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Golden Opportunities in Our Hill Towns

By John W. Colton

Editorial Staff, Springfield Union

"Yes, sir, I am willing to pay one thousand dollars for my first trolley ride from here to Amherst," said Justin W. Keith, town clerk of Pelham, as he stood at the door of his home in that little Hampshire county hill town; "and there are others who would give as much. I made that remark to the street railway people some years ago, and they said that some day they would call to collect. I am still ready to pay."

Mr. Keith's statement takes us at once to the nub of the New England hill town problem—transportation facilities, or rather, lack of them. Do not believe that what we call our hill town problems have come because the people are unprogressive, their ambitions halted and their minds stagnant. Such is far from being the fact. In our Western New England towns you will find some inspiring struggles for self-improvement and great civic patriotism; and you will also find wonderful opportunities for wealth, health, peace of mind and spiritual exaltation. Pelham is a small place and does not possess many men who can make good an offer like that which Mr. Keith has made, but it is no different from all the hill towns in at least this respect—that it has citizens who are willing to make sacrifices in order to improve conditions and who are anxious for increased prosperity for their neighbors. Go among them where you will, you will find the people looking toward busier and better times and striving to bring them about.

To the business men of New England these towns offer interesting study. The census reports for the last fifty years tell a story of decreasing population in most of them. In one of them this loss was recently explained by a young

woman in this manner: "It isn't because we do not love the town, or that all who leave it wish to live in the city. With us it becomes simply a question of what can we do if we remain? In a town like this, where there are no factories, the only means of support a young woman has is by working in the stores or doing housework for the wealthier residents. When you have gone through school and find housework to be the only employment you can secure—for all of us cannot work in the two or three stores—the outlook is discouraging. A girl in a town like ours is even limited in her choice of a prospective husband. If she has average ambition, and is not compelled to remain at home because of sick or disabled relatives, she must choose to go to the city. There she finds work in

the big stores, in the offices, the telephone exchange and a hundred other places. There she finds opportunity for advancement, a chance to broaden and be more useful to the world and contented with her lot."

The young man will tell much the same story. He tires of steady application to the work of the farm. He wants to "see the world," and when the old folks are gone and he is left to his own resources, unless he is a more than ordinarily level-headed fellow he rents the farm to a neighbor and strikes out into the world to see

what he can make of himself. He is spurred by the successes of those who went before him, and in his heart he has the same ambition that they had—to come back some day, perhaps wealthy and honored; to stand in the little schoolhouse where he whittled his initials in his desk and tell the boys and girls of a future generation that once *he* was a little shaver just like them, and advise them to be good and

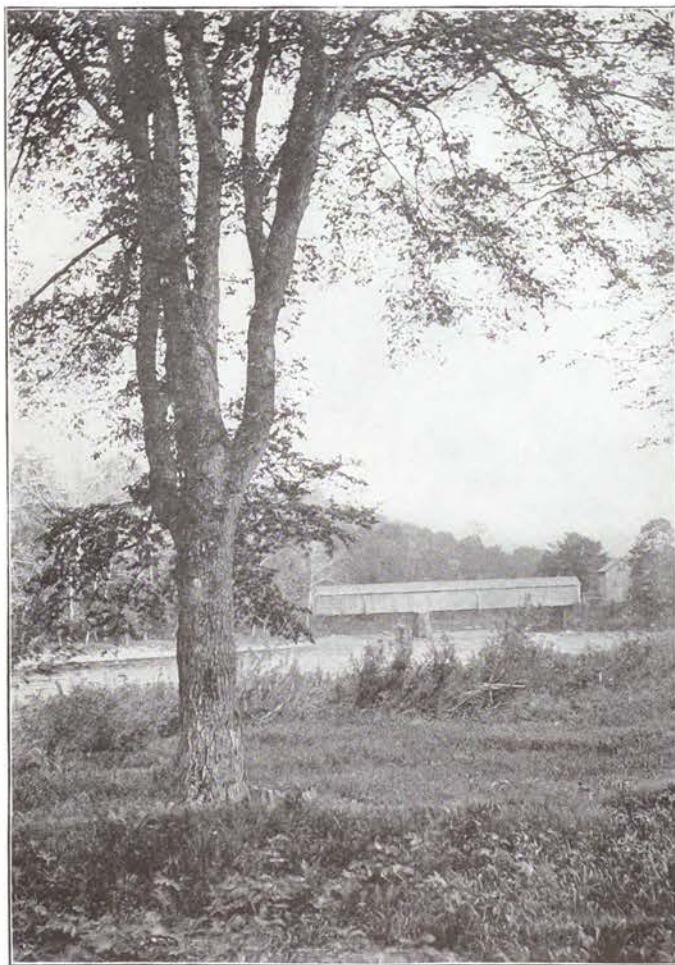


THE BETTER FARMING SPECIAL TRAIN

The Boston & Albany Railroad and the New England Investment and Security Company, owners of Western New England trolley lines, cooperated with the Massachusetts Agricultural College in spreading information about agriculture, horticulture, poultry raising, dairying, and so forth

stick to the farm and they will always be happy. Many country boys have attained that ambition, but how many more have gone to the city only to get a job driving a watering cart or cleaning a stable, whereas, with proper instruction and help they could have made more of themselves on the farms in the old hill town.

