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Draft
Proclamation
Celebrating the Bicentennial of Francis Cabot Lowell and
The Founding of the Boston Manufacturing Company in
Waltham, Massachusetts
1813-2013

After the Revolutionary War, although the United States had gained political independence, the nation still depended on other countries for manufactured goods. Francis Cabot Lowell, son of an important Boston family, in 1810 went with his family on a two-year trip to Great Britain. While he was there, he visited the mills of Manchester, England. There he saw both power spinning mills and power weaving mills. Americans had developed the technology necessary for power spinning, and the Slater Mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island had been a successful spinning mill since the 1790s, employing children as spinners.

But Americans had not yet invented successful power weaving machinery because of the technological difficulties. In the 18th century, experimental American power looms simply broke themselves apart with the complex motions of shuttle and frame. The English had invented power looms, but forbade the export of either the machinery or their design. When Francis Cabot Lowell saw the English power weaving machinery, he became convinced that he could reinvent it. Working with a genius mechanic, Paul Moody, Lowell was successful in this project. In England, because spinning and weaving evolved separately from the old crafts and guilds, power weaving mills evolved separately from power spinning mills.

When he returned to the United States, Lowell concentrated on building an American textile industry and he chose Waltham, Massachusetts as the place to build the first integrated textile mill in the world. Lowell's great idea was to put power spinning and power weaving together all under one roof – to make it possible for cotton to go from bale to bolt in one building. With investment from Boston friends and relatives, Lowell created the first integrated textile mill in the world. They chose the site in Waltham beside the Charles River because it is the only place within twenty miles of Boston where there is a river with a significant fall of water. Here the drop from highest point to lowest is thirteen feet. It was this water fall – or drop – that Lowell and his colleagues used to power the mill. The Boston Manufacturing Company was founded in 1813. We are celebrating the bicentennial of the great achievements of Francis Cabot Lowell at the Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation in Waltham. The mill on the Charles is historically important because it was first in so many ways:

- This was the first integrated textile mill in the world, built from 1813 through 1818. (Integrated means that spinning and weaving were both done in the same building.)

- This was the first large industrial enterprise in the new nation to be financed by a “corporation” – a group of people acting as one – the “Boston Associates.”
- This was the first brick textile mill in the new world; the Slater Mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, is a granite mill.
- This was the first place in the world to employ women as operatives. Children were too small and too vulnerable to tend the heavy and complex power looms, and men were too expensive.
- This was the first place to employ women, mostly young farm daughters, and the first to build boarding houses where they could live.
- This was the first place in the new world to pay operatives a cash wage; in Pawtucket, families were paid in kind.
- This is the site of the first industrial strike in the new world; women stopped the mill for two days in 1821 in consequence of a pay cut.
- This mill quickly demonstrated the immense hunger for water power created by industry, and by 1820, the Boston Associates were looking for a bigger water fall and a larger site. They found it near Chelmsford on the Merrimack River, where they created the first industrial city in the world: Lowell, Massachusetts, named after the founder of the Waltham mill. [Link: Lowell, the first industrial city] There the Boston Associates build ten textile mills exactly on the “Waltham model” – identical to the 1816 mill on the Charles River, down to the number of looms, shuttles, and spindles.

For all these reasons, this site in Waltham is important in the history of the United States. The editors of the 1976 Bicentennial issue of *Life Magazine*, illustrating and commemorating all the major events in two hundred years of American history, called the textile mill located here on the Charles River the fourth most important site in American history. The reason for this is that here is one of the birthplaces of the Industrial Revolution.

For all these reasons, the Trustees of the Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation and members of the Lowell and Cabot Families proclaim that the year 2013 is the year of celebrating the Bicentennial of Francis Cabot Lowell, industrial pioneer and economic revolutionary.