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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FLORENCE

The village of Florence has of late years become so prominent as to call for a somewhat elaborate notice of its business interests, past and present and of its institutions of religion and learning. People over a wide extent of country have heard more of less of Florence, some as a place of successful business enterprises, others as a place of freedom of thought and utterance, but all as a place where smartness, thrift, and intellectual ability abound. To throw a little light on this subject, and to set Florence right before the public, are the objects of this sketch.

Be it known, then, that Florence is beautifully situated three miles west of Northampton, being a manufacturing village within that town. Mill river runs through the village affording a very valuable water privilege, one of the best on that river, so noted for its excellent water powers. Its limits are not clearly defined, the village is quite compact, but we shall treat it as comprising the school district know as the Warner school district, which took its name from the family of Warners, the descendents of Joseph Warner, probably the first settler within this territory. In 1812, there were but seven house within this district. These were the houses of Enoch Jewett, where Samuel A. Bottom now lives; of Paul Strong, kept as a hotel; of William Warner, now called the Bosworth place; of Josiah White, owner of an oil mill near the dam; of Gaius Burt, near the upper bridge, now owned by Austin Ross; of Capt. Julius Phelps, a little farther west, where his son of the same name now lives; and of Joseph Warner, half a mile northerly. The number of houses had not increased as late as 1820 and as late even as 1847—only twenty years ago—there were only about a dozen houses in the district.

The oldest house within the district is probably that now owned and occupied by John F. Warner about a half mile northwest of the village. This house was built about the year 1780 by Joseph Warner, a son of Daniel Warner, who lived on Blackpole Hill in Northampton. It is said that for many years this was the only house between Blackpole Hill and Williamsburg. Mr. Warner owned a large section of land, a portion of which—woodland—he purchased of Col. John Stoddard at $3.33 per acre. He had a family of seven sons and three daughters. Their names were Oliver, Solomon, Joseph, Seth, Moses, John, Aaron, Electa, Jerusha, and Sarah. Electa married Elijah Allen of Roberts' Meadow; Jerusha married Adolphus Wright of Keene, N.H.; John, Seth, and Moses died in early manhood; Joseph lived on the old homestead; Solomon built in 1812 a house half a mile west of his father's, now owned and occupied by his son Moses, and kept it as a hotel nearly forty years; Oliver built the house now generally known as the "Paul Strong tavern," in 1809, and kept it as a hotel until 1821. He then kept the hotel in Northampton which bears his name, and remained there until 1831, when he sold the house to J.B. Vinton, but re-purchased it in 1840 and continued to keep it until his death in 1853. He kept a hotel all 35 years. He was prominent in political life, and represented Northampton several years in the General Court and the County of Hampshire two years in the Senate. Two of his sons—Oliver, the present Secretary of State, and Seth, of Easthampton,—have also been members of the Legislature, the former of both branches. He was a man of mark in his day, and left a name that will long be cherished by his townsmen. He never entered college, though he fitted for a

collegiate course under the tuition of the Rev. Enoch Hale of Westhampton. His widow is now living at the age of 82 years. Aaron, the youngest son, is the only child of Joseph Warner now living. He graduated at Williams College, was settled as pastor in Medford, was then a Professor in Gilmanton (N.H.) Theological Seminary, and for many years was Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory in Amherst College. He now resides in Amherst at the age of 72.

Col. Thomas Pomeroy, now a veteran of 72 years, was one of the early settlers in Florence. He removed there from Northampton in 1820 and erected the house on the beautiful eminence east of the sewing machine factory, now owned by Daniel G. Littlefield. He sold his place in 1865 and removed to Northampton, but the change of location did not suit him, and he last year returned and erected another house near the old homestead, where he is now "settled for life." There were but six dwelling houses when the Colonel built his first house and much of the territory of the present village was covered with forest trees. Soon after 1820, Col. Cecil Dwight built and occupied a house half a mile northerly, long known as the "Dwight place," but now more generally known as the "Fairbanks place," from its having been owned and extensively improved by a son of Ex-Governor Fairbanks of Vermont. Land was cheap and Col. Pomeroy says he could have purchased the entire territory of Florence at $10 an acre. Wild game was plenty, and often the Colonel has seen flocks of wild turkeys in the vicinity of his house. Trout were also in great abundance, and a half hour was sufficient to enable an indifferent angler to catch all that his ambition demanded.

The Capt. Julius Phelps house was built by him about the year 1814 and the Ross house by Gaius Burt about 1800. The Ross house is believed to have been the second house built in Florence. Capt. Phelps was Captain of an Artillery company in Northampton about 1812. In that year, he marched his company to Boston, to aid in the defense of the state. Capt. Phelps was then a Lieutenant of the company, the Captain being Aschel Strong or (Asahel) of South street; but he being occupied as a member of the Legislature, Lieut. Phelps took the command and was afterward chosen Captain. He died in 1853, aged 78. Four of his sons are living: Julius, who occupies the old homestead; Solomon, who lives a short distance northerly; Dea. David B., of Southampton; and Cephas of Conway.

The Paul Strong tavern was, in its day, the most prominent feature of Florence, and through it, the surrounding settlement was known. This was a famous resort for many years, and sleighing parties often visited there in winter. Situated on the old turnpike from Boston to Albany, it received much of the patronage of the great number of travelers who, in the absence of railroads, necessarily took this route to and from the west. The travel here was immense for those days. Col. Pomeroy says he has known twelve heavily loaded stage coaches pass over this route in a day during the height of the season at Saratoga. Mr. Strong purchased the tavern stand of Nathaniel Fowle in 1832, and kept it as a hotel several years. He died in 1856, at the age of 76. He also kept the Mount Holyoke house several years. His family consisted of seven sons and four daughters, all of whom are living, exept one daughter, who died in her infancy. The youngest of the family is 40 years of age. His wife died in 1864, aged 84. This hotel—or tavern, as it was then called; the word hotel in those days not having common use in this region—was afterward kept successively by Andrew Lord, Maj. Harvey Kirkland, Col. Thomas Pomeroy, Maj. C. C. Moore, and a Mr. White, no one retaining it but a short time. It was discontinued as a hotel about the year 1845, in consequence of the building of the railroads and the consequent turn in other directions of the tide of public travel. During all the time that this house was open for the accommodation of the public, liquors were sold at its bar as freely as the viands from its table.

The flip-iron was in almost constant use, and the "flowing bowl" was drained with a frequency quite astonishing to the teetotalers of the present day and the advocates of our rigid prohibitory law. Many will remember the large open fire in the bar-room, around which the good cheer, which distinguished "ye olden time" was always conspicuous.

The Silk Enterprise

The manufacture of silk with which Florence has been identified from the first, was started here by Samuel Whitmarsh. In June, 1835 Mr. Whitmarsh bought of Wm. Clark 95 acres of land in Florence, being that formerly owned by Gaius Burt; also 90 acres of Nathan Storrs, 100 acres of Gaius Burt, and other land, making in all nearly 400 acres, and embracing about the whole of the present village, except some of the upland near the sewing machine company's works. A company was formed, called the New York and Northampton Silk Company, with $150,000 capital. Ebenezer Jackson, Charles N. Talbot, and others, were connected with this enterprise. Mr. Whitmarsh was chosen president of the company, and Thomas W. Shepherd was superintendent. The purchase included the oil mill of Mr. White, and the water privilege; also, a cottage near the bridge; which were the only buildings on the premises. The boarding house was moved from the road near Strong's tavern, where it had been used for a wool storehouse. The company erected the brick building, now used by the Greenville Mfg. Co., for the manufacture of silks, but before its completion, some machinery was put into the oil-mill. The mulberry know as the "Morus Multicaulis," being regarded as worthless, Mr. Whitmarsh went to Europe and visited the silk-growing regions in Italy, France and Switzerland, in search of a better variety. He obtained seeds from near the Alps, and propagated a variety, which he called the "Alpine mulberry." About 100 acres of the meadowland now owned by Austin Ross, were set with this mulberry. The land around the present residence of I.S. Parsons was also set with this tree. The excitement over the mulberry trees was almost marvelous, and extended all over the country. People were crazy on the subject, and the excitement more than outdid in absurdity the wild oil speculation of the past few years. The bubble, however, soon burst, and brought ruin to thousands.

