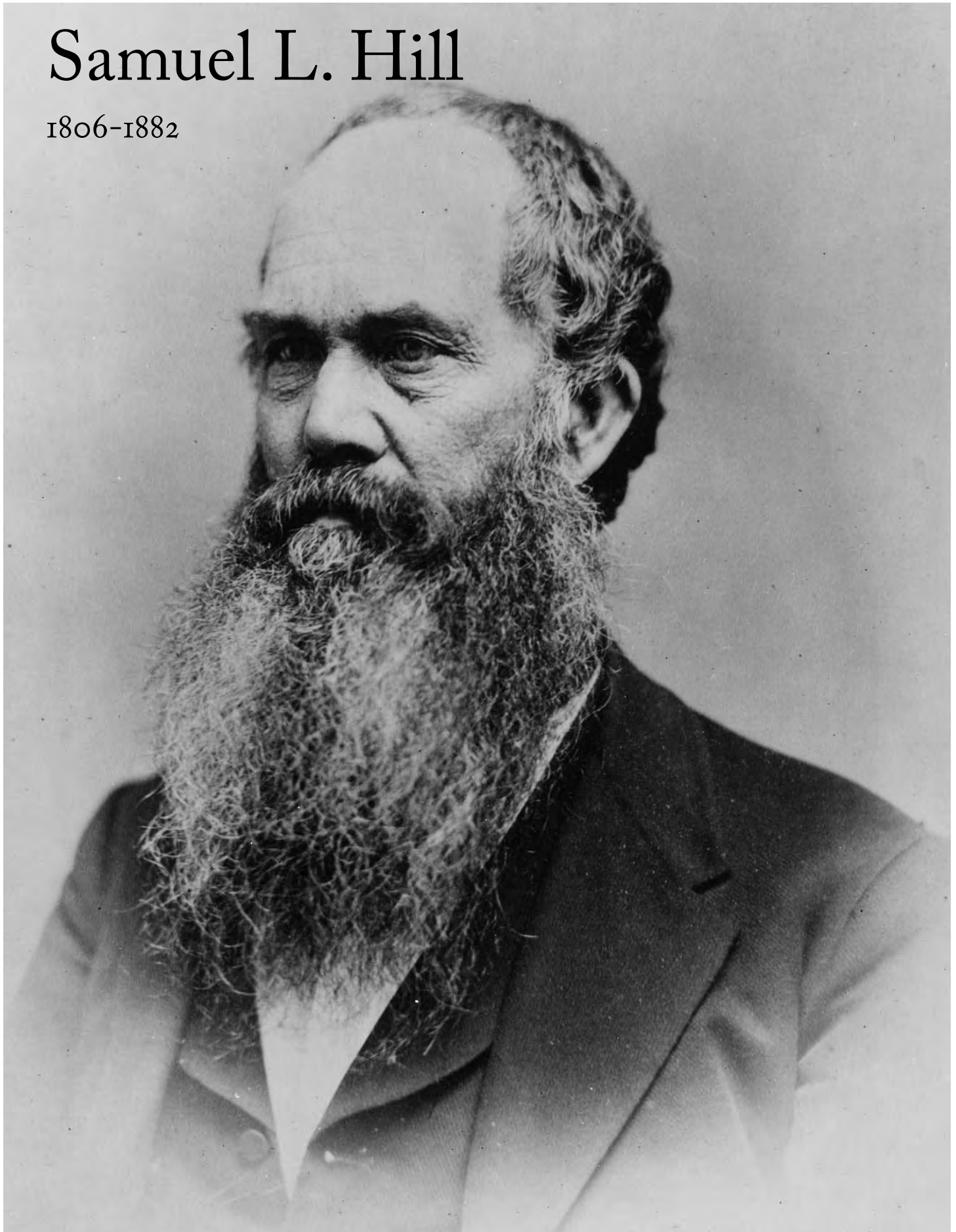


Samuel L. Hill

1806-1882



“Did the Association have a lasting effect on Florence?”

Samuel Hill

Introduction

We stand before the house of Samuel and Roxanna Hill. He was widely considered the founder of the village of Florence. He was a principle founder of the Association and managed its finances for the duration. He then made a remarkable transition from a fully committed Community member to a highly successful businessman. He saw to it that the ideals held by the Association left a lasting imprint on the village as it grew into a thriving industrial center.

Who was Samuel Hill?

- Hill was born and raised in eastern Connecticut. He was trained as a carpenter but soon moved on to managing factories as New England industrialized. He had a head for numbers and a knack for business dealings. He was also a deeply religious man with a strong moral sense of what was right and wrong. He left his church over the issue of slavery (a “come-outer”) and moved to Florence to help found a Community based on anti-slavery principles.
- Hill was one of the original investors who helped buy the property that became the Association. He was elected Treasurer of the Association, put in charge of managing its finances. He oversaw the Stock Company, while the Industrial Association ran day-to-day operations at the various working Departments that supported the entire Community. Can you give us a picture of how this worked? How do you think this arrangement differed from how most businesses were run? (Docs. B,D)
- Briefly describe what the Association bought and how this was broken down into smaller businesses, or Departments, within the larger organization. (Doc. C,D top)
- How did they raise the money needed to buy out the former owners of the property? This led to a major problem that resulted in the Association folding four and half years later. Describe. (Docs. E,F)
- After the Association folded, Hill went on to start a new, privately-owned company that manufactured silk sewing thread. This company made him a very wealthy man and brought prosperity to the entire village of Florence. Tell us why the Nonotuck Silk Company he founded was so successful. (Doc, G)

What was the “Neighborhood Community”?

