁰Knitting mill processes described in U.S. Senate, Woman and Child Wage-Earners, Vol. XVIII, Employment of Women and Children in Selected Industries, 1913, pp. 194-

213, and Report of the Michigan State Commission of Inquiry into the Wages and the Conditions of Labor for Women and the Advisability of Establishing a Minimum Wage (Lansing, 1915), pp. 375-376. Hereafter cited as Michigan Commission of Inquiry.

³¹Information on machines in use at Cooper-Wells, from St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 5 September 1903. General explanation of knitting technology, from Textile World and Industrial Record, 16 (January 1899), pp. 75-76; 16 (February 1899), pp. 76-77.

³²U.S. Senate, Woman and Child Wage-Earners, Vol. XVIII, pp. 198-199.

³³Michigan Commission of Inquiry, pp. 118, 375.

³⁴St. Joseph Evening Herald, 28 April, 1-3 May 1905.

³⁵Michigan Commission of Inquiry, p. 118.

³⁶Report, 1907, pp. 512-513.

³⁷St. Joseph Herald-Press, 31 December 1932.

³⁸Featherbone. A Novel Product and How It Is Used (n. p.: Warren Featherbone Company, 1888), pp. 2-8. Advertising brochures, WFC-A-GG.

³⁹WFC vs. DeCamp and Anderson, EKW Deposition, pp. 576, 589-591, WFC-RHC, WMU.

⁴⁰Three Oaks Press, 8 December 1899. The Niles Daily Star, 12 September 1902.

⁴¹Interviews, Three Oaks. Advertising brochures WFC-A-GG.

⁴²Report, 1903, p. 472; The Acorn [Three Oaks], 24 August 1911.

⁴³Michigan Public Acts, 1909, No. 285.

⁴⁴See Reports, 1895, 1899, 1903, 1904, 1918.

⁴⁵Report, 1903, p. 299.

⁴⁶Reports, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1900. Interviews, Three Oaks and Belding.

⁴⁷See Report, 1897, "The Eight Hour Day," pp. 192-222.

⁴⁸Report, 1905, p. 266.

47Report, 1903, p. 472; 1907, pp. 512-513.

50Elizabeth Sands Johnson, "Child Labor Legislation," in Commons, History of Labor, Vol. III, pp. 403-456; Woman and Child Wage-Earners, Vol. IV, p. 43; Vol. IX, p. 61.

51Michigan Public Acts, 1893, No. 126.

52Interviews, Belding and Three Oaks.

53Report, 1894-1920. Interviews, Belding, St. Joseph, Three Oaks. In 1985-86, I interviewed nine Cooper-Wells mill workers and other St. Joseph residents (named in Bibliography). Their direct knowledge covers the years 1910 to 1950. Informants are named in Endnotes only when they add unique or interpretative details.

54For a discussion of wage and price levels, 1880-1920, see Don Lescohier, "Working Conditions," in John R. Commons and Associates, History of Labor in the United States, Vol. III (New York: Macmillan, 1935), pp. 40-80. Also Whitney Coombs, The Wages of Unskilled Labor in the Manufacturing Industries of the United States, 1890-1924 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926) and Paul H. Douglas, Real Wages in the United States, 1890-1926 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930).

55Report, 1892, pp. 96, 98, 188.

56Warren Featherbone Payroll Book, WFC-RHC, WMU.

57Textile World and Industrial Record 16 (January, 1895), pp. 75-76.

58WFC-RHC, WMU.

59Reports 1905, pp. 266, 270-271; 1907, pp. 12-13; 1912, pp. 362-363.

60Belding Banner, 18 April 1901.

61Calvert, p. 21.

62Belding Banner, 5 May 1920.

63Niles Daily Star, 27 February 1903.

64WFC-RHC, WMU.

65Interviews, Belding and Three Oaks.

66U.S. Census, 1910. Interviews, Belding, St. Joseph, Three Oaks.

⁶⁷See Appendix, Tables A-2, A-3, A-4.

⁶⁸Report, 1906, pp. 381-383.

⁶⁹Report, 1892, p. 173; other comments pp. 171-176, 183.

⁷⁰Report, 1906, p. 383.

⁷¹St. Joseph Herald, 1 December 1888; St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 21 December 1889, 3 January 1891; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 3 January 1910; Three Oaks Press, 10 September 1897, 24 December 1897, 1 July 1898; Belding Banner, 22 March 1900, 5 March 1905, 5 and 20 May 1920; Belding Banner-News, 29 August 1957. Interviews, Belding.

⁷²For example, see Carl Gersuny, "'A Devil in Petticoats' and Just Cause: Patterns of Punishment in Two New England Textile Factories" Business History Review, 50 (Summer 1976), pp. 139-141.

⁷³Michigan Commission of Inquiry, p. 76.

⁷⁴Report, 1892, p. 185.

⁷⁵Michigan Commission of Inquiry, pp. 75-76.

⁷⁶Payroll Books, WFC-RHC, WMU.