This silk enterprise at Florence attracted considerable attention. Daniel Webster, Abbot Lawrence, and James K. Mills, then famous for their advocacy of the doctrine of protection to American industry, came here to inspect it. Some sewing-silk was manufactured, but the machinery was rude, and but little progress was made. Samples of plain and figured satins were woven in the old boarding house, and then Mr. Whitmarsh took to Washington and presented to Henry Clay, who was much gratified with them, as specimens of the home manufactures which he had so long struggled to encourage by governmental policy. Mr. Whitmarsh left the company after a connection with it of about two years, and but little was done afterward. In 1840, the Silk Co. sold its property to Messrs. Jackson, Talbot, Whitmarsh, and others who soon after transferred their interest to Capt. Joseph Conant of Mansfield, Ct., who had been engaged in manufacturing silk in a small way. From Capt. Conant the property passed in 1842 into the possession of the Community Association.

Previous to engaging in this enterprise Mr. Whitmarsh had been for several years cultivating mulberry trees and raising silk. He built his fine residence on Fort Hill in Northampton in 1830, and in a year or two thereafter engaged largely in mulberry culture. He built there a cocoonery 200 feet long, two stories high, and filled it with silk worms. His fame as a mulberry cultivator and silk-raiser was spread abroad through all the land.

Soon after dissolving his connection with the silk enterprise at Florence, Mr. Whitmarsh bought the building near South street bridge, since know as “the Hive,” where he commenced the manufacture of silk for himself. It had not proceeded far in this project, when he left it and went to Jamaica, lead thereto by a reward offered by the government for the successful establishment of the culture of silk on that island. After a visit there of several months, he formed a company, with a capital of $150,000, one half of which was taken by capitalists there, and the other half was assigned to the founder of the enterprise. He went to London, and disposed of his stock at its par value. At this time, Mr. Whitmarsh developed one of the noblest traits of his character. Having thus come into the possession of ample pecuniary means, he returned to Northampton and paid off his old debts in full with interest. He then collected a company of 35 men and women, bought horses, machinery, implements, &c, chartered a vessel, and sailed from Boston, to prosecute his silk enterprise in Jamaica. Col. Daniel Willcutt, Major Wm. Parsons, Horace L. Kingsley, Wm. F. Pratt and others, of Northampton, were in this company. It is related as a note-worthy fact that Mr. Kingsley was the first man that drove a four horse team in Jamaica. The Northampton company from the outset adhered strictly to the doctrine of total abstinence from the use of liquors, and, after a stay there of several years, they all came away in good health with one exception, who remained on the island and married there. The company owned 300 acres of land, an considerable portion of which they cleared and planted. A saw-mill was erected, and put in operation. The enterprise failed, through a blunder of one in whose care was placed a large quantity of silk worm eggs. They were ignorantly removed from a place of safety, so that they rotted and the labor of two or three years was lost hence the scheme was abandoned.

Although Mr. Whitmarsh nominally failed in his projects for the raising and manufacture of silk, he in one sense was eminently successful. The ideas which he advanced, and the principles which he endeavored to carry into practice in the manufacture of silk, though imperfect have since been adopted by other, and improved upon, thus laying the foundation for all the large and successful silk manufacturing interest in this country. One of the most successful silk manufacturers in the country was connected with Mr. Whitmarsh in his Florence enterprise.

The highway from Joseph Warner’s silk factory to the water cure bridge, running by the cotton mill, was located by the County Commissioners about the year 1835 on the petition of Mr. Whitmarsh’s Silk Company.

The Community Association

This organization, which from 1841 to 1846 gave to Florence considerable notoriety, has never been fully understood by the public, and hence may have been unjustly judged by it. The leading men engaged in it were S. L. Hill, George W. Benson, Capt. Joseph Conant, David Mack, and Wm. Adam. Mr. Benson came from Brooklyn, N.Y., [actually Ct. eds.] Mr. Hill from Willamantic, Ct., and Capt. Conant from Mansfield, Ct. In 1843, the officers were—David Mack, president; Wm. Adam, secretary; and S.L. Hill, treasurer. These men came together, not from any preconcerted movement, but rather from a desire to find a comfortable spot to locate, where they could best enjoy life. They were probably attracted to Florence in consequence of the distribution of the lands of the silk company. Several were looking at parcels of this estate, when the idea was advanced that an association should be formed. Desiring to get accurate information of this association we last winter addressed a note to Mr. Hill, one of the originators of and participators in the enterprise, (then residing for the benefit of his health in Minnesota,) asking him to prepare a brief sketch of it, and his reply we give below in full.

Centerville, Minn., Feb 2, 1867

Dear Sir:—The "Community," as it was called by some, but more correctly the "Northampton Association of Education and Industry," is worthy of more notice and a better history than I can furnish. I have no statistics on record at hand, to which to refer, and can only give from memory a general outline and idea of its objects, organization and doings.

It originated with a few individuals in the years of 1841 and 1842, and was formally organized and put in operation in the spring of 1842. Its objects were "progress towards a better state of society, the development of a true social and moral life;" "advancement in truth and goodness, promotion of general intelligence, good morals and liberal religious sentiments." It at first proposed a subscription of capital to the amount of fifty thousand dollars, and to have thirty thousand paid in before commencing business, and also to do business only with cash; but this was not adhered to. The prospect was flattering of getting the required amount, and operations were commenced, but the amount received never reached thirty thousand. It was subsequently found that a capital of seventy-five thousand was needed, and an unsuccessful effort was made to obtain it. The Industrial operations of the Association were, hence, all limited and crippled for lack of capital and credit. Its radical position awakened opposing interests and prejudices, and although tolerating and respecting the honest convictions of every soul, its free discussions very early disconcerted the intolerance and bigotry of some within its fold, and drew contempt and misrepresentation from without, hence its inability to retain capital or to obtain credit, with which to transact a supporting amount of business. The total investments in real and personal property, reached the amount of about fifty thousand dollars. It attempted silk growing, silk-manufacturing, agriculture and lumbering, together with some business of minor importance. Its members, including their children, numbered about 150. The estate included about 500 acres of land, silk factory (now cotton mill,) saw, and grist mills, with 4 or 5 dwellings, which was held by three trustees. Its business was divided into departments, so called, and each branch managed by a special director, but subject to the immediate control of the Association, whenever they chose to act as a body. An appropriation from the productions of the Association or proceeds, was annually agreed upon, for the subsistence of each adult, and a less one for each child, after which, if anything remained, it was to be distributed among the laborers, with a proportion to the capital, as interest. It was arranged for those who chose, to occupy separate tenements and tables, and for others to occupy separate apartments, in a unitary building, or in separate buildings, and sit at a common table, dividing the expense, and sharing in the economy thereof. The marriage and family relations were held sacred. This is mentioned, because there were slanders circulated in relation to this subject. In the intercourse of the sexes, strict chastity and propriety were observed. The unitary family occupied for their lodgings and dwelling, a part of the brick factory, which also was partly used for manufacturing silk. This arrangement was not so agreeable, on account of the rough and rude accommodations, but otherwise it was found pleasant and economical; the cost of living being about two thirds as much as in isolated families. Each individual or family had a separate room or suite of rooms, to which they could at any time retire from the common dining and sitting rooms, or the library and lecture rooms. After the experience of the first year or two, differences arising between individual members were easily settled and harmony restored. The last two or three years of the Association were decidedly pleasant and profitable to its members, except pecuniarily; they acquired a mutual familiarity with, and confidence in each other, enabling them to speak plenty of errors and facts without the presence of anger, and to discuss calmly and candidly any differences of opinion, upon religious or other subjects. After the lapse of more than twenty years, the writer is not alone in looking back with pleasure to those days, nor in considering the discipline there experienced, as the most salutary and profitable of his life. Those years were filled by his associates with honest, earnest efforts for a better life; and to be a witness whereof were profitable to anyone. The educational department of the Association was ably and efficiently conducted. It included instruction in practical industry, as well as in literature and science. It also included moral and spiritual culture. The youth there educated, so far as the writer's subsequent knowledge of them and memory serve, have had good habits, fair talents, and useful characters developed. The arrangements instituted for alternate instruction with labor and

recreation, were eminently successful for the development of mind and character and especially for being in the midst of actual business and example of adult life.

