

THANKS TO THE WORKERS

Objective: By analyzing photographs and statements from workers in the 1890s and judging their historical accuracy, students will be able to describe the labor force of the 1890s and to articulate why immigrants, women, and children made good sources of labor for the growing industries.

Materials:

- **Sheet 8.5A:** Multiple copies of Photograph Analysis Sheet (students will need more than one)
- **Sheet 8.5B:** Multiple copies of Statement Analysis Sheet (students will need more than one)
- **Docs 8.5A-8.5J:** Photographs of Maine workers
- **Doc 8.5K:** Workers' Statements, taken from the Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics reports, 1892 and 1893
- Cardboard and/or a laminating machine

Timing: Two class periods

Background Reading: Chapter Eight

Preparation: Cut the Workers' Statements into sections. Make durable cards out of both the photographs and the statements by either laminating each photograph and each statement separately, or by pasting each onto a piece of stiff cardboard.

Procedure:

1. Review the causes of the Industrial Revolution with students. (This activity might follow well after students have a chance to do the worksheet What Caused the Industrial Revolution in Maine?) Remind them that one of the main reasons industries were able to grow so quickly was because of the increased labor force. Women began to work in large numbers outside the home, as did children. Large numbers of immigrants came into the state looking for work. The change in the labor force was so dramatic that some people did not like it.

2. Read the following statement, made by a Shoemaker in 1891:

With the flood of cheap labor pouring in upon us from all directions, there can be but one result; wages and the standard of living must go down until they reach the level of the stagnant pools from which they flow. We seem to be in the midst of an industrial revolution, and that revolution in the direction of cheap labor. Ten years ago we had no use for it. Why does it find employment today? Because these people are contented and happy with wages and a standard of living that would be, to the American, intolerable. . . . Machinery has taken the place of intelligent labor, and the ignorant foreigner is preferred because the less intelligence, the less ambition and fewer aspirations, and of course more contentment with a low standard of living. . . .

Every cargo of these 'utter failures of civilization' dumped upon our shores degrades labor.

3. Ask students what they think of this statement, using questions like the following:
 - Who do you think this man was?
 - What does he mean by the word "American" here?
 - Who does he call "utter failures of civilization"? Why?
 - Why is he so angry?
 - Are his comments fair? Why or why not?
 - Would you call this man a "nativist" (see definition in Chapter Eight of textbook)? Why or why not?

4. Tell students they will be meeting some of the people this man was so angry with, as well as others who might have had thoughts similar to his. All of these people powered the Industrial Revolution. Give students the following instructions. They will work at their own pace, each choosing a photograph or a statement card and filling out either a Photograph Analysis Sheet or a Statement Analysis Sheet for each card they examine. They will have the class period to finish as many cards as they can. They should not try to rush, however--they will be graded primarily on how well they answer the questions for each card, not the sheer number of cards they can get through.

5. Set out the cards and Analysis sheets. Give students time to examine the cards and complete the worksheets.

6. Bring the class back together. Debrief with students, asking them questions like the following:
 - Who were some of the people you met on these cards?
 - What struck you as interesting or surprising about them?
 - What kinds of complaints did they have about their work?
 - What kinds of things did they like about their work?
 - What did the pictures of the workers tell you about them?
 - Do you think the photographs are accurate historical documents? Why or why not?
 - Do you think the statements are accurate historical documents? Why or why not?
 - Do you think these workers were treated fairly?
 - Why did immigrants, women, and children make an excellent source of labor for quickly-growing industries?
 - In what ways did these people contribute to the Industrial Revolution?

Evaluation: Grade student analysis sheets based on thoughtfulness and thoroughness first, then quantity.

Follow-up Activities:

- Have students research their own ethnic backgrounds. Have them interview their parents or grandparents to find out where their ancestors were from, when they came over to the United States, and why they came over. Emphasize to students that almost everyone in this country comes from immigrant ancestors, except for Native American students.
- Ask students: who is the labor force today in the state of Maine? How has labor changed? Look for photographs and statements by workers today. *Salt Magazine* is an excellent resource for this. Have students compare today's workers to those in the Industrial Revolution. How do their concerns differ? How are they similar?

Alignment with the Learning Results:

Grade Level: **9th-dipl.**

Content Area: Social Studies: **APPLICATIONS**

Standard: **Researching and Developing Positions on Current Social Studies Issues**

Students research, develop, present, and defend positions on current social studies issues by developing and modifying research questions, and locating, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing information from multiple and varied sources.