—The Association could no longer pay its debts and support itself and so it closed its doors. But Community members were still committed to reform ideals and to the free expression of ideas. Hill used his wealth and influence to offer cheap mortgages on houses to former Community members so they could continue to live near one another in what became the village of Florence. They called this their “Neighborhood Community”. How did Hill do this? Can you identify former Community members with houses on the map? (Docs. H,I,J top)

How did Hill help create the village of Florence?

—Hill also offered affordable housing opportunities to people who worked at his silk thread company. How did this work? What else did he offer his workers? Why do you think he did this?
-Hill headed a small group of businessmen that financed new enterprises in the village. One of them still exists. Can you describe them? (Docs. J,K)

How did Hill keep the spirit of the Community alive in Florence?

—Hill was driven to succeed as a businessman, but he lived modestly and never lost sight of the ideals that drew him to the Community in the first place. What were those ideals and how did he support them? Describe Cosmian Hall for us. (Doc. L)
—Education, especially for young people, was very important to the Association – hence its name. Why do you think? How did Hill help provide access to quality education for young children living in the village? Did the philosophy behind that education accord with Community principles? (Doc. M)

Did the “Underground Railroad” operate in Florence?

—At the same time that Hill was building up his businesses, he was also intentionally breaking the law. This was a law he did not support. It forbade sympathetic Northerners from assisting fugitives from Southern slavery. Hill’s house became a “station” on the so-called Underground Railroad. Explain for us how this worked. What proof do we have that Hill was a “conductor”? Why do you suppose proof of this work is hard to find for historians? (Docs. N,O)

NOTES ON SOURCES

- A. Stereo card of the silk factory purchased by the Northampton Association in 1842.
- B. From a “Preliminary Circular” drawn up by the Association founders (1842).
- C. A list of Departments, or places of work for members, printed by the Association.
- D. See B. (top) Prepared by the David Ruggles Center (bottom)
- E. From Community member Frances Judd in the book American Socialisms (1870).
- F. See E.
- G. From Northampton’s Century of Silk, by Marjorie Senechal (2004).
- H. List of Northampton Association members, listed by family. Published by the Association.
- I. Map of Florence (1854).
- J. “Biographical Sketch” of Samuel Hill written by his son Arthur in 1894.
- K. *Hampshire Gazette*, August 21, 1866.
- L. A description of the Free Congregational Society, written by a member in 1894.
- M. History of Florence Massachusetts (1894).
- N. Written by Samuel’s son ,Arthur Hill, in 1911.
- O. Letter written by Arthur Hill (1893). From “Anti-Slavery Days” by Arthur Hill (1912).

A

CONNECTICUT VALLEY VIEWS.



KNOWLTON BROS., PHOTOGRAPHERS,
Northampton, Mass.

B

ARTICLE I. The name and style of this association shall be The Northampton Association of Education and Industry.

ART. II. The management of the affairs and undertakings of this Association shall be conducted by two distinct companies: 1st, a Stock Company; 2d, an Industrial Association.

ART. III. The Stock Company shall be first formed by obtaining a subscription of \$100,000, to be paid in money or some equivalent at the option of the Stock Directors. As soon as \$50,000 are secured by binding subscriptions, \$30,000 of which, at least, shall be paid by the first of April next, the company shall be organized by choosing a President, Secretary and Treasurer, who together shall, as Trustees, hold all the property of the Association in trust, until their successors shall be appointed by the Company.

ART. IV. The President and Secretary shall sign all contracts and papers binding the Company, and the Treasurer shall give security to the satisfaction of the Company for the safe keeping of its money and papers; but the Trustees shall not have power to buy or sell, as agents of the Company, on credit.

C

"1. Agricultural Department, including all farming operations, and all standing wood and timber. Theodore Scarborough, Director. E. D. Hudson, Assistant Director in Horticulture.

"2. Lumber Department, including sawing lumber, cutting shingles, care of lumber yard, and sale of lumber. G. W. Benson, Director.

"3. Silk Manufacturing Department, including the manufacture of Silk and Flax, and the direction of the machine shop. E. L. Preston, Director.

"4. Cutlery Department, including all kinds of blacksmithing and cutlery. H. Wells, Director.

"5. Mechanical Department, including all carpentry, the planing machine, and the manufacture of shoes. W. F. Parker, Director.