The Association dissolved by mutual consent in the fall of 1846, and transferred its assets to the writer, who assumed all its liabilities, stock and debt. He subsequently re-conveyed parts of the property to such of the ex-associates as desired to remain and transact business individually. Some engaged in agriculture, others in mechanical and manufacturing business; and the origin of most of the business, if not all, now prosecuted in Florence is due to the ex-members of the said Association. The writer continued in silk manufacturing and other business, thus transferred and left to him alone, until joined by S. L. Hinckley, Esq. and others, now comprising the Nonotuck Silk Co. Mr. Hinckley became associated with him about 1850, while he (the writer) was embarrassed by the failure of Mr. Benson, and kindly aided him with capital to resume business, which he had been obliged to relinquish, on account of the loss by Mr. Benson. Subsequently, others, who had long and faithfully served the business, as practical manufacturers, mechanics, &c., and under whose personal supervision it is now conducted, also became associated as partners and stockholders.

When the Association commenced manufacturing silk, they made about 40 to 50 pounds per week. The present company have sometimes manufactured about six hundred pounds per week. Thus a comparatively respectable and profitable business has been established, which it is believed has been, and will continue to be, useful and beneficial to the community now surrounding it.

Besides the business operations now prosecuted successfully in Florence, the origin or successful establishment of which rests with said Association or it ex-members, the writer begs leave to mention the "Free Congregational Society," as part of its legitimate fruit, and as possessing the same spirit. He has reason to believe that other kindred institutions have been established by influences having the same origin.

Very truly yours,
S. L. Hill

The First Store—Post-Office—
How Florence took its Name—Littlefield, Parsons & Co.

In the fall of 1850, Isaac S. Parsons, son of Capt. Samuel Parsons of Northampton, went to Florence and commenced the mercantile business, in company with S. L. Hill, under the name of I. S. Parsons & Co. Mr. Hill had been carrying on this business, in a small way, two or three years. In 1860, Mr. Hill retired from the firm, and Henry F. Cutler, who had been a clerk in the store was admitted as a partner; and in 1863, Plympton H. Smith became a partner. Mr. Cutler retired in 1866. The name of the firm has remained the same through all these changes. The partners now are I. S. Parsons and P. H. Smith. A large trade has always been done at this store. This was the first store opened in Florence.

On the 28th of December, 1852, after much hard labor, owing to the opposition made by the then postmaster of Northampton, a post-office was established in Florence, and Mr. Parsons was appointed postmaster, a position which he has filled to this time, with entire satisfaction to the public. Among those who rendered efficient aid in securing the consent of the post-office department to establish the is office, was Sidney L. Clark, now of Hartford, Ct. It is believed that his labors were largely instrumental in achieving this result. Other friends in Northampton also gave the project their generous and efficient support.

From the time of the establishment of the post-office, Florence has been known by its present name. Previously, the village was called "The Community"; and after that organization was dissolved, it took the name of "Bensonville"; and when Mr. Benson failed and took his departure, it was called "Greenville." But on the opening of postal communication, Mr. Parsons; in consultation with Mr. Hill, Dr. Munde, and others, selected the very neat and euphonious name of FLORENCE. The idea was suggested by the fact that the manufacturing village of Leeds,

a mile and a half above, on the same stream, was named after the city of Leeds in England because of its large woolen manufacturing interest; and so, with equal appropriateness, the great silk emporium in Italy was drawn drawn upon to give its name this American silk manufacturing village. The name at once pleased the public, and has grown more and more popular as the enterprise of the village has continued to develop.

In 1854, S. L. Hill and I. S. Parsons became associated with A. P. Critchlow, in the manufacture of paper mache buttons, and union cases for daguerreotypes and ambrotypes. The name of the firm was A. P. Critchlow & Co. Daniel G. Littlefield, then a merchant in Haydenville, was hired to travel and sell the goods, and in 1857 he became an equal partner in the business. Mr. Critchlow disposed of his interest in the manufacturing in 1858. The name of the firm was then changed to Littlefield, Parsons & Co., which continued until the organization of the Florence Manufacturing Company in 1866.

From 1856 to 1865, the business of Littlefield, Parson & Co. gave employment to from 75 to 199 hands. Very great success attended the business after the first two or three years, particularly the manufacture of the union cases. The demand for these goods was so great that during a considerable part of the time the factory was run to its utmost capacity, night and day, producing daily 89 to 150 dozen cases. Although this case was a beautiful article, and ranked high in market, its great success was due quite as much to the extraordinary demand which existed at that time for cases of some sort, and if this company had manufactured any other variety its success would have been inevitable. About the year 1864 however, the fashion changed,—as fashions always do,—so that cases for daguerreotypes and ambrotypes were but little used; consequently the business of this firm, like the occupation of Othello, was essentially gone. It may return again, like Banquo's ghost, and should it do so, we hesitate not to say, on behalf of the manufacturers, that it will be warmly welcome. The buttons also, made by this firm, were in great demand, and from 1855 to 1860 large quantities were manufactured and sold.

Florence Manufacturing Company

This company manufactures toilet brushes, union cases, lockets, &c., and is the legitimate successor of the firm of Littlefield, Parsons & Co. It was organized in July, 1866, as a joint stock company with a capital of $100,000. The stock is principally owned by D. G. Littlefield, I. S. Parsons, George A. Burr, S. L. Hinckley, and George A. Scott. Its officers, chosen in January, 1867 are the following:—Directors—I. S. Parsons, George A. Burr, D. G. Littlefield, George A. Scott, Anson B. Clark, Alfred Littlefield, of Pawtucket, R. I. and John G. McMurray of Lansingburg, N. Y. President—George A. Burr. Treasurer—I. S. Parsons. Clerk—George A. Scott. In the summer of 1866, the company began the erection of their present large and commodious factory, near the bridge, and completed it early in the following winter, when it was at once occupied by the removal of their machinery from the factory used by their predecessors. The factory is 125 feet long and 40 feet wide, three stories in height, and designed by Mr. Gardner, the Florence architect, and built under the immediate supervision of Mr. George A. Burr, whose experience in erecting the large buildings used by the Sewing Machine Co. eminently qualified him to produce so fine a structure. It is one of the most substantial structures in the village, and does great credit to the architect, the builder and the proprietors. Its cost, together with the engine and boiler was about $40,000. The beautiful steam engine of 30 horse power, not only runs the machinery, but furnishes steam for heating the whole building, and for preparing the composition used in the articles manufactured. The building is admirably equipped

and there is an air of nicety in all its part, which arrests the attention of the visitor.

The principal article manufactured by this company is the toilet brush, which finds its way into almost every house in the land. The firm of Littlefield, Parsons & Co., having found that the sales of the union cases were decreasing, in consequence of the introduction and general adoption by the public of the *carte de visite*, were casting about for some other article to manufacture, when, most opportunely, the suggestion was made that the composition used in the manufacture of the cases could, with improvements, be advantageously used in manufacturing toilet brushes. The suggestion was first made by Mr. Scott, one of the present board of directors, then a resident of Lansingburg, and the son of a brush manufacturer of many years' experience. He came to Florence with his idea—the place of all others to find ready appreciators of *ideas*—and the work of experimenting with it was begun, soon producing the most satisfactory results. His principal point was in reference to fastening the hair and molding or shaping the handle at one operation; so that a complete water-proof brush could be produced at once, having the bristles all securely fastened, any beautiful design on its back, and a perfect finish or polish, ready for the market. This is accomplished so satisfactorily as to be at once acknowledged, like the self-evident truth of our great Declaration of Independence. The brush—unlike any other brush ever made—is absolutely water-proof. A trial of soaking it in water for forty eight hours, proved that the hair did not then start, nor was the composition in the least injured, it being composed of ingredients which have no affinity for water. The ordinary brushes, as is well known, are easily injured by occasionally dipping them in water; but with this brush, no such objection exist. The beautiful finish of the handles is an attraction which this brush possesses, surpassing even the buffalo-horn brush, the most elegant toilet brush heretofore made. The backs of the brushes are all handsomely ornamented, and various new designs are produced with ease. The different styles are very neat and attractive.

The process of manufacture is very simple, yet is an instructive curiosity to one who never before witnessed it. The hair, first being cut of a uniform length, is set in steel dies, and so accurately adjusted as to leave the brush, when it comes form the press, with but slight trimming, fit for the dressing table of the most fashionable lady. The company intend to manufacture none but brushes of the finest quality; yet they can manufacture, with ease and with astonishing cheapness, brushes of inferior grades. By the old method of manufacture, the hair is all drawn in with wire, which is bent in the form of a loop and inserted through the hole to be filled. The bristles are then passed half through the loop and doubled in the middle, and drawn into the hole by hand,—a very slow process, and a method by which a girl can only "draw" a dozen brushes per day. After this operation, the veneers and inlays for the backs are glued on and held in cabinet maker's screws over night, to dry. In the morning, the screws are removed and the brushes sawed out to their desired shape, and worked smooth by the aid of drawing-knives, spoke-shaves, files, sand paper &c., after which they receive several coats of varnish and are rubbed and polished ready for the market. This process takes from 10 to 14 days. But the method of this company is more expeditious, so much so, that one girl will adjust the bristles for about ten dozen brushes per day, and the most elegant brush can be produced ready for market in *fifteen minutes*, from the rough material!

