

Bale to Bolt

Boardinghouse Post-Visit Activity

Personal letters that survived over the years, which were never intended to be read by a wide audience, are rich sources of information about the past.¹ They yield information about historical events, and insight as to how the writers felt about those events. For a follow-up discussion in class, here are some suggestions to help your students reflect upon their visit to the boardinghouse:

1. What did the mill workers write that indicated the mill experience had some good points?
2. What were some of the negative aspects of working in the mill?
3. How did the “mill girls” use the money they earned?
4. How does their daily life compare with ours today?
5. How have our lives been affected by what the “mill girls” did 150 years ago?
6. At the bottom of one of the letters there is a postscript that says, “Don’t let this be seen.” Why might the writer have included this request?

¹ Primary source material, including “mill girl” letters can be found at the Center for Lowell History: <http://library.uml.edu/clh/mo.htm>.



Boott Cotton Mills Museum,
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