

The lace makers and stocking weavers who came to Ipswich in 1818 and 1822 were men who were employed in the two factories of Mr. Heathcoat in Nottingham in 1816, in making lace upon the new lace machines, and were subject to the enmity, annoyance and crime of this Secret Society.

THE LUDDITES

It has been truly said that history repeats itself. I will quote an account of the Luddite labor troubles in Nottingham, which influenced the lace weavers to emigrate to this country in 1818-22.⁴

"The Luddite riots in Nottinghamshire, England, commenced March 11, 1811 and continued through a period of five years. The first was at Arnold, near Nottingham, where the unemployed stocking knitters were, for a paltry sum, employed to sweep the streets, and do menial work. By the 11th of March, their patience being exhausted, they assembled at midnight and smashed 60 frames, and 200 other frames were destroyed in a similar manner during the succeeding three weeks.

"These riotous stockingers assumed the name of Luddites, a name said to be derived from a boy named Ludlam, who, when his father, a framework weaver, in Leicestershire, ordered him to square his needles, ' took his hammer and beat them into a heap."

The usual plan of operation was to assemble at night armed with swords and pistols, hammers and axes, under the leadership of one man who was styled "Ned Ludd." Each man was distinguished by a number, instead of name, and all were disguised. They proceeded to the place of destruction and those armed with weapons surrounded and guarded the place, while those with hammers entered and smashed the needles and sinkers of the frames with unsparing hands. When this destruction was completed, they would reassemble at a short distance and call a roll of the numbers, each answering to his number. If all were there a pistol was fired and, removing the black handkerchiefs from their faces, they departed to their homes, keeping the most profound secrecy.

To detect the ringleaders of these rioters, the Government organized a secret committee, which was supplied with a large sum of money, for the purpose of obtaining information, but in spite of these efforts the devastations continued from time to time.

On Sunday night Nov. 10, a party of Luddites proceeded to the village of Bulwell, to destroy the frames of Mr. Hollingsworth, who, in anticipation of their visit, assembled some of his friends with fire arms to defend the property. Many shots were fired, and one John Westly was mortally wounded, which so enraged the mob that they forced an entrance, and soon destroyed not only the frames, but every article of furniture about the place. Soon after that at Sutton, 37 frames were destroyed. The military took several prisoners here, four of whom were committed for trial. On Sunday Nov. 24, at Baskford, 34 frames were destroyed, and 11 more the following day. On Dec. 6, a proclamation ordered all persons to remain in their homes after 10 o'clock, and all public houses closed, and the streets were patrolled by police and military. Notwithstanding these precautions, there were 36 frames destroyed in the villages around Nottingham, during the next six days.

A reward of £50 for the apprehension of any of the offenders was offered by the Government, but this only excited these men to further deeds of daring. They began to rob and plunder, declaring they could not starve in a land of plenty. On the 30th of July, 1812, these labor troubles had compelled no less than 4,348 families, 15,350 persons, nearly one-half of the inhabitants of Nottingham, to be applicants for relief Out of the poor rates. A large subscription was raised to offer more liberal rewards for the suppression of these daring outrages, and seven of the rioters were apprehended and sent to Botany Bay, or transported.

In March, 1812, an Act of Parliament was passed, making it an offence punishable, with death to break a stocking or lace machine. In April, a Mr. Trentham, a manufacturer, was shot while standing at his own door; but the wound did not prove fatal. The offender was never brought to justice, although £600 were offered for his apprehension. These riotous proceedings continued until October 1816, when they finally ceased.

Upwards of 1000 stocking frames and a number of lace machines were destroyed by these organized stocking knitters and pillow-lace makers in Nottinghamshire alone; and in Derby, Leicestershire and York counties, also there were many destroyed. One of Mr. Heathcote's factories was entered by the Luddites. The machines were all destroyed, and the watchman shot and killed.

Many of the skilled workmen, who had formerly been employed by him in making machine lace, being thrown out of employment, resolved to emigrate to this country, and to start for themselves this new industry in this free country, leaving behind them, forever, these trouble-some conditions of the trade, in which they had passed the early part of their lives, to take with them the tools of their trade, and to become naturalized citizens of the country of their adoption. This resolution was carried out to the letter. They could not do otherwise. They arrived in 1818-20 and 1822.

Many of the hosiery weavers as well, thrown out of employment by this wholesale slaughter of their stocking frames, not finding sufficient protection from riotous mobs of unemployed stocking knitters and pillow-lace weavers, resolved to emigrate to America. Had the wealthy gentlemen and nobility of England devoted the funds collected to punish these poor knitters to charitable efforts to furnish employment for them, at more than starvation prices, these labor outrages could not have happened.