The bristles used by this company are all imported from Russia and Germany, and are of the very stiffest and best quality. The American bristles, which are much cheaper, do not possess sufficient stiffness to make a first class brush. They expect soon to consume from four to six ton per year, costing from $10,000 to $12,000 per ton. Every ounce of bristles which now goes into

their brushes costs 50 cents.

There is abundant reason to believe that these water proof brushes will soon distance all competitors. The demand for them has been quite large, and fifty men and women are employed, producing about 250 dozen per week. Of course, their manufacture is yet in its infancy, they having but a few months since been introduced to the public; but we look for the rapid growth of the business, expecting soon to see the manufacture of brushes rank with the three other great manufacturing productions of Florence—sewing-machines, silks, and cottons.

This company also manufactures large quantities of paper-boxes, for the public as well as for its own use. This department is under the immediate charge of that veteran box maker, Mr. Morris Machol, of whom it may truthfully be said, and with increased emphasis after examining his productions, that what *he* does not know concerning that business, is of small account.

Florence Sewing Machine Company.

The most extensive business enterprise in Florence is the Sewing Machine works, employing a capital of $500,000, and giving occupation to from 275 to 300 men. The hands employed are all of an intelligent class, and add much to the good character of the village. These works have grown up very rapidly, and there is excellent promise of a still further increase. The first machine made and put upon the market, of this invention, was in the spring of 1861. Only about fifty machines were made that year. No agencies had there been established, and these machines were sold directly to families. They at once pleased the public, and the demand for them was so brisk as to warrant an immediate enlargement of the facilities for their manufacture. In April, 1861, the first company was formed which consisted of S. L. Hill, D. G. Littlefield, and L. W. Langdon. In the ensuing fall, George A. Burr, I. S. Parsons and S. L. Hill, Jr., were added to the number, the capital of the company being $125,000. In 1862, the business having expanded so as to require more capital, the stock was increased to $200,000. In 1864, the west building, 150 by 40 feet, and three stories high, was erected at a cost of $50,000. The business still increasing, faster even than its most sanguine friends had anticipated, it was decided in the spring of 1866 to increase the capital to $500,000. The stock was all immediately subscribed, and not a dollar of it went begging. In that year, the east building, of the same dimensions as the building first erected, was constructed, and also an extensive foundry. The present capacity of the works is about 20,000 machines a year. The sales have increased from fifty the first year to nearly 1,000 a month for 1866. In January last, the number sold was 930. These sales show that, while nearly all other kinds of manufacturing have been seriously checked, this business has been steadily maintained. We expect to see it at no distant day, at least doubled. The sewing machine trade is yet in its infancy, as the first machines made in the country were brought out only about twenty years ago.

The inventor of the Florence machine is Leander W. Langdon. While to him are due its main principles, to S. L. Hill and D. G. Littlefield belong great credit for their ingenious labors, continued through many months, in perfecting it and giving it its present beauty of form and simplicity and accuracy of motion. It is the *handsomest* machine made, and for capacity in doing all varieties of family sewing it ranks second to none. The machines are sold to agents in the large cities and principal towns. In New York, the company have an elegant salesroom, at 505 Broadway.

To Geo. A. Burr belongs much credit for the energy and efficiency displayed by him to introducing the machines into market. He organized the system of agencies, and pushed the enterprise forward with great success. He was treasure of the company until the fall of 1865,

when he was succeeded by L. B. Williams, who also was the general agent, and under whose management the business largely increased.

The new building is used for making the woodwork of the machines, and the west building for the various metallic parts. The work is nearly all done by ten or a dozen contractors. The officers of the company are the following:—Directors, I. S. Parsons, president, S. L. Hill, Wm. B. Hale, H. G. Knight, Silas M. Smith, L. B. Williams, and Wm. Clark, Jr. Clerk, D. W. Bond. General Agent, J. M. Wardwell. Treasurer, Sidney Strong. Superintendent of the works, J. W. Hoxie.

The Company erected last year, for the accommodation of its workmen, three new blocks, comprising 24 tenements, and a large boarding house, at a cost of $30,000. An abundant supply of water is secured from a spring near the Ross farm, half a mile west of the factory, being forced by an engine into four large tanks in the building, The monthly pay-roll of the company varies from $15,000 to $17,000.

Nonotuck Silk Company

This company was organized July 1, 1855, and soon after was incorporated under the general statutes, with a capital of $75,000. The stock is all held by S. L. Hill, S. L. Hinckley, A. T. Lilly, J. D. Atkins, Ira Dimock, Lucius Dimock, Edwin M. Eaton, and A. G. Hill. With the exception of the latter gentleman, these were the original stockholders. The company organization is as follows:—President, S. L. Hinckley; Clerk, A. G. Hill. Treasurer, S. L. Hill. Mr. Lilly is agent of the company at the factory, and Mr. Eaton at the New York warehouse, 28 Warren street. The company owns and operates, besides the main factory in Florence, where 137 operatives are employed, the large brick factory in the upper part of Leeds, where 87 operatives are employed, under the immediate supervision of Mr. L. Dimock; thus making the aggregate number of hands employed, 224. The company manufactures skein sewing silk and machine twist, and its goods rank deservedly high in the market. The first machine twist manufactured in the country for sewing machines was made by this company. At first this was only a small part of the business, but since the rapid increase of sewing machines throughout the country, this branch of the manufacture has largely expanded, and now equals the manufacture of sewing silk. Some idea of the extent of the company's business may be obtained from the fact that 550 lbs. of the raw material are worked up every week. The silk is mainly from China, but since the opening of commercial relations with Japan a portion comes from that country.

Greenville Manufacturing Company

This company was incorporated under a special character, in 1846, with a capital of $400,000. The stock is principally owned by Samuel Williston of Easthampton, J. P. Williston of Northampton, A. L. Williston of Florence (who has the active management of the business,) and Joel Hayden of Haydenville. The officers of the company are—President, S. Williston; Treasurer, J. P. Williston; Secretary, A. L. Williston. The company manufactures 1,000,000 sheetings per year. The mill is the building erected by Mr. Whitmarsh for a silk factory, and afterwards owned and occupied by the Community Association.

Florence the Place of Ideas and Principles

To write of Florence principally as a manufacturing village, would not be doing justice to its character. It has elements of life and of greatness that give it a power far out reaching the weight

of its business interests. It is emphatically a place of ideas and principles. Bound by no shackles of party or sect, its leading spirits have lead the way in new paths, and infused new moral and political life into the whole surrounding region. Not always right, nor always wise, yet invariable honest and truthful, they have with remarkable resolution and persistency acted the part of the pioneer in the wilderness of political and social reforms; and for their moral heroism, manifested at times when heroism of this sort was a priceless jewel, we award them the full measure of praise which they so well deserve. From the first inception of the great anti-slavery movement, which now has encompassed the nation in its victorious folds, the citizens of Florence gave it and its supporters a cordial welcome, and early in the struggle they were almost a unit in the good work. The anti-slavery lecturer here found, not only a refuge, but an attentive and sympathizing audience, when, in adjoining places, he was greeted either with empty benches or the jibes and buffoonery of the unthinking rabble. Many a poor fugitive from the land of stripes and of human auction, has here found that protection which the laws and the courts denied him, and which even the common sentiment of the people of New England was slow in aiding him to reach. No mobbing of anti-slavery meetings, or repressing of that highest instinct of humanity which teaches that a man is to be measured, not by his cloth, nor by the depth and weight of his pockets, nor by the long pedigree he may be able to produce, nor by the land of his birth or the color of his skin; but rather by that higher standard of the worth of man, his individual merits,—ever gained a foothold in Florence. Here, the representatives of all nations have gathered,—the Englishman, the Frenchman, the Irishman, the Scotchman, the Africo-American, and the emigrant from fatherland,—and by their united efforts have been harmoniously working out the great problem of our American nationality. We bid them a cordial welcome—welcome to our free institution, to our great and warm throbbing patriotism, to our dearly-bought yet glorious freedom—welcome to America.