⁷⁷See Roy Rosenzweig, Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

⁷⁸Michigan Commission of Inquiry, pp. 13-16.

⁷⁹Report, 1900, p. 61.

⁸⁰Interviews, Belding and Three Oaks.

⁸¹Belding Banner, 18 April 1901; 26 September 1917; Reports, 1901, pp. 220-221; 1904, p. 314; 1905, pp. 263-286; 1906, pp. 271-283.

⁸²Report, 1900, pp. 37-41. Data based on census of 2102 women working in 25 Michigan cities.

⁸³Report, 1892, pp. 95-98.

⁸⁴Report, 1892, pp. 182-183.

⁸⁵Belding Banner, 18 April 1901.

CHAPTER IV

¹See Chapter I and Table I-1.

²Robert W. Smuts, Women and Work in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1959), p. 46. See also Thomas Dublin, Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1869 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) and Judith A. McGaw, "'A Good Place to Work,' Industrial Workers and Occupational Choice: The Case of Berkshire Women," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 10 (Autumn 1979), pp. 227-248.

³The classic work on this topic is Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," American Quarterly, 18 (Summer 1966), pp. 151-174. See also discussion in Sarah Eisenstein, Give Us Bread, But Give Us Roses: Working Women's Consciousness in the United States, 1890 to the First World War (Boston: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1983), Chapter 4, "Victorian Ideology and Working Women," pp. 55-112.

⁴Smuts, pp. 38-51; Eisenstein, Chapter 5, "Working Women's Attitudes Toward Marriage and Work," pp. 113-145. See also Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," Midcontinent American Studies Journal, 10 (Spring 1969), pp. 5-15; and Leslie Woodcock Tentler, Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

⁵Lucy Larcom, A New England Girlhood (1889; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1974), p. 210, quoted in Eisenstein, p. 175.

⁶Eisenstein, pp. 70-95.

⁷Smuts, p. 48, 87-88. Michigan Commission of Inquiry, p. 19. Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) pp. 71-72, 101-102, 105.

⁸Eisenstein, p. 95, and discussion pp. 95-112.

⁹Kessler-Harris, pp. 139-150. For a general discussion of "de-skilling," see Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

¹⁰Belding Banner, 18 April 1901.

¹¹For details on employment, see Appendix, Table A-2; Souvenir [c. 1907]; Belding Banner, 18 May 1905; Belding Banner-News, 29 August 1957; Interviews, Belding.

¹²Reports, 1894-1920; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Manuscript Population Schedule, Otisco Township, Ionia County, Michigan. Interviews, Belding.

¹³U.S. Census. 1900.

¹⁴Belding Banner-News, 29 August 1957; Souvenir [c. 1907]; Belding Banner, 27 June 1912, 17 February 1915; Interviews, Belding.

¹⁵For details on company housing, see Report, 1892, p. 187 and Report, 1903, pp. 465-470; Calvert, pp. 19-25; Belding Banner, 18 April 1901, 9 August 1906, 29 June 1912, 26 September 1917.

¹⁶For details on college dormitories, see Thomas Woody, A History of Women's Education in the United States, Vol. II (New York: The Science Press, 1929), pp. 198-203; Maude Gilchrist, The First Three Decades of Home Economics at Michigan State College (East Lansing: School of Home Economics, Michigan State College, 1947), pp. 66-69; Dorothy Gies McGuigan, A Dangerous Experiment: One Hundred Years of Women at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor: Center for Continuing Education of Women, 1970), pp. 67-68.

¹⁷Souvenir [c. 1907] pp. 11-16; Souvenir, 1920; Interviews, Belding. According to a Detroit reporter, Miss Zieman, one of the boarding house matrons, was "commanding yet motherly...[She] wins the confidence and love of the girls under her charge, thereby supplying a loss many girls experience in leaving congenial home surroundings to enter the world of self-reliance." Belding Banner, 26 September 1917. For a discussion of urban working class women "on their own," see Tentler, pp. 115-135.

¹⁸Belding Banner, 4 November 1897.

¹⁹Interviews, Belding. See Thomas Dublin, "Women, Work and Protest in the Early Lowell Mills: 'The Oppressing Hand of Avarice Would Enslave Us,'" Labor History, 16 (Winter 1975), pp. 104-106 for reports that residents in New England dormitories exerted similar pressures in the early 19th century.

²⁰Belding Banner, 26 September 1917; Belding Banner-News, 19 March 1924.

²¹Belding Banner, 18 April 1901. Similar comments in Belding Banner, 18 May 1905, 26 September 1917.

²²Calvert, pp. 17-18. Calvert was nationally known for his interest in social issues. This particular work was published by Belding Brothers and Co.

²³Interviews, Belding.

²⁴Herbert Gutman, "The Worker's Search for Power: Labor in the Gilded Age," in H. Wayne Morgan, ed., The Gilded Age: A Reappraisal (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963), pp. 47-48.