Prior to 1818 there were no stocking machines in this country, although strenuous efforts were made to get them. In 1776 the Committee of Safety had appropriated £300 to Mr. Coxendfer of Maryland, Frederic County, to establish a stocking factory, and the Society of Arts in New York had offered a prize of £10 for the first three stocking frames of iron set up in that year. The prizes were not claimed.

The British government, ever extremely careful of its textile industries was especially so of its hosiery, and of its newly introduced lace manufacture at Nottingham. In order to keep these in England, excessive duties had been put upon the exportation of the machinery required in these industries. These had been from time to time increased, until they amounted to actual prohibition.

Every obstacle was placed in the way of skilled workers in these branches of industry, to prevent them from leaving the country, and especially their emigration to the United States of America. A penalty of £40 for the exportation of a stocking machine existed till 1788. It was then increased from time to time till it amounted to a prohibitory duty and the penalty for exporting lace machinery in 1818 amounted to an excessive fine of £500, much beyond the means of the ordinary workman to pay, and transportation for a term of years if payment, was not made. The agitation of the labor question, at about this time, and the recent Luddite troubles furnished a pretext for extremely stringent laws in this respect.

In the face of all this, as we have said, some of the better class of the lace weavers and stocking weavers resolved to come and bring the tools of their trade with them, even if these excessive fines had to be paid. The first delegation of these men had enough of King George's pictures in yellow metal, in their pockets, to brave the consequences. It is an open secret, that some of these golden pictures were actually used to facilitate the transportation of the tools and effects of these skillful men to America. I have heard it boldly said that the bobbins, points, guides and needles of lace stocking machines came into Boston in 1818 and 1822, secreted in pots of good Yorkshire butter. Whether these pots of butter paid an export duty to the British Government I am unable to tell.

The first stocking machine, which reached this part of the country, came out of England from Liverpool, in 1818. Some incidents in the history of this machine are interesting. It was first bought in Nottingham, then packed in two boxes and sent to a framesmith to be repaired and repacked for its trip to America. It was then sent to Liverpool and left upon the wharf where an old brig was lying, being laden with salt stowed loosely in bulk. It was taken by a stevedore and placed upon the keelson away up in the bows of the ship, and packed deep in the salt. The brig dropped down to the mouth of the harbor, and was overhauled and inspected thoroughly (as they thought) by the Custom House men. Trunks and boxes were inspected and long sticks run into the salt but these two boxes with the adventurous machine escaped detection.

Its passage in the brig, which was destined to a southern port, was a stormy one. She was driven out of her course several times, by adverse winds, for over sixty days. Then, when some miles outside of Massachusetts Bay, she was spoken by a schooner bound for Boston, to which the machine and its adventurous owners were transferred and the brig, with her lost reckoning rectified, and her mechanical "Jonah" not overboard, but reshipped on an American schooner, went on her southbound way rejoicing, no doubt. The schooner arrived in Boston on Sept. 4, 1818. The boxes were put upon a produce wagon, carted to Watertown, and carefully unloaded at a little house by the river, near the present Etna Mills. When the boxes were opened it was found that one of the most important parts of the machine was missing. Its sinker bar and all its sinkers had been left behind in England.

By the ingenuity and skill of one of its owners, these were replaced during the first winter in its new home; then it was used under the management of its two owners, six hours on and six hours off, through the day; and night, for the greater part of its two first years in this country. It was then there came the lace makers, and the starting of the Lace Factory in Watertown, which gave it a long time of rest, but it finally reached Ipswich to do duty while the New England lace company was getting a foothold in this good old town.

This was done to ensure the proper temperature for them on the voyage, as the temperature during some of the colder days was too low to ensure their safe transportation without this precaution. These were put in charge of Mr. Clark the superintendent of the lace factory, and a room was set apart for them in the factory and kept at the proper temperature to hatch the eggs. Prior to this time, a nurseryman in Newton, Mr. William Kendrick, had planted a large stock of white mulberry trees (*Morus alba*), a native tree of China, and had advertised the same largely in all the papers of the day. In fact a furor for silk raising had been created, not unlike the celebrated Tulip mania in Holland several years previous. Great quantities of these trees were sold and, among others, Dr. Manning became interested. He had the side hill in the rear of the Old Manning homestead graded and terraced, and planted with these trees of the white mulberry. When the eggs of the mulberry moth came into town these trees had attained two or three years of growth.