Descriptor **A1c**: Make judgments about conflicting findings from different sources, incorporating those from sources that are valid and refuting others.

Grade Level: **6th-8th**

Content Area: Social Studies: **APPLICATIONS**

Standard: **Researching and Developing Positions on Current Social Studies Issues**

Students research, select, and present a position on a current social studies issue by proposing and revising research questions, and locating and selecting information from multiple and varied sources.

Descriptor **A1c**: Locate and access relevant information that includes multiple perspectives from varied sources.

Name: _____

Date: _____

PHOTO ANALYSIS SHEET

Examine your photograph. Answer the following questions based on your observations. Use complete sentences.

1. Photograph Number: _____

2. Who is in the photograph? _____

3. What are they doing? _____

4. Where was the photo taken? _____

5. When was the photo taken? _____

6. Why do you think was it taken? _____

7. Was the photo posed or taken as a candid? How can you tell? _____

8. What is the attitude of the people in the photograph? Are they happy, sad, angry, tired? Why?

9. What other things are in the photograph, besides the people? _____

10. Does the photograph have a message? What is it? What conveys that message? _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

STATEMENT ANALYSIS SHEET

Examine the worker's statement. Answer the following questions based on your observations. Use complete sentences.

1. Statement Number: _____ 2. Who made the statement? _____

3. Summarize the statement. _____

4. What is the worker's attitude about his or her job? How can you tell? _____

5. This worker was responding to questions asked by agents of Maine's Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics. Do you think this worker was interviewed in person? If so, how might his or her answers have been affected by the interviewer?

6. Do you think the worker was responding on a written questionnaire? If so, how might that have affected the worker's answers? Would it have affected *who* answered the questions?

7. What question(s) do you think the worker was responding to? _____

8. Do you believe the worker is speaking truthfully? Why or why not? _____



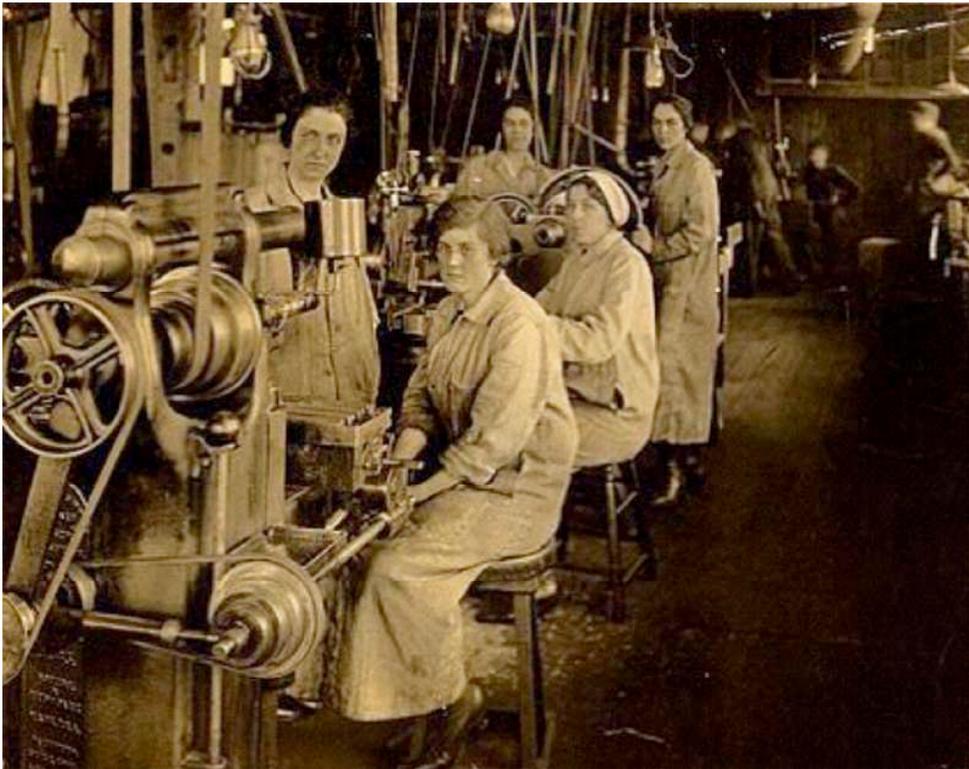
Doc 8.5A: From www.mainememory.net, item # 7904
Courtesy of the Maine Historical Society