²⁵For contrasting situations, see Dale Newman, "Work and Community Life in a Southern Textile Town," Labor History, 19 (Spring 1978), pp. 204-225; Edmund deS. Brunner, Industrial Village Churches (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1930), pp. 81-86; and Glenn Gilman, Human Relations in the Industrial Southeast (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1956), pp. 226-232. Southern textile towns often treated mill workers with contempt. Prude noted that some New Englanders perceived factory operatives as "separate ominous social groupings." See Prude, "The Social System of Early New England Textile Mills: A Case Study, 1812-40," in Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz, eds., Working Class America: Essays on Labor, Community and American Society (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), pp. 1-36.

²⁶Report, 1892, p. 187. Belding Banner, 18 May 1905, 27 June 1912. Calvert, pp. 16-19. Interviews, Belding, especially Pearl Olger Burns.

²⁷Appendix, Table A-3. St. Joseph Traveler-Herald, 19 May 1883; St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 20 December 1890, 5 September 1903; St. Joseph Herald Press, 21 May 1919.

²⁸St. Joseph Herald, 24 July 1886; St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 20 December 1890; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 8 September 1906.

²⁹U.S. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Manuscript Population Schedule, St. Joseph Township, Berrien County, Michigan, and Otisco Township, Ionia County, Michigan, is the source for the comparisons in this and following paragraphs. The St. Joseph census listed 226 hosiery workers in 1900; the state factory inspector reported that Cooper-Wells employed 277 in 1900. See Appendix, Table A-3.

³⁰U.S. Census, 1900; Interviews, St. Joseph; Pamphlets on Churches, Fort Miami Heritage Society, St. Joseph, Michigan. The twelve block residential area on the Lake Michigan beach, below the bluff, was heavily German. Into the 1920's and 1930's at least four churches in St. Joseph held services in German and many shops had bi-lingual clerks to accomodate German-speaking customers. Some of the German-speaking residents of the St. Joseph area had come from Russia, not Germany. Their families had previously been welcomed by the Russians, but as the political climate

changed, many left.

³¹St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 7 June 1890.

³²Textile World Record, 31 (August 1906), pp. 65-66 and 33 (April 1907), pp. 76-87; Textile World Journal, 52 (April 1917), pp. 93-95. St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 7 June 1890. See St. Joseph Herald Press, March, May, June, September, October, November, December, 1919 and January, 1920.

³³St. Joseph Herald Press, 11 July 1919; The Herald Palladium [Benton Harbor], 13 March 1975.

³⁴Interview, St. Joseph, Herbert Gorr, 1985; U. S. Census, 1900, St. Joseph.

³⁵Kessler-Harris, pp. 137-140.

³⁶Interview, St. Joseph, Ruth Hoffmann Becker, 1986.

³⁷See Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, Women, Work, and Family (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978). See Joseph A. Hill, Women in Gainful Occupations, 1870 to 1920, Census Monographs IX (1929; rpt. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978).

³⁸Three Oaks Press, 16 December 1898, 24 February 1899; The Acorn [Three Oaks], 8 April 1915; Belding Banner, 6 May and 9 September 1909. St. Joseph Herald, 24 July 1886; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 15 November 1906, 26 December 1907, 6 April 1909, 4 November 1909, 3 April 1914, 30 April 1915. Reber, pp. 48-49 and 132-134; Michigan State Gazeteer and Business Directory (Detroit: R. L. Polk & Co., 1895, 1907, 1917). Hereafter cited as Polk.

³⁹Reber, pp. 132-134.

⁴⁰Hawley, The Population of Michigan, pp. 97 and 101. In 1920, the population of St. Joseph was 7,251; that of Belding, 3,911.

⁴¹Appendix, Table A-4. The Niles Daily Star, 27 February 1903; Interviews, Three Oaks.

⁴²Three Oaks Press, 10 March 1899.

⁴³U. S. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Manuscript Population Schedule, Three Oaks Township, Berrien County, Michigan.

⁴⁴Report, 1892, p. 188. U.S. Census, 1900.

⁴⁵Report, 1892, p. 188.

⁴⁴The Niles Daily Star, 27 February 1903.

⁴⁷Three Oaks Press, 11 February 1898, 11 March 1898, 17 February 1899, 12 March 1899; The Acorn [Three Oaks] 15 February 1901, 12 April 1901, 12 July 1901, 15 February 1902, 19 August 1904, 20 April 1906; WFC v DeCamp and Anderson, EKW Deposition, p. 667.

⁴⁸See "Help Wanted" notices, The Acorn [Three Oaks], 4, 11, 18 June 1914; Minutes of Department Heads Meeting, 11 September 1918, WFC-RHC, WMU.

⁴⁹Report, 1892, p. 188.

⁵⁰Three Oaks Press, 30 December 1898.

⁵¹Region, pp. 159-199. Interviews, Three Oaks.

⁵²Interviews, Three Oaks.

⁵³Tentler, pp. 22-23.

⁵⁴Prude, p. 8.