"6. Silk Growing Department, including the culture of mulberry trees, the feeding of silk-worms, and the reeling of cocoons. O. D. Paine, Director.

"7. Domestic Department, including the providing of females with work, the superintendence and care of domestic labour and of the community boarding house. Roxie Brown, Director. Nancy Richardson, Assistant Director of the Table. S. L. Hill, Assistant Director of the Household.

"8. Store Department, including the purchase and sale of supplies and the care of the Daily Express. Hall Judd, Director.

"9. Accountant's Department, including charge of the book and accounts of the Association. W. Larned, Director.

"10. Educational Department, including the direction of the studies, labours, and amusements of all members under the age of eighteen, in consultation with parents, guardians, teachers, and industrial directors. W. Adam, Director.

"11. Secretarial Department, including charge of the correspondence of the Association, keeping copies of letters sent and recording the transactions of all business meetings. W. Adam, Director. G. W. Benson, Financial Assistant in the Treasurer's Department."

D

BROUGHTON MEADOWS, NORTHAMPTON, February 15, 1842.

At a meeting of the owners of the property known as the Northampton Silk Factory Estate, held this 15th day of February, 1842, Joseph Conant was voted President, and William Adam, Secretary. Whereupon, it was unanimously

Resolved, That, approving of the principles and objects developed in the preceding Declaration and Articles of Association, we, the owners of the aforesaid Estate, consisting of about four hundred and twenty acres of land; six dwelling houses; a large brick factory, nearly new, four stories high, measuring one hundred and twenty by forty feet, with water-wheel, gear, and shafting fit for operation, and situated on a durable stream of water called Mill River, having from twenty-seven to twenty-nine feet fall; a dye-house, with necessary apparatus; a wooden building about thirty feet square, formerly used for manufacturing purposes, with water-wheel, in good condition; a saw-mill; a Raymond's shingle mill, with patent right secured for the town of Northampton, capable of cutting ten thousand shingles per hour; a planing machine for planing and jointing boards, planks, and timber; turning lathes, circular saws, &c., &c., together with machinery in the factory adapted to the manufacture of silk, and sundry other articles of personal property: also a lot of pine timber, containing about fifty acres, about a mile and a half from the saw-mill:—the whole estimated to be worth about thirty thousand dollars,—are willing and ready to place it at the disposal of the projected Northampton Association of Education and Industry, at a fair valuation, whenever fifty thousand dollars of stock shall be subscribed, and thirty thousand dollars paid up, as specified in the Articles already referred to.

[Signed]

W. Adam

Secretary.

Joseph Conant

President.

In conformity to the preceding Declaration of Sentiments and Articles of Association, and in consideration of the foregoing proceedings of the proprietors of the Northampton Silk Company Estate, We, the undersigned, do severally subscribe to the Stock Company therein set forth the number of shares set against our names, the amount of which we promise to pay as herein specified to the Treasurer of said Company; the said Stock property to be forever holden and managed in all respects according to the principles and provisions of the aforesaid Declaration and Articles.

At its beginning, the Northampton Association, as a working business, was run by two separate groups. A "Stock Company" managed the financial side. A small group of investors, including Samuel Hill, pooled their money to buy the property. This group became the Stock Company that technically owned all the property belonging to the Association. They decided how money should be used to support the various businesses that supported the Association. They also managed the debt that was incurred when the Community was formed. New members could join the Stock Company if they invested in the Community and lived there.

A second group, called the "Industrial Association", ran those businesses from day to day — what to make, how much to make, who to hire, etc. Stock Company members could attend meetings of the Industrial Association but they could not vote on what was proposed there. The Industrial Association elected its own leadership and decided who should run each individual business and how much workers were paid.

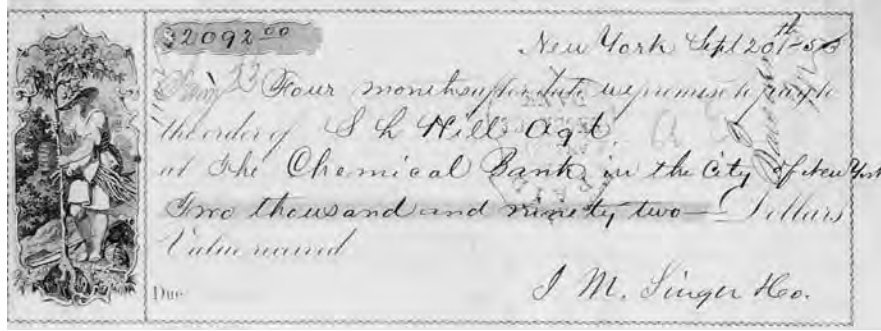
E The Association was located about two and a half miles from the village and center of business of Northampton. The estate consisted of five hundred acres of land, a good water-privilege, a silk factory four stories in height, six dwelling-houses, a saw-mill and other property, all valued¹ at about \$31,000. This estate was formerly owned by the Northampton Silk Company; afterwards by J. Conant & Co., who sold it to the persons who originated the Association. The amount of stock paid in was \$20,000. This left a debt of \$11,000 upon the Community, which, in the enthusiasm of the new enterprise, they expected soon to pay by additions to their capital stock, and by the profits of labor. But by the withdrawal of members holding stock, and also by some further purchases of property, this debt was afterwards increased to nearly four times its original amount, and no progress was made toward its liquidation during the continuance of the Association.