Doc 8.5B: From www.mainememory.net, item #12750
Courtesy of the Sedgwick-Brooklin Historical Society



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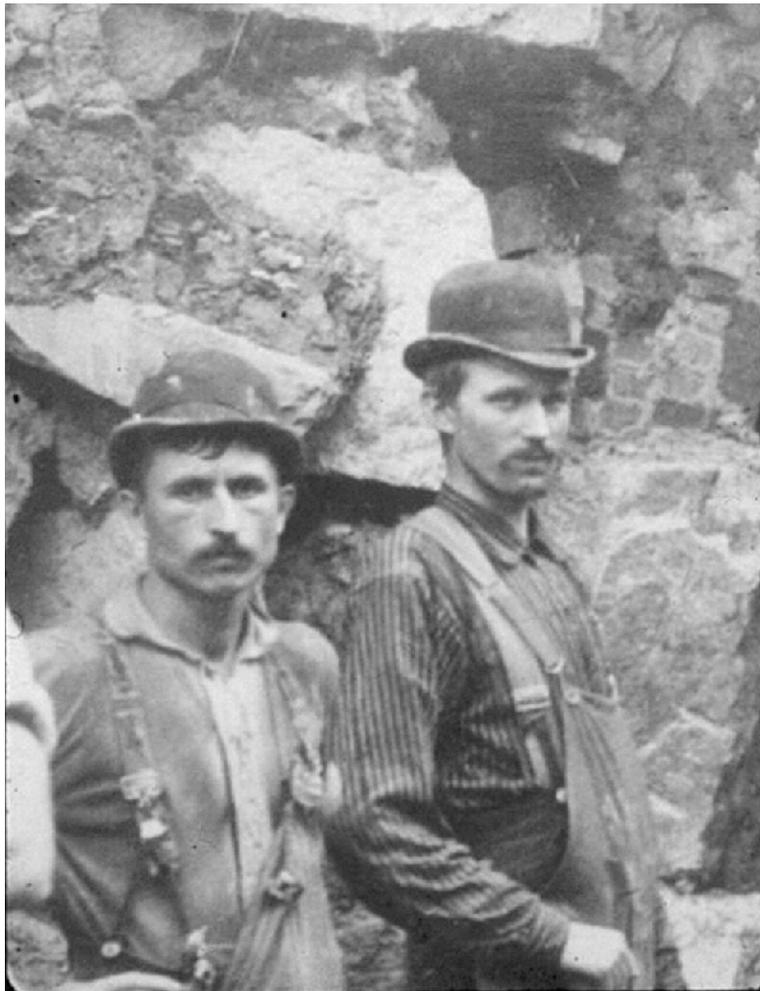
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Doc 8.5I: From www.mainememory.net, item #8181
Courtesy of the Patten Lumbermen's Museum



Doc 8.5: From www.mainememory.net, item #133
Courtesy of the Maine Historical Society

WORKERS' STATEMENTS

From the *Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics for the State of Maine, 1891. Augusta: Burleigh & Flynt. 1892. Excerpts from p. 137-144, "Remarks of Working Men":*

1. "Don't lose any time at my work. A laboring man, and especially a railroad man who has to lay steel rails in summer and shovel snow all winter, should have at least two dollars a day, and no man can educate and dress his children as they should be, for less. It has taken all my best days to get my home, and it is a small one at that."

--Railroad Section Hand, male

2. "For a year back I have been urged by my father to come back to Canada and accept the gift of a good farm, with team, stock and tools complete, worth two thousand dollars, but I am making more money here without them than I could there with them, and do not have to work so hard myself. When I get money enough to support myself without work I will go home to Canada to live."

--Mason Tender, male

3. "More study and less rum would make our State a better place for people to earn a living in."

--Harness Maker, male

4. "I work in winter on the field sawing out the blocks; in summer I bar up the cakes in the house. The ice business, first and last, is no good. I never have got enough out of it so as to save a cent yet."

--Iceman, male

5. "By jobbing around the houses when there is no regular work, I managed to get in every working day in the year, earning nearly six hundred dollars."