⁵⁵St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 20 December 1890; Three Oaks Press, 10 March 1899; Souvenir [c. 1907], pp. 10, 34.

⁵⁶"Less than half of the wage-earners' families in manufacturing industries...depended entirely upon the earnings of the fathers...[Unless the father is in an especially well-paid occupation,] the larger the family income the greater were the proportionate contributions from the wage-earning mother and wage-earning children, or from boarders and lodgers." William Jett Lauck and Edgar Sydenstricker, Conditions of Labor in American Industries (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1917), pp. 357-358. See also Dublin, Women at Work, pp. 165-182; Tentler, pp. 85-114; McGaw, pp. 227-248.

⁵⁷Interviews, Three Oaks and Belding.

⁵⁸Belding Banner, 18 April 1901.

⁵⁹Souvenir [c. 1907], p. 34.

CHAPTER V

¹Textile World Record, 27 (September 1904), pp. 136-138. See also Textile World Record, 29 (May 1905), pp. 154-155 and 32 (January 1907), pp. 139-140.

²See Chapters II and III. For Belding Brothers and Company, see Belding Brothers and Company, 1863-1925 (New

York: Edward B. Smith & Co., 1925). For Cooper-Wells and Company, see St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 6 February 1892; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 23 October 1912; The Herald-Press [St. Joseph] 22 & 28 December 1928. For Warren Featherbone and Company, see The Acorn [Three Oaks], 6 February 1919.

³Interviews, Belding, St. Joseph, Three Oaks. John S. Ellsworth, Factory Folkways: A Study of Institutional Structure and Change (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952). For a discussion of the effects of personal supervision in early New England factories, see Prude, pp. 4-6.

⁴For a discussion of work culture, see Susan Porter Benson, "'The Customer Ain't God': The Work Culture of Department Store Saleswomen, 1890-1940," in Frisch and Walkowitz, pp. 185-211.

⁵Souvenir [1907], p. 12.

⁶Belding Banner, 26 September 1917.

⁷Copies of these advertisements and of instructions to salesmen and dealers are in the files of the Alvah N. Belding Memorial Library in Belding, Michigan. The ads appeared in the March and April issues of Ladies Home Journal, Good Housekeeping and Delineator and were the only Belding advertisements that used this focus on workers and working conditions. Both before and after this, Belding Brothers and Company ads focused on their products' luxury, durability, beauty and long lasting colors. The Belding dormitories were also described in the Michigan Bureau of Labor Report, 1892, pp. 187-188.

⁸For a detailed survey, see Stuart Brandes, American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970). For a political assessment, see David Brody, Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the Twentieth Century Struggle (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), Chapter 2, "The Rise and Decline of Welfare Capitalism," pp. 48-81. For a study of corporate social control, see Peter Iverson Berg, "Welfare Capitalism at the REO Motor Car Company," Michigan History, 69 (Nov./Dec. 1985), pp. 37-44.

⁹Souvenir [1907], pp. 13-16. These views are similar to those expressed in the Textile World Record, 27 (September 1904), pp. 136-138; 29 (May 1905), p. 154; 33 (April 1907), pp. 76-87.

¹⁰Belding Banner, 13 February 1919; 31 December 1919. Interviews, Belding.

¹¹Interviews, Belding. Belding Banner, 26 September 1917. Textile World and Industrial Record, 16 (March 1899),

pp. 76-77, recommends fining as a means of maintaining discipline and output.

¹²Interviews, Belding.

¹³Reports, 1894-1901, note reductions in wages and/or total workforce during those years. For example, the 1895 Report indicates that since April 1893, Belding Brothers had reduced wages by 10%, Richardson Silk by 15%.

¹⁴Belding Banner, 5 May 1915. See Chapters II and III. Interviews, Belding.

¹⁵Belding Banner, 22 March 1900.

¹⁶According to the 1901 Report, the average daily wage at the three Belding Brothers mills was 93 cents, and 83 cents at the Richardson mill. Two of the Belding mills were weaving mills and one was a thread mill, like the Richardson. Weavers were paid more than the thread mill workers, and their wages brought up the average for the Belding workers. Management philosophy and interviews indicate that the two thread mills paid comparable wages. Therefore the Belding spoolers probably earned close to the Richardson's daily wage, 83 cents. Belding Banner, 22 March 1900.

¹⁷A canvass of 154 women workers in Belding in 1905 indicated an average daily wage of 95 cents (Report, 1906, p. 272.) Assuming that this sample was fairly representative, and given their relative status among women workers, the spoolers probably earned a little less than average.

¹⁸Belding Banner, 9 March 1905.

¹⁹Belding Banner, 5 and 12 May 1920.

²⁰Belding Banner, 5 May 1920.

²¹Souvenir, [1907], p. 16.