Florence also derives much of its public character from the freedom of thought and speech, especially on religious subjects which has ever been a leading element here, and from which has grown the church called the Free Congregational Church. This element at first undoubtedly attracted a degree of public odium upon the place, particularly in the days of the Community Association; but this, chiefly through the intelligence, good conducts, and enterprise of its people, has gradually worn away, until comparatively little of it remains. The times have changed, and what once would hardly have been tolerated, is now openly countenanced. There is more liberality of sentiment respecting religious subjects, now, than existed a quarter of a century ago. Even among the evangelical denominations there is a marked improvement, while between the public and the liberal views of those who give life and character to the Free Society of Florence, there is a better understanding. This Society, through the freedom of its platform, and its willingness, and even eagerness, to hear various antagonistic theological views, has done much toward infusing a spirit of toleration throughout this region, and thus, we think, has accomplished a decided good. Its views may be erroneous, but we hold that in this free land, where intelligence abounds, and the avenues to knowledge are open to all, no essential error can long be maintained, when it is left free to be combatted by truth. It is rather by the clash and friction of opposing views, that the truth is established. Steel is not polished by contact with velvet, however vigorous the application. It needs the swiftly revolving belt of emery to bring out the grit and the fire and give the metal a beautiful finish. Water is purer and more sparkling when it dashes over boulders, than when in pools or ponds. So it is with opinion. Free discussion never yet injured, a just cause, and never can.

Florence also has been distinguished for its faithful support of temperance. No portion of the town has been more free from rum-selling or rum-drinking, and consequently good order has invariably been maintained within its limits.

Congregational Chuch and Society

About the year 1845, a Sunday school was organized in Florence. This, for about ten years, was the only religious organization in the village, under the auspices of any of the evangelical denominations. The village grew so rapidly that in 1860 the attention and efforts of influential men in the vicinity, mostly connected with the First Church in Northampton, began to be turned toward the establishment here of a church, of the Congregational order. The subject had indeed been more or less agitated several years, but no definite action was taken until the fall of 1860. The Rev. Zachary Eddy, D. D., pastor of the First Church in Northampton, preached at that time a discourse with particular reference to the need of a church in Florence, and this had the desired effect to concentrate the already awakened sentiment of the community and give it a practical form. Funds were at once solicited, and liberal contributions made. J. P. Williston, A. L. Williston, I. S. Parsons, and D. G. Littlefield each gave from 500 to $800; John Clarke, Eliphalet Williams; Joel Hayden, S. L. Hinckley, and Thos. Pomeroy each gave $100; and many of the merchants and business men of Northampton gave sums varying from 10 to $50. Much of the success of the enterprise was due to the active efforts of Mr. A. L. Williston, who spent considerable time in soliciting contributions, collecting funds, and pushing forward the work.

The Society called the FLORENCE CHURCH SOCIETY, was formed in the Chapel of the First Church, Oct. 20, 1860. Many of the subscribers to the building fund were also present, and united with the Society in choosing a building committee consisting of D. G. Littlefield, A. L. Williston, I. S. Parsons, Joel Hayden and J. P. Williston. In the following spring the edifice was commenced, and during the ensuing fall, it was finished and paid for. The cost of the church and furniture was about $5000. Moses Breck of Northampton was the builder. The land on which the church stands was the gift of the Greenville Manufacturing Co., whose members were also liberal contributors to the building fund. The edifice is a beautiful structure, and is both an ornament to the village and a credit to the architect, Wm. F. Pratt of Northampton.

October 9, 1861, twenty-six members of different evangelical churches, having adopted the Confession of Faith and Covenant, were regularly organized by an Ecclesiastical Council, into a Church of Christ; and in the afternoon of the same day, their house of worship was dedicated to the Lord. The sermon on this occasion was preached by Rev. Dr. Eddy. For six months after this, they had the services of Rev. T. A. Leefe, who had also labored with them for some time previous to the organization. He was succeeded by Rev. S. O. Dyer of North Becket, who supplied the pulpit for three months. On the 15th of December, 1862, Rev. Horace C. Hovey, a graduate of Wabash College, and who had preached at Coldwater, Mich., was called to settle as pastor, and on Feb. 5, 1863, he was duly installed, Rev. Dr. Eddy preaching the sermon. He was dismissed Oct. 1st, 1866, after a successful ministry of three years and eight months, and soon afterward was settled at New Albany, Indiana. His successor, and present pastor, is Rev. E. G. Cobb, from Peekskill, N. Y., where he was settled seven years. The installation of Mr. Cobb was held on the 6th of December, 1866, Prof. Tyler of Amherst college, preaching the sermon. Mr. Cobb is a graduate of Amherst college. He is held in high esteem by his people, who anticipate from his ministrations the continued vigorous growth of the young Society.

A special work of grace was enjoyed in the spring of 1863, which resulted in the hopeful

conversion of twenty-seven souls, who were admitted to the church. There are now 141 members, of whom about 125 are resident.

The Sunday School, A. C. Estabrook superintendent, consists of 230 scholars, and over 400 persons were connected with the school during the past year, the average attendance being 151. The year before the average attendance was 140. On the 1st of January last, the superintendent reported that there were two teachers and six scholars who had been present every Sabbath for two years, and one scholar who had been present every Sabbath for three years. The school raised for benevolent purposes in 1866, $155. The officers, chosen Jan. 20, 1866, are as follows:—Superintendent, A. C. Estabrook; Directors, Leavitt Beals, A. L. Williston, P. H. Smith: Librarians, Freeman Sears, James Tayntor; Secretary and Treasurer, Albert Sears.

In the summer of 1864, the audience-room of the church was enlarged by the addition of the chapel, and a new chapel erected; capable of seating 150 persons, at a cost of $2,000. A commodious parsonage was erected in 1863. It is owned by four individuals, but is kept for the special purposes of a parsonage.

The salary of the pastor is $1,500. The pews are annually rented at auction, and the sum derived from their sale is sufficient to meet the current expenses of the Society. Thomas Pomeroy and Leavitt Beals were first chosen deacons, and A. L. Williston and Anson B. Clark were afterward added. Dea. Beals is the leader of the church choir. The Parish organization is as follows:—Clerk, A. B. Clark; Treasurer, A. L. Williston; Collector, Geo. T. Cutler; Prudential Committee, I. S. Parsons, Geo. A. Burr, Julius Phelps, A. L. Williston, C. B. Snow; Committee on Music, I. S. Parsons, Leavitt Beals.

The Free Congregational Society

A prominent feature of Florence is the Free Congregational Society which has probably given the place quite as much notoriety as any of its business interests. This Society, as Mr. Hill says, is the offspring of the Industrial Association; that is, many of its active members were either participants in, or sympathizers with, that organization, and had not that association lived, this society would not have been favored. It was not organized until May 3d, 1863, but its members had held occasional meetings form the time of the breaking up of the Community Association in 1846, though no regular preacher had been employed. The Society's platform, or articles of agreement, the signers of which constitutes a person a member, are as follows:—

> "We the undersigned, inhabitants of Florence and its vicinity in the town of Northampton, wishing to avail ourselves of the advantages of associate effort, for our advancement in truth and goodness, and for the promotion of general intelligence, good morals and liberal religious sentiments, do hereby agree to form ourselves into a body corporate, under the name of the Free Congregational Society of Florence.
>
> "Respecting in each other and in all the right of intellect and conscience to be free, and holding it to be the duty of every one to keep his mind and heart at all times open to receive the truth and follow its guidance, we set up no theological condition of membership and neither demand nor expect uniformity of doctrinal belief; asking only unity of purpose to seek and accept the right and true, and an honest aim and effort to make these the rule of life. And, recognizing the brotherhood of the human race and the equality of human rights, we make no distinction as to the conditions and rights of membership in this Society, on account of sex, or color, or nationality."

It is claimed of this Society that it was "the first religious association of Florence, and probably the first religious body ever organized in the United States on the basis of the American idea of perfect freedom of thought and speech."