When the writer was a small boy, I think it was in the spring of 1832, his father took him with others to the lace factory, now the estate of the late Joseph Ross, to see the machines weaving lace. Mr. Clark escorted the party through the works, showing and describing the different machines and processes by which the lace was woven, cleansed, mended and wrought, to get it into a marketable condition. He then took them into a room set apart from the others, in which were a number of cases containing trays, the bottoms of which were made of lace. These were covered with young and tender green leaves, upon which were innumerable worms like caterpillars, all voraciously eating the leaves. In some of the trays the worms were as large as an ordinary appletree caterpillar, nearly one and a half inches long. From this size they varied, in other trays, to about one quarter of an inch in length. Each tray seemed to be occupied with similar worms representing different ages of the hatch. Mr. Clark said the larger worms were fed with the older leaves, while the younger required the more delicate, younger foliage. As I remember their appearance, the more mature and larger worms, scattered over the green leaves, were of a golden yellow color. In some of the trays the worms had nearly finished eating and would soon begin to spin their cocoons. He also showed the party cocoons all formed and showed how readily the silk could be unwound from the cocoon in one continuous thread. The temperature of the room in which these silkworms were kept was much higher than that of other rooms. He then escorted the party out through the garden in the rear of the factory to a terrace at the foot of the hill where the young mulberry trees were growing and showed them where the tender leaves had been gathered. I cannot tell how many seasons this experiment was continued; probably it was abandoned at the time the lace works closed, I think in the winter of 1832-3.

This Company continued its factory in operation till 1832, when it failed to procure the usual supply of thread, which had been imported from England. Linen thread of sufficient fineness for the work could not at that time be spun in this country, owing chiefly to the dry atmosphere. It was always spun by secret methods in damp cellars in England and France. The British government, finding that the lace machines and workmen had really escaped to this country, and that lace was being woven from imported thread, put an excessive export duty upon thread, and allowed manufactured lace to go out free. This ruined the industry of lace weaving in Ipswich, and its promoters lost their investment.

Finding themselves out of employment, the lace-makers returned to their old business of weaving hosiery. Many of them went to Germantown, Pa., where some

imported frames were in use, and others to Portsmouth, N. H., where some frames had been introduced, during the term of the lace industry in Ipswich. Some of the most skillful remained in Ipswich, and in 1832, the Peatfield brothers made for Mr. Benjamin Fewkes two new stocking frames, which were the first made in New England, and I think the first made in this country. He began the manufacture of hosiery in a small shop on High St. near his dwelling. Mr. George Warner established a similar shop on the site of the Damon Block, directly opposite the B. & M. R. R. station. He bought the interest of Mr. Fewkes in the original machine, but sold it to Mr. John Bilson, with whom it went back to Newton in 1840. Mr. Samuel Hunt, Sen., began work in a shop on East St. in the rear of his dwelling, and Mr. Charles Bamford, Sen., in the shop still standing in the rear of his dwelling, the old Frisbie house on County St. Each of these stocking makers had only two machines.

It is said that Timothy Bayley, of Albany was the first to put power to the Lee frame, in 1831. I know that in 1834 James and Sanford Peatfield of Ipswich had a rotary warp frame in successful operation in the Old Saw Mill building by the Cove in Ipswich. Jesse Fewkes at that time was their "Wjnder Lad" and can vouch for the age of this great improvement in warp machines. They also invented a round knitting machine in 1841 or about that time.

The Census Report of 1900 says, "The only stocking factory in the United States in 1831 was the Newburyport Hose Manufacturing Company." Ipswich I think is entitled to the credit of manufacturing stockings by machine nine years prior to this first recorded date, and in 1833 there were four well-started hosiery manufactories in this town. It is true that these were small but they were the seed from which has grown a mighty creation, a textile giant. The total amount invested in this industry in the United States in 1900 was \$95,482,556. There were employed in that year 69,829 machines, operated by 83,387 persons and the value of its production for that year was \$95,482,566. In Massachusetts alone the capital employed was \$6,288,675. There were 6,667 workmen employed and 5,003 machines, and they produced \$6,620,257 worth of hosiery goods, in 54 establishments or factories.

The American inventor has made great improvements on the old English method of hosiery making. The American "Latch Needle" which came out somewhere in the forties of the last century, was a most simple and effective device, which completely revolutionized the machines for the manufacture of hosiery. The Lee stocking frame had remained for nearly 250 years in practically the same stage of development; all improvements on the original device during this time had been merely accessories to the old machine, but the introduction of the latch needle made possible the rotary knitting machine and, consequently, automatic action in all its parts, and steam power for its motive.