²²Many states, including Michigan, considered establishing a minimum wage for women. These legislative efforts were not very effective in raising women's wages. For example, in 1918, the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, which had the authority to recommend "living wages" for women and minors, suggested a minimum wage for skilled millinery workers that was 15% less than estimated weekly needs. "In practice, the living wage...never rose to a level adequate to provide the necessities of life for a single self-supporting woman, much less for one with dependent children." Kessler-Harris, pp. 142, 196-197. See "Legislation for Women in Industry: Minimum Wage," American Labor Legislation Review, 6 (December 1916), pp. 383-393.

²³Belding Banner, 9 March 1905.

²⁴For details on the walkout, see these newspapers: The Buchanan Record, 2 May, 5 May 1905; The Evening Press [St. Joseph], 28 and 29 April, 1, 2, 3 May 1905; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 28 April, 1, 2, 3 May 1905.

²⁵Report, 1905, p. 493. The 1907 Report included nearly identical statements, pp. 512-513.

²⁶The Evening Press [St. Joseph], 29 April 1905; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 28 April 1905. None of these names were found in the 1900 U.S. Census or in St. Joseph city directories.

²⁷St. Joseph Evening Herald, 28 April 1905 listed the names. Except for the mayor, the newspaper omitted first names. Polk, 1904-05 lists Henry Roblee, pastor of the First Congregational Church; Dr. Edward Witt and Dr. Frank M. Gowdy, physicians and surgeons. "Reverend Frye" may have been either William A. Frye, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church or Edward G. Frye, pastor of the Evangelical Association. Coolidge, p. 186. Mayor Frank L. Pixley was the son of a local fruit grower and had lived in St. Joseph since 1871. He had been a member of Schultz-Pixley, Real Estate and Insurance, since 1889. St. Joseph Evening Herald, 2 May 1905.

²⁸The Evening Press [St. Joseph], 29 April 1905.

²⁹The Evening Press [St. Joseph], 29 April 1905; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 28 April, 1 May 1905. In 1910, Assistant Superintendent Charles Gess left Cooper-Wells for another firm. He had worked there for twenty-two years, beginning when he was a "boy" and eventually became the "head of the department of female help." St. Joseph Evening Herald, 20 December 1910.

³⁰The Evening Press [St. Joseph], 1 May 1905; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 1 May 1905; The Buchanan Record, 2 May 1905.

³¹St. Joseph Evening Herald, 1 May 1905; Polk, 1904-05. Coolidge, p. 190, lists John V. Starr, Mayor, 1896-1899, 1904-1905.

³²The Evening Press [St. Joseph], 1 May 1905; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 1 May 1905.

³³The Evening Press [St. Joseph], 1 May 1905.

³⁴The Evening Press [St. Joseph], 1 May 1905; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 1 May 1905.

³⁰"Knitting Mill Rules," Textile World and Industrial Record 16 (March 1899), pp. 76-77.

³⁴St. Joseph Evening Herald, 2 May and 5 May 1905.

³⁷St. Joseph Evening Herald, 2 May 1905.

³⁸St. Joseph Evening Herald, 2 May and 3 May 1905. Only Maud Van Brunt (b. 1887) was found in the 1900 U.S. Census. She and her parents were born in Michigan. Her father was a carpenter. Helen Langer was listed in Polk, 1902 as a "roomer".

³⁹The Buchanan Record, 5 May 1905.

⁴⁰St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 24 May 1902; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 8 September 1908.

⁴¹The Evening Press [St. Joseph], 28 April 1905.

⁴²The Evening Press [St. Joseph], 1 May 1905.

⁴³St. Joseph Evening Herald, 1 May 1905.

⁴⁴St. Joseph Evening Herald, 28 April 1905.

⁴⁵"Booster Editions" include: St. Joseph Traveler-Herald, 19 May 1883; St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 2 May 1903; 5 September 1903; St. Joseph Evening Herald, 15 November 1906; 4 November 1909. This last reference describes the policy of The Herald since Merchant's association began in 1870: "Loyalty, too, to its home city and general interests had been a cardinal principle of the management....The Herald will continue to do its part in the upbuilding of this section."

⁴⁶St. Joseph Saturday Herald, 29 August 1903.

⁴⁷Report, 1892, p. 188; 1903, p. 472. The Acorn [Three Oaks], 24 August 1911; 2 November 1911.

⁴⁸Payroll Books, WFC-RHC, WMU. "Early Days at Three Oaks Factory," St. Joseph Herald-Press, 10 February 1928, reported on a presentation to the Three Oaks Historical Society by Mrs. Joseph Lee, Fred Edinger, David Potts, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Portinga. The article noted that Richard Portinga was a long-time Featherbone employee. According to The Acorn [Three Oaks], 7 December 1911, Joseph Lee was the custodian of the Three Oaks opera house, which was used by Warren Featherbone for business and recreation. The Galien River Gazette [Three Oaks], 23 May 1957, printed a 1917 photo of Featherbone department heads, including Fred Edinger and David Potts. Interviews, Three Oaks. Textile World Record, 16 (March 1899), pp. 76-77. On absenteeism

and labor turnover, see Textile World Record, 29 (May 1905), p. 154; 31 (Sept. 1906), p. 65; 33 (April 1907), pp. 76-87; and Textile World Journal, 51 (August 19, 1916), p. 16; 52 (April 28, 1917), pp. 93-95.