The Society at its organization consisted of 36 members; it now has 131, showing a vigorous growth. It enjoys the advantages of what is termed "an itinerant with a settled minister." Charles C. Burleigh is the settled minister, who occupies the desk one-half time, while the other half is given to speakers from abroad. In this way, a great variety of talent has been secured, the speakers embracing many persons of note, and of various religious denominations. Indeed this has been one of the most popular features of the Society. Among the speakers who have addressed this Society are Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles E. Norton, (editor of the North American Review,) Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Samuel Longfellow, (brother of the poet,) Henry James of Boston, Prof. Wm. Denton, (the geologist,) Theodore D. Weld, Dr. Dio Lewis, Frederick Douglass, Parker Pillsbury, A. Bronson Alcott, and Edward C. Towne. Of local speakers, there have been Rev. Erastus Hopkins, Congregational, Rev. Wm. L. Jenkins, Unitarian, and Rev. Ira D. Clark. Baptist, of Northampton, and Rev. John F. Moors of Greenfield, Unitarian. Woman has not been excluded from the desk, and Frances D. Gage, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, and Mrs. Caroline Darrow, have each spoken to this congregation. Among the speakers who have expressed their willingness to address this Society, are Rev. Dr. Zachary Eddy, late pastor of the First Church in Northampton and Miss Anna E. Dickinson, the popular lecturer.

The Society has an address or sermon only on Sunday afternoon. The forenoon of each Sabbath is devoted to the Sabbath School, which numbers about 80 scholars, under the superintendence of E. C. Gardner. In addition, there is a class of 20 to 25 adults, under the leadership of Mr. Burleigh, which usually takes up some topic for discussion each Sunday. The funds of the Society are raised by subscription. The salary paid Mr. Burleigh is $600 per year. The audiences vary from 100 to 500. Usually the hall has been well filled, and sometimes there has not been sufficient room to accommodate the throng. The meetings are held in the hall in the school-house building, designed expressly for the accommodation of this Society; and deeded to it by Mr. Hill for the space of ten years, or longer, if the building should not be wanted for school purposes.

Mr. Burleigh is a man of fine abilities, a close reasoner, and an eloquent speaker. He studied in Philadelphia for the legal profession, but becoming deeply interested in the anti-slavery movement, he relinquished his chosen pursuit and engaged in the herculean task of arousing the public mind on that subject. He was with Mr. Garrison at the time the mob of men of respectability and standing in Boston assailed him, and rendered efficient, aid in protecting the great agitator from the fury of his persecutors. He continued to lecture in various parts of the free states, on the anti-slavery question until the villainous institution was dead; and now, after thirty-six years of labor in the contest, he rejoices with the millions of loyal people over the wonderful victory. Connected with and controlled by the Society are a library and a reading room both of which are free to the public.

Samuel L. Hill

Perhaps the most prominent man in the history of Florence, and the one who has done most to build up the place is Samuel L. Hill. His name is connected with nearly all the principal enterprises in the village, so closely indeed that the history of the one is in large part the history of the other, and therefore some account of his personal career seems not improper in connection with this sketch.

Mr. Hill was born in Smithfield, R.I., July 30, 1806, and is now in his 61st year. His parents were Quakers, but in consequence of his marrying outside of the Quaker fraternity, his

connection with them was dissevered. His education was only such as the common schools of those days offered, with a single year at Leicester Academy. His father being a farmer and a carpenter, he learned with him the carpenter's trade, but at an early day engaged in the mercantile business, which, in consequence of an unfortunate partnership, proved unsuccessful. He then removed to Willamantic, Ct., and engaged as superintendent of a cotton-mill, which position he held 10 or 12 years. He early became connected with the Baptist church, and at Willamantic was chosen and served as deacon. He proved so far as we have learned, a good deacon, and the older citizens of that town still have grateful recollections the efficient services of "Deacon Hill."

When Mr. Garrison commenced his anti-slavery campaign, Mr. Hill became one of his disciples, and to this day has remained a firm friend and supporter of the distinguished agitator. He desired the church to take decided ground against that great national wrong, and after vainly endeavoring to effect that object, he withdrew from it, and ever since has maintained an independent position on religious questions. Like Mr. Garrison, he has not exercised the elective franchise, but has always given to movements for enlightening the public mind on this question, his active support.

In 1841, having become possessed of a comfortable property, at least for man of not very great ambition in the country, he desired to engage in farming, and for this purpose made arrangements to purchase the house now occupied by Austin Ross, in Florence, with about fifty acres of land; but before this arrangement was consummated, Capt. Joseph Conant, George W. Benson, and others, brought forward the idea of forming the Community Association, and Mr. Hill joined them, the farm which he had bargained for becoming a part of the real estate of that organization. At the breaking up of the Association in 1846, he bought the property, and disposed of the brick factory to Mr. Benson, who commenced the manufacture of cotton cloth; and Mr. Hill, in connection with Messrs. Macomber and Parsons, continued the manufacture of silk. In 1847, he met with a misfortune, which swept away all his property. He had indorsed the notes of Mr. Benson, who became bankrupt, leaving Mr. Hill to pay his debts, to the amount of $15,000. He proposed to the creditors to stand by his obligations like a man, and only asked of them to give him the privilege of paying the interest semi-annually, and twenty per cent, of the principal, yearly. This was granted, and in five years he paid off the last dollar of this indebtedness. He also proposed to his partners, at the time of this disaster, to leave it entirely with them whether or not he should continue his business connection with them; but one objected, and he withdrew. Macomber & Parsons contend the business two or three years only. Mr. Hill, however, determined to retrieve his fortune, and commenced the manufacture of silk in a little building now comprising a part of the sewing machine company's works. It had previously been occupied by Valentine & Sowerby, for manufacturing silk. He obtained pecuniary aid from Samuel L. Hinckley, a wealthy citizen of Northampton, and the business of Hill & Hinckley was carried on under the name of the "Nonotuck Steam Silk Manufactory," with S. L. Hill as agent. The business connection then formed between Messrs. Hill and Hinckley was continued until about a year ago, with great success. During the whole time, whatever business was done by Mr. Hill, was done in the interest of Hill & Hinckley, and in every transaction he acted wholly on his judgment, Mr. Hinckley being a silent a partner. These transactions involved large sums of money, and show the almost unlimited confidence which Mr. Hinckley, for nearly twenty years, reposed in his partner.

Mr. Hill's connection with the mercantile firm of I. S. Parsons & Co., the Nonotuck Silk Co., the manufacturing firm of Littlefield, Parsons & Co., and the Florence Sewing Machine

Co., is noticed elsewhere in this sketch.

We might speak at length of Mr. Hill as the benefactor of the village which has grown up around him, and of the qualities which have enabled him to surmount the difficulties which beset his way; but this perhaps is not the proper place for elaboration in these respects. We shall only briefly allude to them. In business matters he has few superiors, uniting in a remarkable degree these essential qualities of the successful business man:—sagacity, deliberation, method, and promptness. Probably no one ever saw him when he was not perfectly self possessed. His sagacity is fully shown by the success of his business enterprises. His methodical accuracy and promptitude are also shown in like manner, for no man without these qualities could accomplish what he has, in so short a time. As a benevolent man we need not say to the citizens of Florence what they all so well know. The beautiful schoolhouse and hall, costing upward of $33,000, is his gift to the village, and will stand, we trust, for all time, as a monument to this generosity and wisdom. While firmly maintaining his own opinions, he has ever upheld the right of others to a free expression of whatever views they might think best to entertain. Toleration of opinions and of their free expression, is eminently one of his leading characteristics. Many poor men have been helped by him in the erection of homesteads, and whenever he has deeded land for that purpose he has stipulated that no intoxicating liquors should be sold on the premises. He has always been a fast friend of education, having manifested great interest in the village schools, and been several times chosen a member of the general school committee of the town. His integrity has ever been above reproach, and his promise has always been regarded as good as his note. His modesty and unpretending nature (in this respect manifesting the Quaker element of his family, have ever been conspicuous, and had he known that this personal mention of himself was intended to be published, it would probably never have been printed. The influence of a such a man cannot but be of a beneficial and enduring character.