F In the course of the third year a subscription was opened, for the purpose of relieving the necessities of the Association; and people interested in the object of Social Reform were solicited to invest money in this enterprise, no subscription to be binding unless the sum of \$25,000 was raised. This sum never was subscribed, and of course no assistance was obtained in that way.

Many troubles were constantly growing out of the pecuniary difficulties in which the Community was involved. Many sacrifices were demanded, and much hard labor was required, and those whose hearts were not in the work withdrew.

G

“The sewing by hand, and the simple needle then in sole use demanded a far less perfect thread than that now required for machine-sewing,” explained the Judges of Group IX (Wool and Silk Fabrics, Including the Materials and the Machinery) of the Centennial International Exhibition in the historical section of their final report. “The proprietors of an establishment in Massachusetts, now famous, knowing the difficulties attending the use of silk threads, as then made, upon the newly-invented sewing-machine, devised the plan of twisting the silk in a direction opposite to that of common or skein sewing-silk. Winding a pound of three-cord silk, thus twisted, upon spools containing one-half ounce each, they submitted it, in 1852, to Mr. Singer, who was then experimenting upon his newly-invented sewing-machine, with which he met difficulties that he could not overcome.”*



The Singer Company papers are archived in the Wisconsin State Historical Society in Madison. After a three-day search through Singer's early (1850s) folders, Smith College student Alena Shumway found a bundle of cancelled checks, wrapped in paper and fastened with a pin, several checks from Isaac Singer to Samuel Hill among them.

Upright Samuel Hill and lowdown Isaac Singer, both dark-haired men in their forties, each in his own way a man of his time, shook hands, one presumes, and got down to business. “The silk was handed to Mr. Singer with the request that he would try it,” the judges continued. “He put a spool upon his machine, threaded up, and commenced sewing. After sewing sufficiently to enable him to judge of its merit, he stopped, and after examining the work it had done, exclaimed, ‘Can you make any more like this? I shall want all you can make’—a prophecy literally fulfilled. The new fabric assumed the name of ‘machine-twist;’ and from that time to the present the amount of silk consumed upon sewing-machines is marvelous.”

Isaac Singer wrote checks for thousands of dollars to Samuel Hill—a large fortune at the time. To honor the community’s great good fortune and the prospect of more, the residents of Northampton’s mill district met and renamed it “Florence” after “the great silk emporium of Italy.” A second motion, to rename the Mill River “the Arno,” did not pass.

Improved Machine for Doubling and Twisting Silk

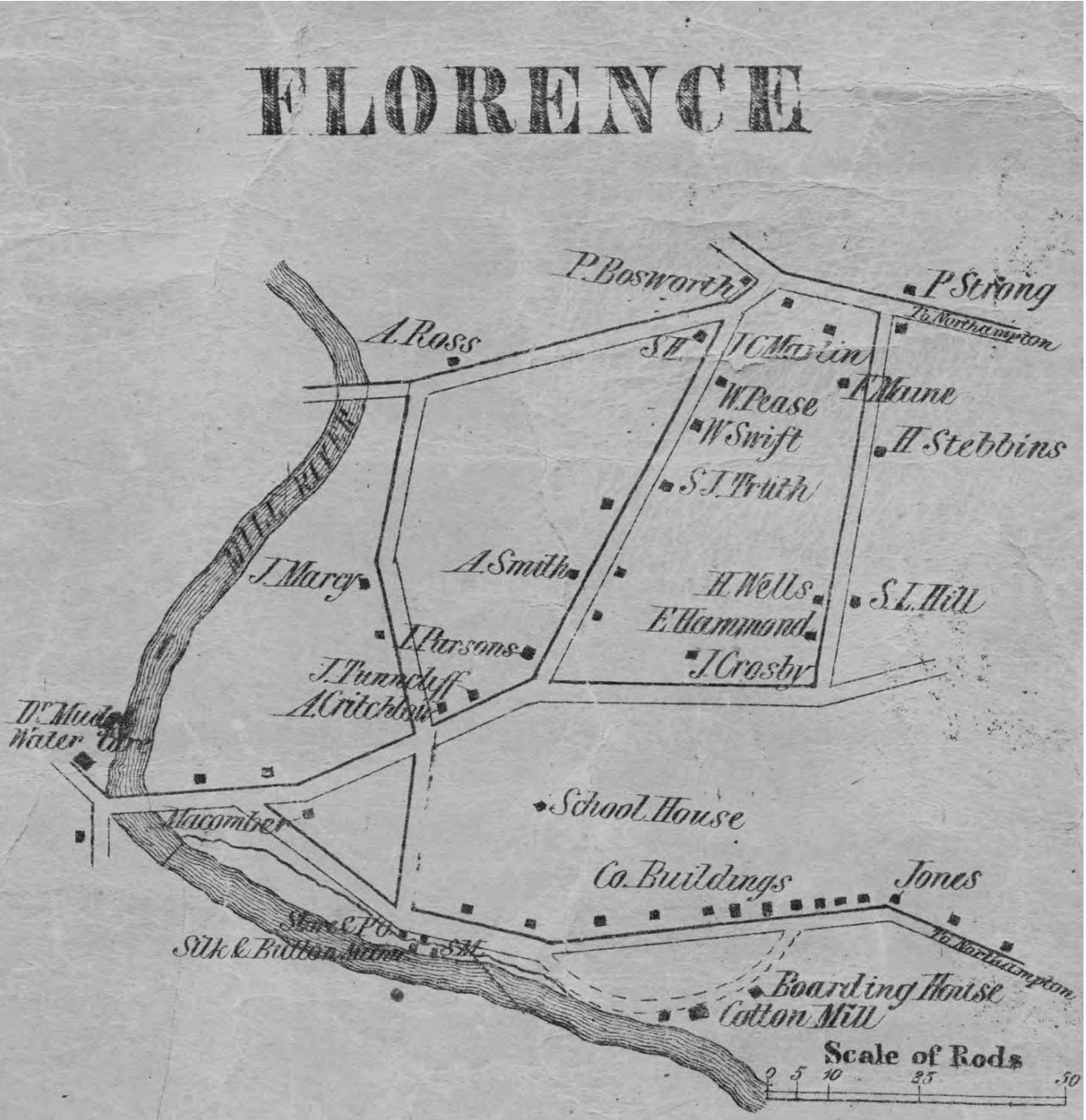
Messrs. **Joseph Conant** and **Lucius Dimock**, of Northampton, Mass., have invented a valuable and improved machine for doubling and twisting silk.