47Three Oaks Press, 12 February 1897; 12 March 1897; 10 September 1897; 30 December 1898. The Acorn [Three Oaks], 16 March 1906; 2 November 1911; 7 December 1911; Interview, Three Oaks, Charles Jackson, 1983.

50The Acorn [Three Oaks], 2 November 1911.

51The Acorn [Three Oaks], 14 May 1914; Interviews, Three Oaks, Vonda Hollett Chilson and Charles Jackson, 1983.

52Berrien County Record, 8 March 1925.

53Interviews, Three Oaks, especially Vonda Hollett Chilson, Jessie Lowe, Lucille Long Roundy, 1983.

54Three Oaks Press, 12 March 1897; 30 December 1898. Minutes of Department Heads Meeting, 11 September 1918, WFC-RHC, WMU.

55Three Oaks Press, 12 March 1897. Signed by W. K. Whitehead, J. Chatterson, J. L. McKie, D. H. Beeson, J. E. Bommerschein, G. L. Stevens, J. B. Paddock, Wm. Holz, W. T. Green, D. F. Bommerschein.

56Three Oaks Press, 30 December 1898. According to the local newspaper, this was a prosperous time for Warren Featherbone Company. See Three Oaks Press, 10 September 1897; 11 February 1898; 10 March 1899. Between 1899 and 1906, the Warren Featherbone Company had additional production facilities in Chicago, in Porter (Indiana) and in Middleville (Michigan). Their original production method had been so labor intensive that Three Oaks could not provide adequate workers or housing. After 1906, the company developed more efficient production methods and closed the other facilities.

57The last saloon in Three Oaks closed in 1897. Edward Kirk Warren, President of the Village Council, and a majority of its members had opposed granting any new licenses. Debate over this issue had "clogged" the "business of the village council...for two months" in 1898. E. K. Warren's son, Charles, said that he would vote to move the factory out of Three Oaks if another saloon were allowed. Three Oaks Press, 28 October, 9 December, 30 December 1898. From 1899 to 1915 (when Three Oaks voted "dry"), the Warren Featherbone Company annually paid \$250 to the village treasury, equivalent to the cost of a liquor license, to compensate it for lost revenue. See Three Oaks Press, 24 February 1899; The Acorn [Three Oaks], 8 April 1915.

••Minutes of Department Heads Meeting, 11 September 1918, WFC-RHC, WMU. E. K. Warren, "Let them whistle up here."

••Interviews, Three Oaks. Robert W. French, Living Together: Buchanan and Clark, 1904-1975, (n.p.: n.p., [1976]), 194 pages.

••Three Oaks Press, 22 July 1898; The Acorn [Three Oaks], Special Memorial Edition, 6 February 1919.

••Prude, in Frisch and Walkowitz, pp. 1-36; Dublin, Women at Work, pp. 60, 225, also noted that "the scarcity of experienced hands led Lowell firms to modify their written regulations in actual practice." In spite of the rules, workers who had quit without giving the required two weeks notice were often rehired.

••Textile World Record, 27 (September 1904), pp. 136-138. See Berg for the adoption of similar strategies by the REO Motor Car Company.

••Textile World Record, 29 (May 1905), p. 154.

••Textile World Record, 31 (September 1906), p. 65.

••Textile World Record, 32 (January 1907), pp. 139-140.

••Textile World Record, 32 (January 1907), pp. 139-140.

••Textile World Record, 33 (April 1907), p. 87.

••Kessler-Harris, pp. 149-151. Christine Stansell, "The Origins of the Sweatshop: Women and Early Industrialization in New York City," in Frisch and Walkowitz, pp. 78-103.

••In 1909, 59,000 women in New York City worked in the women's clothing industry. Irene Osgood Andrews, "The Relation of Irregular Employment to the Living Wage for Women," American Labor Legislation Review, 5 (June 1915), pp. 365-366. Many homeworkers wanted to continue such work, but end the abuses. Instead, in the 1930's many types of homework were made illegal, without making any provisions for the workers who depended on such employment. Kessler-Harris, pp. 269-270.

CHAPTER VI

••See Lingeman, pp. 321-363.

••Atherton, p. 23.

⁵See Anthony F. C. Wallace, Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); Hannah G. Josephson, The Golden Threads: New England Mill Girls and Magnates (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949); and David Brody, "The Rise and Decline of Welfare Capitalism," Chapter 2 in Workers in Industrial America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

⁶Ellsworth, p. 113

⁷Atherton, p. 26.

⁸Walkowitz, Worker City, pp. 259, 254.

⁹John Bodnar, Worker's World: Kinship, Community, and Protest in an Industrial Society, 1900-1940 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

¹⁰Walkowitz, p. 13.

¹¹Bodnar, pp. 168, 178, 181.

