

Troy Textile and Collar Industries

1820s-1920s

Many industries flourished along the Hudson River during the nineteenth century; however, the Troy textile and collar industries were significant for a host of reasons. Though the textile industry on its own was very significant, the detachable collar, invented in 1827 by Hannah Lord Montague, led to a booming economy in Troy and the city gained the nickname “Collar City”.¹ Troy’s prime location at the North end of the Hudson River Valley, made it a strategic transportation and trade center.² The “Collar City” soon soared to be one of the top American industrial cities; by 1840, Troy had the fourth highest per capita income in the United States.³

In the later 1800s, the textile industry continued to be important to American commerce. Through the 1880s, Troy was home to one of the largest producers of cotton fabric in the US, the Harmony Mills Company.⁴ Though Harmony Mills was famous for producing printed calico and fine cotton muslins, it was also significant to history for other reasons.⁵ During the Civil War, Harmony Mills contributed to the production of clothing for the Union troops.⁶

Women played a very important role in the textile and collar industries. Women made up most of the full-time permanent employees.⁷ In fact, at the collar industry’s peak, over 85 percent of the 15000 launderers employed were women.⁸ Many of the original workers were Irish immigrants, but French-Canadian women came to be most prevalent in the industry in the 1880s.⁹ The high volume of

¹ “Chronology,” *Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway*, accessed March 29, 2010, http://hudsonmohawkgateway.org/4_heritage_chron.html.

² *RiverSpark Hudson-Mohawk Heritage Area*, accessed March 29, 2010, <http://riverspark.org/indepth.asp>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ “Harmony Mills,” *National Historic Landmarks Program*, accessed March 30, 2010, <http://tps.cr.nps.gov/nhl/detail.cfm?ResourceId=-1568528353&ResourceType=District>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ James S. Corsaro and Kathleen D. Roe, “Labor and Industry in Troy and Cohoes: A Brief History,” accessed March 30, 2010, <http://www.albany.edu/history/Troy-Cohoes/>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

women workers led to the creation of a strong women's labor movement, one of the first in the United States.¹⁰ Started in 1864 by activist Kate Mullany, the Troy Collar Laundry Union had over 600 members at its peak.¹¹

The textile and collar industries in Troy were some of the few large-scale industries that continued to thrive into the 20th century.¹² The peak of industry for the collar industry was reached in the 1920s.¹³ However, like many of the other industries in the region, these sources of manufacturing suffered a slow decline as the 1900s wore on.¹⁴

-Jane Sheehan '10

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

"Chronology."

¹² Corsaro.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Bibliography

"Chronology." *Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway*. Accessed March 29, 2010.

http://hudsonmohawkgateway.org/4_heritage_chron.html.

Corsaro, James S. and Kathleen D. Roe. "Labor and Industry in Troy and Cohoes: A Brief History."

Accessed March 30, 2010. <http://www.albany.edu/history/Troy-Cohoes/>.

"Harmony Mills." *National Historic Landmarks Program*. Accessed March 30, 2010.

<http://tps.cr.nps.gov/nhl/detail.cfm?ResourceId=-1568528353&ResourceType=District>.

RiverSpark Hudson-Mohawk Heritage Area. Accessed March 29, 2010. <http://riverspark.org/indepth.asp>.