A great difficulty has always been experienced in doubling and twisting silk to make a fine smooth thread, owing to the fact that the doubling, in machinery heretofore used for that purpose, has always been accomplished by twisting together the threads of separate spools, which are rarely alike in texture. This must make an uneven thread. **This improvement doubles each thread from a single spool and does it with speed and uniformity.** Measures have been taken to secure a patent.

H

NAMES.	FROM.	ENTERED.	WITHDREW.
William Adam, wife, 4 children,	Cambridge,	April 8, 1842.	Jan. 2, 1844.
James D. Atkins,	Old Cambridge,	Sept. 28, 1842.	March 6, 1847.
George Ashley,	Chaplin, Ct.,	Jan. 13, 1844.	Dec. 28, 1845.
George Benson, wife, 4 children,	Brooklyn, Ct.,	April 8, 1842.	Oct. 1, 1845.
*Frances P. Birge,	Colebrook, Ct.,	May 28, 1842.	
Samuel Brooks, wife, 7 children,	Hadley,	April 9, 1842.	March, 1843.
Samuel A. Bottum, wife,	Mansfield, Ct.,	April 8, 1842.	Oct. 13, 1843.
†Roxey A. Brown,	Bloomfield, Ct.,	Nov. 12, 1842.	
James Boyle, wife,	Boston,	June 5, 1842.	
Wm. J. Bumstead, wife, 3 children,	Bloomfield, Ct.,	Nov. 16, 1842.	
Luther Brigham, 4 children,	Worcester,	Nov. 29, 1843.	
Susan Byrne,	Willimantic, Ct.,	Nov. 4, 1843.	July, 1844.
William Bassett, wife, 4 children,	Lynn,	Feb. 24, 1844.	Nov. 18, 1844.
Cyrus Bradbury,	Boston,	April 4, 1844.	Dec. 2, 1844.
Elizabeth Ely Bradbury,	"	April 4, 1844.	
Sarah Elizabeth Bradbury,	"	April 4, 1844.	
Bailey Birge, wife, 3 children,	Colebrook, Ct.,	Jan. 31, 1846.	
Joseph Conant, wife,	Mansfield, Ct.,	April 8, 1842.	Oct. 8, 1842.
Orwell S. Chaffee, wife, 1 child,	"	April 24, 1842.	Oct. 22, 1842.
George Cooper,		April 15, 1843.	Sept. 12, 1843.
†Octavia M. Damon,	Chesterfield,	Sept. 30, 1844.	March 6, 1847.
Sophia Foorde,	Dedham,	April 15, 1843.	June 12, 1845.
Emily Farwell,	Cambridge,	June 17, 1843.	1843.
Gustavus Gifford,	Nantucket,	Nov. 29, 1842.	
Roswell K. Goodwin,		Nov. 25, 1843.	
Caroline M. Gove,	Lynn,	June 25, 1844.	
Erasmus G. Hudson, wife, 2 children,	Bloomfield, Ct.,	April 8, 1842.	Sept. 16, 1843.
Rhoda Hudson,	Wolcottville,	Feb. 11, 1843.	May 13, 1843.
Romulus Fowler Hudson,	Bloomfield, Ct.,	April 8, 1842.	
Samuel L. Hill, wife, 3 children,	Willimantic, Ct.,	April 8, 1842.	
Sally Hill, 4 children,	Northampton,	April 8, 1842.	Sept. 23, 1842.
Josiah Hayward, wife, 3 children,	Salem,	March 8, 1843.	July 2, 1844.
William Haven, wife, 7 children,	Windham, Ct.,	May 4, 1843.	
Matilda Hill, 4 children,	Willimantic, Ct.,	Jan. 13, 1844.	
Lucy Charlotte Hayden,	Bath, Me.,	April 10, 1844.	
*Harriet W. Hayden,	"	April 10, 1844.	
Elisha L. Hammond, wife,	New Ipswich, N.H.,	May 16, 1844.	Nov. 1, 1846.
Hall Judd,	Northampton,	May 28, 1842.	
William Larned,	Boston,	Oct. 15, 1842.	Aug. 2, 1843.
David Mack, wife, 2 children,	Cambridge,	May 15, 1842.	Sept. 5, 1845.
Charles May,	Benton, Ala.,	Jan. 13, 1843.	
Abner S. Meade,	Danvers,	Dec. 6, 1842.	
Littleton T. Morgan,	Cambridge,	July 28, 1843.	
Moses K. Meader,	Nantucket,	April 15, 1843.	April 3, 1844.
George W. Miller,	Boston,	July 22, 1843.	
A. Menkin, M. D.,		Jan. 13, 1844.	March, 1844.
Joseph C. Martin, wife, 4 children,	Chaplin, Ct.,	April 9, 1844.	