¹²Tentler, pp. 180-185.

¹³Bodnar, pp. 165-185. This sense of powerlessness is suggested by a phrase used by my husband's parents: "What are you going to do?" This is said with an air of resignation and helplessness in response to some political or job-related circumstance. They lived in Detroit, Michigan and Andrew Havira worked at the Chevrolet Gear and Axle Plant for nearly forty years.

¹⁴My husband's family, especially his aunt, Mary Havira, routinely greets us this way. For thirty years, she operated a high speed, double-needle sewing machine in a factory in Streator, Illinois.

¹⁵See Ellsworth, pp. 1-26.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Table A-1 List of Factories Employing 100 or More (1919)

CITY (POPULATION)	COMPANY	PRODUCT	EMPLOYEES*			
			M	F	C	T
<u>Allegan County</u>						
Allegan (3637)	Blood Brothers Machine	machinery	112	12	0	124
Douglas (305)	E.E. Weed	fruit packages	111	22	0	133
Hastings (5132)	Consolidated Press	power presses	298	8	0	306
	Grand Rapids Bookcase and Chair	furniture	179	15	2	196
	Hastings Table	furniture	140	29	0	169
	Hastings Wool Boot	wool boots	68	46	0	114
Otsego (3168)	Bardeen Paper	paper	264	57	0	321
	MacSim Paper	paper	216	4	1	221
Plainwell (2049)	Michigan Paper	paper	259	79	0	338
<u>Berrien County</u>						
Buchanan (3187)	Clark Equipment	drills, wheels, axles	664	45	0	709
Coloma (663)	Friday Brothers	canned foods	34	80	0	114
Niles (7311)	French Paper	paper	222	34	0	256
	Kawneer Mfg.	metal store fronts	258	30	0	288
	National Print- ing & Engraving	printing	103	17	0	120

St. Joseph (7251)	Auto Specialties Manufacturing	auto parts	352	79	0	431
	Bradford	novelties	33	67	0	100
	Cooper-Wells	hosiery	217	300	27	544
Three Oaks (1362)	Warren Feather- bone	sewing notions	143	196	38	377
Watervliet (1073)	Watervliet Paper	paper	227	63	0	290

Branch County

Bronson (1257)	Douglas & Rudd Manufacturing	electric supplies	89	68	0	157
Coldwater (6114)	Hoosier Shoe	shoes	54	60	0	114
	Wolverine Port- land Cement	cement	122	1	0	123
Quincy (1251)	Wolverine Port- land Cement	cement	100	0	0	100
Union City (1268)	Peerless Port- land Cement	cement	110	8	0	118

Calhoun County

Albion (8354)	Albion Malleable Iron	castings	898	46	0	944
	Gale Mfg.	castings	260	40	26	326
	Hayes Wheel	auto hubs	357	32	0	389
	National Spring and Wire	auto cush-105 ion springs	128	10	10	243
	Union Steel	steel wire	268	23	10	301
Homer (1076)	Homer Furnace	furnaces	152	3	0	155

Cass County

Dowagiac (5440)	Beckwith	stoves, furnaces	756	28	0	784
	Rudy Furnace	furnaces	170	6	0	176

Eaton County

Bellevue (1035)	Burt Portland Cement	cement	205	7	0	212
Charlotte (5126)	Hancock Mfg.	auto parts	147	34	0	181
Eaton Rapids (2379)	E.R. Woolen Mills	yarns, woolens	283	115	15	368
Grand Ledge (3043)	Grand Ledge Chair	chairs	110	26	2	138

Ionia County

Belding (3911)	Belding Bros. (four mills)	silk	298	652	29	979
	Belding Hall	refrig- erators	203	6	1	210
	Dort Motor Car	auto bodies	159	0	0	159
Ionia (6935)	Hayes-Ionia	auto bodies	352	17	0	369
	Pere Marquette R.R. Shop	R.R. car repairing	227	1	0	228
	E.F. Stafford Manufacturing	furniture	259	14	0	273
	Ypsilanti Reed Furniture	furniture	589	292	37	918

Kalamazoo County

Vicksburg (1712)	Lee Paper	paper	183	65	0	248
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Kent County

Comstock Park (unincorp.)	Wallin Leather	tanning	132	1	0	133
Rockford (1143)	Hirth-Krause	shoes	107	89	1	197
Sparta (1502)	Welch Mfg.	store fixtures	166	12	0	178

Ottawa County

Coopersville (914)	E.P. Dagget Canning	canned foods	70	43	2	115
Ferrysburg (unincorp.)	Johnston Bros.	boilers	109	0	0	109
Grand Haven (7205)	Challenge Mach- inery	printing machinery	168	11	0	179
	Challenge Re- frigerators	refrig- erators	166	19	4	189
	Keller Pneu- matic Tool		208	22	0	230
	Eagle-Ottawa Leather	leather tanning	367	57	36	460
	Story & Clark Piano	pianos	271	64	8	343
Zeeland (2275)	Wolverine Furn- iture	furniture	96	8	2	106