Basil Dorsey

Any sketch of Florence would be incomplete, that did not embrace an honorable notice of its colored teamster, Basil Dorsey. For 23 years he has been a citizen of the village, and is known to the residents of all the adjoining region. He was a slave in the town of Liberty—God have mercy on the man who gave the place its name!—in Frederick County, Maryland. His grandfather was an Englishman, who married a colored woman in Maryland; therefore Dorsey claims that he was by law as well as by right, a free man. But in Maryland, under the slave-code, not much attention was paid to law or right; so Basil was compelled to come under the yoke. To a man of his high spirit and pluck, the yoke was grievously heavy, and he continually longed to be a free man. His master—Tom Saulers—had agreed to sell him his freedom for $350, and Dorsey found a man named Richard Cole—to his honorable memory be the act credited—who agreed to become his bondsman for that amount, but when Saulers was confronted with this security for his “property,” he refused to accept it, declaring that he could get $500. This act of treachery so enraged Cole that he advised Dorsey to his legs and try their virtue. He did so. On the 14th of May 1836, before anti-slavery became very popular, even in Massachusetts, Dorsey, in company with two other slaves, turned his back upon his master and set out for the land of freedom. They travelled in the night and reached Gettysburg to safety. From thence they went to Harrisburg and then to Reading. He found employment in Bristol, Penn., where he worked nearly a year. While there, an attempt was made to recapture him. He was arrested and taken before Judge Fox. Friends rallied to his aid, who secured ample legal counsel., and after lying in jail, two weeks, a flaw in the proceedings was found and he was set at liberty. His wife, who was

a free woman, and their children joined him in Pennsylvania in August, but in consequence of his arrest he determined to set his face northward for better security. He went to New York, where he met Dr. David Ruggles, the founder of the well known water cure in Florence, who assisted him. Gentlemen connected with the Anti-Slavery Standard sent him to Northampton. He first stopped at the house of Haynes K. Starkweather, in South street, and after a day or two Capt. Samuel Parsons—whose heart, always beat in sympathy with the fugitive—harnessed one of his horses and with one of his boys for driver—this was the "underground railroad"—took Dorsey and carried him to Charlemont, where he was cared for by Dea. R. H. Leavitt; with whom he lived about five years. His wife died and was buried at that place, leaving him with three children. In January, 1844, he came to Florence, where he has ever since resided, working as a teamster, first as an employee of the cotton-mill company, and latterly as a general jobber. He has always done the teaming for the cotton mill. In Dea. J. P. Williston he has ever found a firm and faithful friend, and his gratitude for his kindly assistance is strong and heartfelt. Soon after settling in Florence, Mr. Dorsey married again, and by his present wife has had eleven children, making in all fourteen—all of whom are now living. He has always been industrious, and a hard-worker, and has succeeded in buying and paying for a homestead. In 1850, his friends in Florence and Northampton contributed $150, and he added $50 from his own earnings, making $200 in all, with which he purchased his freedom. This was done against the wishes of many of his friends, who didn't like to buy with money that freedom which God had endowed all men with; but as he sometimes visited Boston, Providence, and other cities, in his teaming business, it was feared he might, when away from home be made a subject for the fugitive slave law, and be hurried back to slavery. So it was deemed best to pay the price demanded and thus make his freedom secure. In January last, desiring once more to see the "sacred soil" whose dust he had shaken from his feet thirty-one years ago, he revisited Maryland. His old master was gone and family nearly broken up. A look of desolation pervaded the entire country. He found not many that he knew but one man loomed up conspicuous amid the general strangeness, with whom and whose business he was familiar. This was a professional slave-catcher and the owner of trained blood-hounds. —Dorsey has several times been away on trips for various purposes, and has many times come in contact with the prevailing hatred of his race. It is amusing to hear him relate his experience with those negro-haters. While residing in Charlemont, he accompanied Dea. Leavitt to Rochester. While in the cars beyond Albany, some of the passengers directed him to take the forward car, but he stoutly refused, and high words ensued. The conductor was appealed to, but he said that so long as the negro behaved well he could ride as other passengers rode. This, however, did not satisfy the disturbed passengers, and they were only deterred from laying violent hands on him by his divesting himself of his hat and coat and threatening to pitch through the window any man who should molest him. His stalwart form and defiant manner were a sufficient caution to the passengers to pay at least a decent respect to his rights. The conductor was so well pleased with his bearing on this occasion that he offered him a free passage on his return. He is deserving of much credit for the energy and industry which he has displayed, and the many who have heard the clear ring of his voice as he greets them while on the road from Florence to Northampton with his pair of horses, will long remember the colored teamster, Basil Dorsey.

The Milk Business

The milk business in Florence has always been of considerable proportions, and has been conducted since the Community Association by Austin Ross. Mr. Ross was the farmer for the

Association one year, and when it dissolved he bought the "Broughton's Meadows," or Gaius Burt farm, consisting of about 150 acres. He has kept from 12 to 20 cows, and supplied the village with milk. When the water-cure was in operation, he supplied that establishment with from 50 to 75 quarts per day. In 1866, he built a first-class barn 80 by 40 feet,—the best barn in Florence.

Schools and School-Houses

The first school-house in the district was located about half way between the Bosworth place and John F. Warner's, and was then included in the Rail Hill school district. As the population increased in the village, the question of moving the school-house eastward was agitated, and aroused considerable feeling. The Selectmen were petitioned to make the removal, and did so. Joseph Warner, Cecil Dwight, and others in that part of the district, built another school house near the former's residence, which was used a few years only. The school-house in Florence village becoming too small to accommodate the increasing number of scholars, it was decided in 1863 to build a larger one. The town appropriated for this purpose $2,000, and S. L. Hill, the acknowledged Father of the Village, contributed the balance, the total cost being about $33,000. The building was well located, and is one of the most tasteful structures in this region. It was designed by E. C. Gardner of Florence, and comprises a main building, 76 by 46 feet, with an east wing 44 by 36, and a west wing 12 by 36 feet. The upper floor includes a hall, 44 feet by 36 feet, accommodating about 200, and used for Sunday Schools and various evening meetings; and a library room, 24 by 44 feet. The library consists of from 1,600 to 1,800 volumes, connected with which is a reading room where about a dozen daily and weekly papers and the leading monthlies are taken, and very generally read.

The first floor contains the Grammar and Intermediate school rooms, the former accommodating 120 scholars. Besides these main rooms, there are three recitation rooms, and a room for the use of the teachers. The basement is used for the primary and evening schools. The building is of brick, and the interior is all finished with unpainted wood, the principal school room with chestnut. The building was commenced in 1863, and completed in 1864. The chapel was appropriately dedicated. The tower contains a beautiful bell, of 1,600 lbs. weight, and was designed for a clock, and it is hoped that some of the public spirited citizens will soon cause one to be placed in it. The schools of Florence have always been of a high standard, and it is believed were never in better condition than now. They are well graded, but still further improvements are contemplated. The entire building is heated by steam, and notwithstanding the fire is kept up every evening and on Sunday, the cost is believed to be only about half the expense of heating the high school building in Northampton.

The Evening School

For three on four years an evening school of some kind has been kept up, for the benefit of those who had no chance to attend the day schools, both children and adults. Sometimes it has been taught gratuitously, and at all times, with the exception of one year, has been sustained, by private contributions. At the late town meeting, however, the town was asked to appropriate $250 to sustain this school, and it was at once granted. The school will now be under the supervision of the General School Committee, the same as the other public schools. During the past year and a half it has been consolidated and systematized, and is now upon a thorough, and it is hoped, a permanent basis. During the year, three teachers have been constantly employed. There are three grades of schools, the higher department being under the admirable management

of Miss Carrie James. In all there have been about 90 pupils, 30 in the higher department. It would be difficult to find a more earnest, zealous set of students. Not one pupil is admitted who does not labor through the day, and to see these young men and women from the ages of 16 to 25, coming there regularly, after having worked steadily 11 or 12 hours through the day, is enough to make one ashamed of the opportunities we have used so poorly. Wm. Riley, the young man whom the Rev. Mr. Cobb's church are educating at Wabash College, received his first start in the evening school. Two young girls who wished the benefit of Smith Charities were questioned "Could they read and write?" "Yes, they learned at the evening school." And many others are doubtless receiving benefits equally great if not as palpable. It does indeed seem pitiful that the younger children should be compelled to work during the day, and thus lose the day school; but this is certainly better than nothing and does not in the least abate the legal requirements in regard to attending schools.

The Streets

The streets of Florence are all properly named. At a meeting of the Warner School District, held last year, a committee was appointed to name the streets, and their report, given below, is now the common law of the village:—

Spring Street — From Leeds to Dr. Munde's bridge.

West Street — From near Dr. Munde's bridge to the road to West Farms.

South Street — Also from near Dr. Munde's bridge to the road to Easthampton.

Meadow Street — From Julius Phelps' to the old Primary School House.

Nonotuck Street — From Munde's bridge to Warner's Silk Factory.

Pine Street — From A.T. Lilly's residence to Hemenway's Corner.

Park Street — From the park opposite I. S. Parsons' to Mrs. Polly Bosworth's.

Prospect Street — From Mr. Ross' bridge to Parson's store.