Lorenzo D. Nickerson,	Boston,	April 15, 1843.	Nov., 1843.
Enos L. Preston, wife, 1 child,	Brooklyn, Ct.,	Sept. 3, 1842.	July, 1843.
William F. Parker, wife, 2 children,	Nantucket,	Oct. 22, 1842.	
Susan F. Parker,	"	Jan. 14, 1843.	
Oliver D. Paine,	Chesterfield,	April 10, 1842.	June 16, 1845.
George Prindle,	New Haven, Ct.,	May 13, 1843.	May, 1845.
Fortune R. Porter,	New York,	Aug. 19, 1843.	Jan. 31, 1844.
Lydia B. Pierce,		Feb. 25, 1843.	
Nancy Richardson, 4 children,	Waltham,	Sept. 24, 1842.	
David Ruggles,	New York,	Nov. 30, 1842.	
Stephen C. Rush,	"	Nov. 4, 1843.	April 23, 1846.
Lucius F. Reede,	Cummington,	May 20, 1843.	Nov., 1843.
Austin Ross, wife,	Chaplin, Ct.,	Mar. 29, 1845.	
Ezra Rosbrooks,	Cicero, N. Y.,	Jan. 26, 1844.	
Polly Rosbrooks,	"	Jan. 26, 1844.	
Louisa C. Rosbrooks,	"	Jan. 26, 1844.	
Francis O. Rosbrooks,	"	Jan. 26, 1844.	
Three Rosbrooks children,	"	Jan. 26, 1844.	
Theodore Scarborough, wife, 1 child,	Brooklyn, Ct.,	April 8, 1842.	
Jason Sulloway, wife,	Canton,	April 17, 1842.	
Pamelia Small, 1 child,	Norwich, Ct.,	April 8, 1842.	May 31, 1845.
Earle Dwight Swift, wife,	Mansfield, Ct.,	April 8, 1842.	Oct., 1842.
Herbert Scarborough,	Brooklyn, Ct.,	Jan. 14, 1843.	
Mary Ann Smith,	Bloomfield, Ct.,	Jan. 8, 1843.	

1



J

Upon the breaking up of the association, Mr. Hill interested his brother-in-law, Edwin Eaton, of Chaplin, Conn., in joining him in the purchase of the flat table-lands which form the center of Florence. This land was plotted, streets laid out, building lots sold as they were needed by the gradually increasing population, and financial assistance given to the worthy settler, to enable him to make a home of his own. It was a strong desire of Mr. Hill that every man of family should own his little



HILL RESIDENCE IN 1869.

home place, and his influence was thus extended. He had great pleasure in seeing the growing number of houses that owed an existence to his encouraging words and sympathetic money loans. The faithfulness with which the loans were regularly paid in the small amounts, from time to time, as they could be saved for this purpose, kept alive in him his great faith in the people.

FLORENCE SAVINGS BANK was incorporated February twelfth, 1873, on the petition of Samuel L. Hill, George A. Burr, A. T. Lilly, A. L. Williston, and Isaac Parsons. To Rev. F. W. Bishop, the first pastor of the Methodist church, is due the credit of starting the bank, he having proposed the undertaking to several business men. The first president, A. T. Lilly, remained in office till his death in 1890, when Samuel Porter was elected. H. H. Bond, the first secretary and treasurer, in whose law office in Davis block the first meeting of trustees was held, and where the banking was conducted for several years, was succeeded in 1880 by his sister, Mary W. Bond, who was the first woman to hold the office of treasurer of a savings bank in Massachusetts, and who continued to perform with skill and fidelity the duties of the office until her death in September, 1891. The office of the bank remained in Davis block until 1891, when it was moved to the present quarters of the bank. Miss Mary E. Gould succeeded Miss Bond, and Miss Emilie M. Plimpton was appointed bookkeeper.