St. Joseph County

Centreville (701)	Dr. Denton Sleeping Gar- ment Mills	sleepers	62	111	0	173
Sturgis (5995)	Aulsbrook and Jones	furniture	160	32	0	192
	Grobhiser Cab- inetmakers	furniture	120	16	0	136
	Kirsch Mfg.	curtain fixtures	176	86	0	262
	Chas. A. Miller	plumber's supplies	118	21	0	139
	Morency-Van Buren Mfg.	plumber's supplies	142	3	0	145
	National Carbon Coated Paper	carbon paper	115	60	0	175
	Royal Easy Chair	chairs	203	18	0	221
	Sturgis Steel Go-Cart	baby cabs	173	42	0	215

	Wilhelm Furni- ture	furniture	134	27	0	161
Three Rivers (5209)	Eddy Paper	paper	102	2	0	104
	Fairbanks Morse	railway motor cars	915	54	0	969
White Pigeon (887)	Eddy Paper	paper	305	28	0	333

Van Buren County

Hartford (1361)	S.M. Carpp Canning	canned foods	48	70	1	119
South Haven (3829)	National Motor Casting	castings	166	1	0	167
	S.E. Overton	wood spe- cialties	115	2	0	117
	Cable Nelson	pianos	165	36	0	201

*Males, Females, Children under 16, Total.

Source: Michigan. Department of Labor. Report. 1920.

Table A-2 Employment at Belding Brothers and Company,
1893-1919*

Year	Males	Females	14-16 Year Olds	Total
1893	44	131	8	183
1894	50	150	3	203
1895	42	157	6	205
1896	24	49		73
1897	80			80
1898	31	99	6	136
1899	69	253	22	344
1900				350
1901	67	200	6	273
1902	No Data			
1903	No Data			
1904	46	88	4	138
1905	154	494	16	664
1906	186	412	9	607
1907	193	478	6	677
1908	177	470	2	649
1909	226	677	2	905
1910	166	515	1	682
1911	147	426	12	585
1912	173	430	15	618
1913	184	548	7	739
1914	198	601		799
1915	175	549	5	729
1916	203	613		816
1917	200	558	22	780
1918	197	505	19	721
1919	199	432	22	653

*Richardson Silk Mill data on following page.

Source: Michigan. Reports. 1894-1920.

Table A-2 continued

Richardson Silk Mill

Year	Males	Females	14-16 Year Olds	Total
1893	46	100	8	154
1894	30	240	4	274
1895	30	220	7	257
1896	25	100	3	128
1897	25			25
1898	35	140		175
1899	31	170	9	110
1900				300
1901	44	281		325
1902	No Data			
1903	No Data			
1904	75	195	5	275
1905	67	249	8	324
1906	79	232		311
1907	63	204	2	267
1908	60	202		262
1909	62	227		289
1910	51	207		258
1911	50	262		312
1912	66	204		270
1913	62	200	2	264
1914	54	142		196
1915	61	137		198
1916	108	193		301
1917	77	199	10	286
1918	82	197	9	288
1919	99	220		319

Source: Michigan. Reports. 1894-1920.

Table A-3 Employment at Cooper, Wells and Company,
1893-1919

Year	Males	Females	14-16 Year Olds	Total
1893	100	150	16	266
1894	50	150	14	214
1895	70	130	18	218
1896	50	185	6	241
1897	93	187	00	280
1898	121	198	30	349
1899	105	188	22	315
1900				277
1901	116	195	7	318
1902	No Data			
1903	No Data			
1904	162	266	48	476
1905	170	255	50	475
1906	143	263	44	450
1907	165	290	37	492
1908	146	275	22	443
1909	155	286	30	471
1910	181	306	28	515
1911	182	328	18	528
1912	189	302	15	506
1913	205	317	23	545
1914	191	304	25	520
1915	218	309	15	542
1916	223	345		578
1917	212	290	36	538
1918	255	327	20	602
1919	217	300	27	544

Source: Michigan. Reports. 1894-1920.

Table A-4 Employment at Warren Featherbone Company,
1893-1919

Year	Males	Females	14-16 Year Olds	Total
1893	75	150		225
1894	75	100	12	187
1895	100	175	15	290
1896	142	153	15	310
1897	118	80	2	200
1898	125	200	8	333
1899	75	150	10	235
1900				312
1901	190	185	17	392
1902	No Data			
1903	No Data			
1904	97	169	5	271
1905	138	150	11	299
1906	146	153	17	316
1907	122	137	64	323
1908	173	160	7	340
1909	130	134	14	278
1910	148	151	18	317
1911	131	134	11	276
1912	151	146	6	303
1913	140	144	8	292
1914	216	273	38	527
1915	185	140	12	337
1916	211	178	2	391
1917	135	150	3	288
1918	105	140	23	268
1919	143	196	38	377

Source: Michigan. Reports. 1894-1920.

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