The census of 1900 gives the entire number of Latch needle machines in this country at that time as 55,816, while the entire number of machines weaving hosiery with the old-fashioned Beard needle was 14,013, which fact speaks well for the American inventor's work.

The more beautiful and artistic industry, the weaving of fine laces by machines, has never recovered in Ipswich from the disastrous failure it experienced and it remains an unexplored, but inviting field of industry on this side the Atlantic.

This machine was brought to Ipswich in 1822 by Benjamin Fewkes and George Warner, its joint owners. I have been told that the first pair of stockings, woven upon this machine in Ipswich, were made by Mr. Benjamin Fewkes, Sr., in the kitchen of a house, which then stood upon the site of the present South Congregational meeting house.

The successful transfer of this first stocking machine, furnished a clew to others, who were anxious to get the lace machines introduced into this country. The essential and more delicate parts of the lace machines were brought over concealed in the effects of the lace weavers from Heathcoat's factories, who came in numbers soon after this time. In this instance the more bulky heavy bars and frame work of the lace machines were constructed here, from drawings and ideas of skilled machinists who came over about the same time. A factory was brought into successful operation in Watertown near the Newton boundary line, by the capital engaged in the enterprise, and the lace machines were in working order in the spring of 1820, where they continued till 1822.

A gentleman of Ipswich, Mr. Augustine Heard, and others, becoming interested in the enterprise, the machines were removed to Ipswich, and located in the building nearest the mill dam and foot bridge, on the south side of the river in 1824. This company was called the Boston and Ipswich Lace Company. Another rival company, of which Dr. Thomas Manning and others were promoters and stockholders, was started in 1828. This was called the New England Lace Company. This new company located itself upon the old Dr. Manning homestead on High street, the site of the residence of the late Joseph Ross, Esq. This building has been remodelled and beautified with architectural elegance by its recent proprietor. The west front room was used for the weaving room; the front chamber over this was used for warping, winding and mending the lace; the rear lower rooms, west, were used for washing and for a machine shop. The east rooms were the residence of Mr. Clark the superintendent. Mr. Fewkes was a stockholder and worked in each of these three factories.

The names of the persons employed by this lace enterprise in Ipswich were as follows :-

Sup't, John Clark; machinists, James Peatfield, Joseph Peatfield, Sanford Peatfield; lace weavers, Benjamin Fewkes, Samuel Gadd, George Gadd, James Clark, John Trueman, Mr. Watts, George Warner, Samuel Hunt, Sr., John Morley, James Cartwright, Sr., Charles Bamford, Sr., and Mr. Harrison. The warpers and winders were young men and boys as follows: Thomas and William Gadd, William and Henry Fewkes, Samuel Hunt, Jr., Charles Bamford, Jr., and others. There were also employed many women and girls, mending, embroidering and washing lace, who were mostly the wives and daughters of the workmen and some others of Ipswich birth whose names I am unable to give.

The managers of the lace enterprise also made an effort looking to the introduction of a silk industry in Ipswich.

Mr. Augustine Heard (I have been told), who was one of the first movers of the Lace Company, imported from China in one of his vessels some eggs of the mulberry Moth (*Bombyx mori*). The transportation of the eggs was accomplished by packing them in small silk bags which were worn about the person of the Chinaman who brought them.

¹ Exodus xxxv: 25, " And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue and of purple, and of scarlet and of fine linen."

² Burns mentions the spinning rock in another of his Verses "The Weary Pund o'Tow:"

"Quoth I For shame ye dirty dame,
Gae spin your tap o' tow!
She took the rock and wi' a knock
She brak it o'er my pow."

³ The spinning wheel of the fourteen century called a " Tarn," was a simple wheel with a crank upon one side of the axle upon which it turned, and a spindle similar to the spindle used with the spindle whorl of the earlier times projecting from the opposite axle, upon which the fiber was twisted by the turning of the tarn. The spinning wheel with its independent spindle driven by a band from the larger wheel did not develop until nearly a century after the "Tarn" came into use. Thus we have the progressive stages in the spinner's art: 1st, the rock; 2d the plummet-formed rock; 3d, the spindle whorl of ancient Troy and Egypt; 4th, the tarn; 5th, the colonial spinning wheel; 6th, the modern spinning-jenny, and ring spinning machine turned by power.

⁴ "Book of Days, March 11, page 357."