FLORENCE SEWING MACHINE COMPANY.—An old shop, now surrounded by new buildings, built about 1844, on the site of the Oilgas Stove plant, was used as a dyehouse, and afterwards for the manufacture of silk, by Valentine & Sowerby. The buildings were afterwards used for the manufacture of circular sawmills and various kinds of machinery job work, by Hiram Wells & Company. It was while at work in this shop, that L. W. Langdon experimented, while busied with his invention of the Florence sewing machine. D. G. Littlefield and S. L. Hill joined with Mr. Langdon, and, after spending considerable money in experiments, perfected and brought out the first machine in the year 1861. In 1861 the first company was formed, with a capital of \$125,000. In 1862 it was increased to \$200,000, and in 1864 the first building was erected. In 1866 the capital was increased to \$500,000.

K*Hampshire Gazette, August 21, 1866*

The population of Florence has grown up about the silk mills of Samuel Lapham Hill. When I visited the mill I found evidence that the evening schools, held for the factory hands, were conducted as wisely as the best foreign effort of the kind. I observed that Mr. Hill encouraged the women, who worked for him, to save their earnings, by giving them interest on their money, and finally investing it for them. I was present at more than one interview in which he discussed with such persons the best way to manage their affairs. In one corner of his office was a set of book-shelves filled with books, papers and periodicals of a liberal kind; underneath was printed in large letters, "For free distribution; help yourself."

Around the mills is quite a little village of white cottages, each with its own lot of land, properly fenced in. When a man saves five hundred dollars towards the price of a land lot, Mr. Hill immediately loans him money toward building, and this little village, in which each house is worth from two to three thousand dollars, is the result.

L

from THE FREE CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY.

By Henry S. Haven.

It was decided to build a hall, not only adequate for all the uses of the society, for its Sunday services, Sunday-school, and social gatherings, but of a capacity and design suitable for all general public meetings liable to be called for in a village of the size, enterprise, and public spirit of Florence. The result is Cosmian Hall, a noble edifice, built in a commanding location, with ample arrangements for the general uses of the public in its main hall, with a seating capacity of nearly seven hundred, with large stage and abundant stage appointments, including organ and grand piano. This hall has been opened on all occasions of general public interest, celebrations, and anniversaries, for the people's use, without any expense to them or the town.

Cosmian Hall was dedicated in 1874, and cost about forty thousand dollars,—Mr. S. L. Hill contributing much the larger part, Mr. A. T. Lilly, about ten thousand dollars, and the balance by subscription in the society. In 1893, a platform for the choir was built to the right of the stage, and the capacity of the organ was nearly doubled. The tower story contains lower Cosmian Hall, and connecting recitation rooms for use of Sunday-school and other purposes, also double parlors, with adjoining kitchen accommodations for use of the Industrial Union.

The position of the society cannot be better stated than from an extract from its executive committees' reports. "This society believes that in this free interchange of thought and ideas, and in the hospitality that is willing to listen to diverse religious theories, is the surest promise of the truth that maketh free, which Lord Bacon pronounces 'the sovereign good of human nature.'"

The minister is not, like the minister or pastor of most religious societies, pledged to advocate and defend a formal statement of faith. He is under no intellectual bonds. He is at liberty to express freely his latest thought, and it is understood he speaks only for himself.

ONE of the institutions which has given to Florence a more than local fame is the kindergarten. Established in 1876, it was one of the pioneer institutions of the kind in the country. At a time when in our large cities such an institution existed only for the favored few, the children of wealth, and occasionally in connection with mission work for the very poor, the little village of Florence enjoyed the distinction of having a well equipped kindergarten which was thoroughly democratic, knowing no high and no low, no rich and no poor.

In 1884–86 Mrs. Leland Stanford opened, in San Francisco, six kindergartens as memorials of her beloved son, Leland Stanford, Jr., but it was not until 1891 that they were endowed, so that up to that time the Florence institution was probably the only endowed kindergarten in the country. It is still one of the few kindergartens with a building of its own, planned with special reference to its needs, and having spacious lawn and playgrounds.

To speak of the Florence kindergarten is to be reminded of Samuel L. Hill, whose generous benefaction to the village it is, and whose memorial it will long remain.