--Iceman, male

6. "I believe that drink causes more want and misery than any other thing; with that, and the avarice of capitalists, labor cannot keep up with the social and financial progress of our time. Shut up the rum holes, give the working people more time to rest and think, and the future will be brighter. Eight hours a day, less rum, more fellowship for each other, and more organizations among wage workers is what we need."

--Edger in Sawmill, male

7. "I can't save anything because I don't try; I want to enjoy what I now have; some time I can't. I know the most of the fellows in the mill who are married have about all they can do to pull through and come out even at the end of the year. A man can't last long working at this business, and if he don't take his enjoyment before he is married he surely can't after he has a family dependent on him. I often pity the poor little children that work in the mill, who ought to be at school."

--Mule Spinner, Cotton, male

8. "I work one week by day for ten hours and the next week by night for thirteen hours."

--Paper Mill Hand, male

From the *Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics for the State of Maine, 1892. Augusta: Burleigh & Flynt, 1893. Excerpts from p. 152-158, "Remarks of Working Women."*:

12. "I have been shoemaking for past fifteen years, and am still at the machine. My husband and I saved from our work in the shoe shop a large amount of money, and we paid \$3,500 for a farm. I expected we should be very happy and comfortable, but my husband took to drink and became of no help to me, so I had to come back into the shop again. I do my work as best I can at the farm, and make some butter which I bring in with me mornings as I come to work. Rum is the curse of the working people, and it must be terrible in states where it is as free as water, but it is bad enough in some cities in Maine."

--Shoemaker, female

13. "All the help in our shop are employed at day pay; there is no piece work. I get \$1.25 per day and am expected to do fifteen twelve-pair cases for a day's work. If I stitch more than fifteen cases I get no more wages, but if I fall short because the work fails to come to me, why I am docked at the rate of eight and two-thirds cents per case. I think this a great injustice, and I think we ought to have a union here so we can get fair pay for our work. . . . My health has failed in last four months, and my doctor says I must rest for two or three months or break down entirely. How can I rest when I have not been able to save anything out of my wages? A woman's life is pretty hard now a days, I think."

--Shoemaker, female

14. "I like my employer very much but think he could pay better wages for female labor, and if we should organize I believe we could get it. Where there are unions the wages are always better, I have noticed that, and I would join a union the first one [even] if I lost my place for it. The women have got to organize."

--Shoemaker, female

15. "It is hard work to clothe a body and be a decent woman, but the work is healthy. Not many of us have any education, but we live and die about the same as better folks."

--Rag Sorter, female

16. "My work is in a small hotel, and I have \$2.00 per week and my board. I have lost but two days in the past fourteen months and it will be some time before I can get a vacation. I never have time to go to church, for Sunday is the hardest day in the week. Guests rise late and come late to every meal, and it is a long tiresome drag, and the most tiresome part of hotel life. We get no tips, but in some hotels the girls get more in tips from guests than in wages from the proprietor."

--Hotel Waiter, female

17. "I have as good a place as any, for any place at housework is poor enough. People don't know how to treat you decently well and if they do know they won't. A girl is a fool to do housework if she can do anything else in the world."

--House Girl

18. "I like housework and would not do anything else. I have been here a long time and attend to my business and let the family attend to theirs."

--House Girl

19. "I am thirteen years old and live at home. I get two months' work at drying fish and earn \$1.80 per week. I put the fish on flakes and get five cents a dozen flakes of 120 to 150 fish to a flake. I can do six dozen in nine or ten hours and when I get that number done I go home. In hot days when the fish are soft it takes longer. I get very tired and the odor often makes me sick."

--Fish Curer, female

20. "I commenced work in a cotton mill at fourteen years of age at thirty-five cents a day; have worked eight years and now get eighty-five cents a day which is as much as any of the girls in this mill get in the spinning room. I would like to get out and try some other kind of work as I find it hard to get more than enough to pay my bills from one month to another. I hear of girls who are doing better, and my mind is made up to change and shall do so as soon as an opportunity offers."

--Cotton Spinner, female

21. "Am expected to be in the shop ten hours a day but do not average more than five hours' work."

--Shoemaker, female

22. "My sister and I work in a cotton mill and can make a living if we are well but cannot save much. If either of us should be sick or if we lose any great amount of time we would soon use up what little we have managed to save while in good health. It is simply staying, that is all. We have no time to do our own cooking as we work eleven hours a day, so we must board out. We manage, however, to room ourselves much better off than some of the girls who are obliged to board at the corporation boarding house."

--Cotton Spooler, female