Main Street — From John Warner's past the Sewing Machine buildings to Warner's Silk Factory.

Maple Street — From Nonotuck St. to High St., crossing Pine St. at Mr. S. L. Hill's residence, and Main St. at Abercrombie's.

High Street — From Sewing Machine boarding house extending westerly parallel with Main St. and north of the Railroad.

Fruit Street — From Main St. at the Florence Mercantile Co.'s building to High St.

Locust Street — From Main St. at the old Pomeroy place, to Dr. Denniston's.

Bridge Street — From Nonotuck St. near Rummell's blacksmith-shop, southerly to residence of Mr. Scanlon.

Water Street — From residence of Graves brother down south side of Mill river.

River Street — From cotton-mill to Bay State village.

Center Street — From Maple Street, near Cutler's store, to the continuation of Chestnut Street, near the sewing machine factory.

West Center Street — From Maple street, near Cutler's, to Park street.

Several more streets are already laid out, but not yet worked.

Gardner & Perkins, Architects

During the past few years, Mr. E. C. Gardner has achieved an excellent reputation as an architect. He designed the new school-house in Florence, one of the finest appearing buildings in the Connecticut Valley. He is also the architect of the fine resdence of Wm. Clark, Jr., the new

banking house of the First National Bank, and the new factory of the Clement & Hawks Mfg. Co. in Northampton, the new screw nail factory at the Bay State village, the new brush factory in Florence, and numerous other public and private building in the vicinity. He plans all show much good taste. Mr. Gardner is a mason by trade, and taught school in Ohio six years. He came to Florence in 1863, and has established a large and honorable business. The value of the buildings which have already been erected from his plans is over $250,000. He has also done the greater part of the surveying in this vicinity. At the beginning of the present year he formed a business connection with Jason Perkins, a thorough and reliable mechanic of twenty years experience, and a conscientious man. The results of the labors of this firm will undoubtedly tend very much to improve the modes and styles of buildings in this region. They are now preparing plans for Palmer's new block in Amherst and also for two fine residences in the same town.

Florence Mercantile Association

This is a joint stock company for the prosecution of a mercantile business. Its capital is $10,000; share $25 each. The organization is as follows:—President, S. B. Fuller; Clerk, Sylvester J. Bosworth; Treasurer, Col. J .L. Otis; Directors, Orin Storer, E. C. Davis, D. H. Bond; Agent, H.K. Parsons. The company erected a brick store 28 by 50 feet on Main street, at a cost including the land, of about $5,000. The object is to sell goods at such a profit as will pay the current expenses and render the investment safe. Goods are sold only for cash on delivery. The company commenced business in January last, and has thus far had a very satisfactory trade.

Professional

No *live* community can long live comfortably without a lawyer. Florence was supplied in this particular four years ago, when Daniel W. Bond, Esq. hung out his shingle. He has met with good success Esquire Bond taught school several years in Florence and then studied law graduating at Columbia College, N. Y. city, with the highest honors of his class.

It may with equal truth be said that no live community can long be comfortable without a physician. Until within two or three years, Florence has had no settled doctor, the physicians in Northampton attending to the physical ailments of the people. Dr. James Dunlap has had the larger share of this patronage for many years, and still retains much of it. He has for a considerable time had an office in the village, where he could be consulted at certain hours of the day. Dr. Thomas Gilfillan has been here since 1865, and has been well patronized. Dr. Lathrop Smith also practices on the clairvoyant system, and finds both patients and friends. We wish them all the most abundant success, but we cannot wish them many patrons. Dr. Gilfillan graduated at Williams and the Berkshire Medical colleges, studied medicine with Doctors D. & J. Thompson of Northampton, served in the army two yeas as surgeon of the 46th and 59th Mass. regiments, and practiced his profession in Cummington eight years.

Dr. R. D. Brown, dentist, has an office over the mercantile company's store, and attends to the teething wants of the people in a creditable manner.

Various Matters

The water-cure establishment, founded by Dr. David Ruggles, an almost blind colored man, gave Florence considerable celebrity. Dr. Ruggles established this water-cure in 1845, and died in 1849. Dr. Charles Munde, a distinguished German hydropathic practitioner, became his successor in 1850, and conducted the establishment with success until its destruction by fire, Nov. 7, 1865. In ten years, under Dr. Munde's charge, this establishment had 2,200 patients, of

whom about one-third were Germans. After settling up his affairs here he went to Wurzberg, in his native country, as U. S. consul, a position which he has since resigned, although still residing in Germany.

The mercantile interests of the village have always been properly attended to. I. S. Parsons & Co.'s store is elsewhere noticed. In 1850, W. A. Godfrey opened a store in the old boarding house of the cotton company, and continued it until 1866, the last 14 [?] months in connection with L. K. Baker. He sold out in May, 1866, to Henry F. Cutler, who now has a large and commodious store, built by Mr. Godfrey, and does a flourishing business. S.S. Hemenway deals in groceries; L. B. Moore, in flour and grain; and John Irwin, in boots and shoes. E. G. Brown and Edwin Gooch [?] keep saloons.

The Eagle Base-Ball club of Florence won a wide reputation last year as a competitor for the champion silver ball. This ball it won from the Chicopee club, and succeeded in holding it a considerable time, against the utmost efforts of several clubs of large experience and extended reputation. The ball was finally won from them by the Chicopee club. The Eagles club will probably reorganize the coming season, and enter the field again, as a contestant for the coveted prize. The officers of the club, who hold over from last year, are H.H. Bond president, and J. B. O'Donnell, secretary and treasurer.

The livery business is well cared for by the proprietors of two stables of well established repute. Joel Abercrombie keeps about 20 horses, about half of which are used in teaming. Graves Brothers keep nine horses, and have just enlarged their facilities by erecting a new barn, in a good location 62 by 44 feet, costing over $3000, and capable of keeping 20 horses. They have been in this business about nine years, and no one need visit them, thinking he can give them much information about livery matters.

Of the mechanical employments which attend all well regulated communities, we may notice that W. S. Hartwell is the village blacksmith; A. H. Stockwell and Coleman & Richmond are painters; Eldridge & Smith and Asa Squires, carpenters; E. L. Hammond, mason; and P. P. Pond, William Swift, and Vincent V. Reinstein, shoemakers; Miss Burbank, over Cutler's store does dressmaking; August Assen and Mr. Morgenwick are tailors and Lewis Jones and Geo. Washington Stamps are [ ] find ready employment.

The wants of the inner physical man have been well attended to by C. L. Warren, butcher, who commenced running a meat-cart in Florence in 1857, and established a market in 1861. In 1866 Allen Shaw and Amasa Graves were associated with him, under the name of Warren, Shaw & Co. They "do up" this business in a style quite satisfactory to people of good appetites.

It may not be inappropriate in this sketch to note prices of farm produce in 1843, which we find recorded on a paper received from Hiram Stebbins. Corn and rye were 60c per bushel, wheat $1, buckwheat 42c, potatoes, common 17c, Carter 25c, beets, carrots and turnips 20c, beans $1, beef 4c, pork 5c, chickens 6c, eggs 12c, butter $12^{1}/_{2}$c, cheese 6c. Florence was certainly a happy place to live in, in those days.

Florence will soon have steam railroad communication with the outside world. The extension of the New Haven and Northampton railroad to Williamsburg, now in process of construction, passes through this village, and will afford a much-needed relief to its extensive freight business, and aid essentially in promoting its prosperity. The depot will be nearly opposite Abercrombie's hotel.

A lyceum has usually been kept up in the winter season, but during the past two or three winters it has been omitted. A private debating society has been in successful operation the last

winter, and some conspicuous “stars” may therefore soon be looked for in the rhetorical world.

Lee & Harvey, stove and tin-ware dealers in Northampton are about to open a branch shop in the basement of the mercantile company’s store, and will stand ready to meet the demands of the public to any extent. They are reliable and straightforward men, and can be depended upon.

Florence also has, besides Esq. Bond, two Justices of the Peace, in the persons of Bela Gardner and Hiram Stebbins; and a Deputy Sheriff in Frederick O. Hillman. With so many legal appliances it would seem that law and order must prevail.

The population of Florence at the present time is not accurately known. In 1865, it was 1654; in 1864, 1442; and in 1863, 1282. At the same rate of increase it would now be about 2,000.

A new cloak and dress making establishment will be opened tomorrow, by Mrs. M. E. Bond and Miss M. E. Kennedy, over Cutler’s store.

Transcribed by Steve Strimer, August , 2000