

## Coventry in 1880- Demographics- by Bill Jobbagy

The 1880 Federal Census reveals some interesting statistics about Coventry and gives a glimpse of the life of the times. The population of the town was 2,034 with 490 households. (Compare that to today where the population is 12,519 with 4,468 households) Residents were split almost exactly 50% male and 50% female. Virtually every household had a woman whose duties were "keeping house" a vital, difficult and necessary task for raising a family. Her average age was 46. The average age of the head-of-household was 53. There were 558 children living at home either in school or pre-school, slightly more girls than boys, and their average age was nine. Most children over the age of 12 were working, save a few who were sent away to school. Eighty-two older relatives lived with their children, average age of 70, 86% widowed, the remaining were widowers. The most prevalent occupation was a farmer, and there were 226 of them with an average age of 53, supplemented by 121 farm laborers at an average age of 29.

The mills in the Village employed 330 Coventry residents, mostly young folks (in their teens and early twenties, though children as young as eleven were employed). Two young men named Lathrop and Preston were operating a bed-quilt manufactory at the site now occupied by Teleflex. They were boarding with Mr. Clark whose house stood where the library is today. They employed ten young people, mostly men.

Thomas Wood and young Eugene Tracy had a new wool shoddy mill at the site of Ackert's Electric. Mr. Tracy was boarding at the Bidwell Hotel. They employed five men. (Though in twenty years, this would be the biggest employer in town.) There were three silk mills on the mill brook. Mr. Washburn's was located behind the Visitors Center. He lived on Main Street next to the Methodist church. Messrs. James Morgan and Albert Bottum operated their mill on Mason Street. Mr. Morgan lived on Main Street and Mr. Bottum on Wall Street. Mr. Dwight Allen's silk mill was located on Armstrong Road near Snake Hill Road. In total they employed 44 people, two-thirds of them women.

Henry Mason ran his well-known cartridge factory on the east side of Mason Street and lived just south of the mill. He employed 19 young folks, half male and half female. Addison Kingsbury had a very successful paper box and printing factory across the street in the red building that exists today with 26 employees mostly young women.

The Washington Woolen mill owned by H. Kimball of Rhode Island was located where the town public works garage is today. It was managed by Mr. George Nason who lived nearby. The mill, which was the largest building in town, employed 78 men and boys and 18 women and girls. Their average age was 25. The woolen fabric made was cassimere- a closely woven smooth twilled wool fabric (as for suits)

There were two jean factories, one owned by John Wood and located on Woods Lane and the other owned by Charles Kenyon, who lived in Norwich, and was operated by Rensselaer Barber who lived on Main Street next to Song-A-Day Music. This large mill was located on Armstrong Road in the building that exists today. These mills made "doeskin" jeans which were a fine satin-weave wool that resembled doeskin leather.

There were two lumber (saw) mills, one operated by Charles and Andrew Kingsbury located on Armstrong Road. Charles lived in a fine home on Depot Road. The other was owned by Marvin Coleman. They employed six men.

There were a myriad of other occupations which are listed here. The number in parentheses is the number of residents engaged in that occupation. Laborer (53), Servant (22), Carpenter (20), School Teacher (14), Machinist (12), Blacksmith (11), Dress Maker (11), Teamster (8), Railroad (7), Carriage Maker (6), Clerk (5), Painter (4), Shoe Maker (4), Cotton Mill worker (4), Butcher (3), Grocer/Merchant (3), Physician (3), Nurse (3), Brick Maker (2), Clergy (2), Harness Maker (2), Huckster (2), Miller (2). The remaining occupations had one practitioner: Boarding House Owner, Bookkeeper, Cooper, Deputy Sheriff, Fur Dealer, Fish Dealer, Hotel Keeper, Iron Mill Worker, Lamp Maker, Lawyer, Marble worker, Milliner, Music Teacher, Peddler, Pharmacist, Plasterer, Post Master, Lumber Agent, Steam Engine Operator, Tailor, Tanner, Tinsmith, Traveling Agent, Wagon Maker, Wool Buyer, Cloak Maker, Seamstress, Stocking Mill worker.