From the early days of Florence, Mr. Hill was deeply interested in all efforts for the mental and moral advancement of its people, supplying from his own means needed appliances for the schools, special teachers, and even a school building. After his retirement from active business, he gave much thought to educational problems, and pondered deeply the question how best to help the youth of Florence to true and noble manhood and womanhood. The more he pondered the subject, the stronger grew his conviction that "the seed sown in life's early springtime takes deepest root" In those days, Elizabeth P. Peabody was one of the few enthusiastic preachers of the kindergarten idea, and to her Mr. Hill went for counsel. At his solicitation she came to Florence, and in a lecture at Cosmian Hall set forth the Froebelian philosophy. Whatever may have been the effect upon the minds of the majority of her hearers, Mr. Hill, whose mind, by long consideration of the subject, was prepared to apprehend the truth that was in her discourse, decided to make trial of this new educational idea, and, with his usual promptness, he set about perfecting the necessary arrangements. A few weeks later, in January, 1876, he opened in the parlors of his own house a kindergarten. A brief trial was sufficient to convince him that he had made no mistake and plans were made for a permanent home for the institution.

Meantime the numbers, fifteen at first, increased beyond the limits of his parlors, and for a short time, pending the completion of the new building, the sessions were held in lower Cosmian Hall. In December, 1876, the building was ready for occupancy, and there the children gathered about their first kindergarten Christmas tree, laden with the simple gifts which they had prepared for their friends.

The growth of the kindergarten has been slow but steady. There was at first a strong prejudice against it, in the minds of many, because it was supposed to be a place where the children were allowed "to do as they pleased," but this prejudice gradually vanished as it came to be recognized that they did as they pleased because they pleased to do right.

N

from FLORENCE THE MECCA OF THE COLORED RACE

By Arthur Hill

Many other members of the colored race came here, lived for a short time, and then departed after being frightened by Judge Taney's celebrated decision which sent back to slavery the fugitive Dred Scott. Justice Taney said that "the black man has no rights that the white man was bound to respect".

This decision in the United States Supreme Court and the remanding of Dred Scott back to slavery, frightened the fugitives who had been drawn here by the anti-slavery sentiment of the place, so that they soon after migrated to Canada in which country the Dred Scott decision had no power.

This place then became a station on the so called underground railroad for transporting the fugitives toward Canada. Southampton held the station south of us while Cummingtön and Whately were the stations between Florence and Canada.

The fugitive slave brought here from Southampton in the nighttime, put to bed and to sleep for the next day and transported north the night of the next day.

Before the decision of Justice Taney and its results, Wilson, a fugitive arrived here. He decided to remain here, became a laborer, lived on Nonotuck Street, got together a little money and tramped back to Virginia to try to rescue his son. Leaving him he went back to get his daughter. He was captured and kept in slavery again for several months. He again escaped and arrived here with his daughter when the three started for Canada to happily breathe the air of freedom.

FLORENCE, MASS., January 31, 1893.

① Dear Mr. Marsh,—

Although I saw a good many passengers who were on the underground railway, bound north, I remember few of the incidents that occurred. A good many passengers stopped “five minutes for refreshments at my father’s, and conductors were often changed here. On a few trips I was either conductor or assistant conductor. Quite a number of the through passengers temporarily took up their abode in Florence, the balmy anti-slavery climate here proving very attractive to them. After the forced return of Anthony Burns from Boston to the Southern tyrants, the sojourners here became alarmed and pushed on to their original destination, Canada. Father Henson, one of the originals that furnished particulars for Harriet Beecher Stowe’s “Uncle Tom,” came by this line on one of his trips to Canada. I think that it was not his first trip, but that he had been south again after some of his friends.

William Wilson was landed here, remained a few months, worked and earned some money, returned south secretly, was gone quite a while, but finally reached here again with a grown-up son, that he had been able to guide from slavery to freedom. The two men hired a small tenement, were industrious, and worked for an object. After they had saved money enough they went south to rescue their daughter and sister. After a long absence the younger man returned, the older one having been captured and returned to slavery. The younger was confident that his father would again escape and decided to wait for him here. Sure enough, in a little while the old gentleman and daughter came, and after a short stay to rest and get a little money the whole party moved north to the queen’s dominions.

Many of the refugees, who were intelligent enough, became the talking centers for our neighbors and sympathizers to gather around. I heard many a thrilling story of brutality, suffering, and exciting adventures in the “leap for freedom.” Father’s most frequent trip as conductor ran to the Kingman’s in Cummington, but occasionally our living freight was delivered at a Mr. Crafts’ house in Whately.

Sincerely yours,
Arthur Hill

Florence was one of the Stations on the so-called underground railroad, where fugitive slaves were secretly housed and assisted on their way to Canada, from which place they could not be sent back to slavery. The Dred Scott decision of the Supreme Court of the United States declared that runaway slaves found anywhere in the country must be returned to their masters. On account of this decision, many of the abolitionists refused to vote or to recognize the government of the country in any way. Until the Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln, Samuel Hill, altho participating in all town matters, especially those relating to schools, did not vote at any Unites States election.

The fugitives were brought from Southampton, the nearest station south of us, during the night or early in the morning, were fed and put to bed. The next evening they were sent to the next station north, sometimes to Cummington, sometimes to Whately.