But the young people have been leaving the farms for many years, and thus we find the state boards of agriculture publishing long lists of farms for sale in the hill towns—good farms, the most of them—at rock-bottom prices. Here is an opportunity for sturdy young men today. These farms are just as good now as they ever were. In some cases they have improved through rest, and require



OLD NORWICH BRIDGE AT HUNTINGTON

Russell and Huntington are the first of the hill towns reached from Springfield, going west, and are beautifully situated in the Westfield river valley where the famous Berkshires begin to rise high

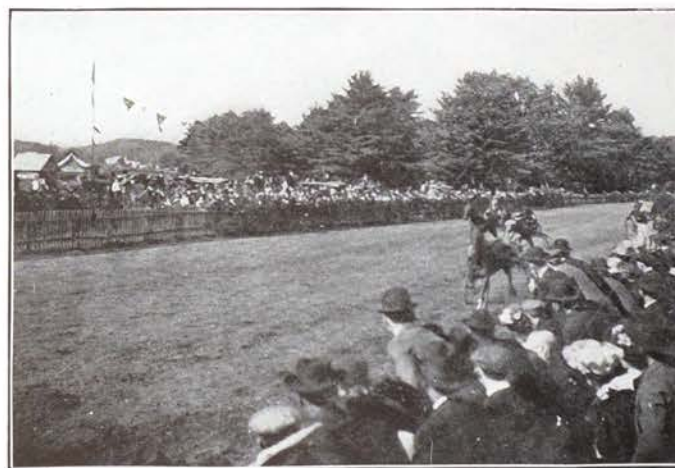
only scientific working to be transformed into wealth-producers. An investment in them must be profitable, because the cities are ever crawling nearer to the country towns and the demand for the products of the farm is ever increasing.

Conditions are Really Improving

In spite of population losses, conditions in our hill towns are steadily improving. The people are more anxious to know the best methods of working the farms than they used to be, and they will travel many miles to learn new points. Not only are the people anxious to learn, but the colleges, the business men in the cities and the transportation companies are desirous of helping them. No better evidence of this new coöperative spirit can be offered than

the "better farming specials" which the Boston & Maine railroad ran through New England five years ago and which the Boston & Albany railroad ran a year ago. The New England Investment & Security Company, which holds most of the trolley lines in Western Massachusetts, carried the gospel of scientific agriculture to towns that the railroads do not touch, by means of specially equipped trolley cars. At every place where the special trains and trollies stopped there were large, interested gatherings of farmers and their families, who listened with great attention to the short, sensible lectures given by experts from the state agricultural college, and who viewed the practical exhibits the trains and cars carried.

Still another factor which does much to improve conditions is the country fair. This is an old New England institution and, while it has degenerated in some places, in the main it exists for the education rather than the amusement of the people. The prizes which are offered for the best horses, the best cattle, the best poultry, the best fruits and vegetables, arouse the spirit of competition. The money value of these prizes is never great, but the honor of getting them is large. The grange meetings, farmers' institutes and the rural free delivery system are



FINISH OF A HORSE RACE AT THE BRATTLEBORO FAIR

The country fair draws thousands of people and is an excellent means of spreading the "Better New England" idea

all doing their share toward making the rural dweller more ambitious and to improve his fortunes and make him a better citizen.

Those of our business men who do not go after the trade of the hill town people would be surprised and chagrined if they knew what they are losing. It would do them good if they could sit in a country postoffice some morning and note the character of the mail that is received. There are more catalogs from great mail-order houses in the middle west and advertising circulars from distant concerns than there are letters and newspapers. If the postmaster would tell, it would be interesting for them to know how many letters and postal cards leave his town bearing orders to the firms that send out the advertising matter. Unless one goes into these towns, inquiring of the residents where they buy this staple article and where they get that one, he can have no true conception of the volume of trade that is continually going out of its legitimate bounds. Here is an opportunity for the business man of our own section, for will he admit that he cannot compete with houses a thousand miles away? Here, also, is added incentive for the city merchant to coöperate with his friends in the country in doing all that he can to secure more adequate transportation facilities in the hill towns.

The Hill Towns and Immigration

A comparatively new factor in the hill town problem, and one which must be seriously reckoned with, is immigration. The influx of Slavs to New England is now at its height, and the time is not far distant when Poles, Lithuanians and Russians will have become sufficiently Americanized to be a controlling element in many towns in the Connecticut valley. As a matter of fact, already a great number of the fine tobacco farms in Hadley, Hatfield, Whately and the Deerfields, and the productive onion farms of Sunderland, are now owned by Poles who, ten or a dozen years ago, carried all their earthly possessions in a bundle under their arms, and began life in America as laborers in the textile mills. They have developed into an industrious, frugal people, possessed of a natural love of the land, and they are not afraid to work hard. In the old country they were little better than serfs, and the thought of becoming landed proprietors did not enter their minds until letters from the first emigrants told them of this wonderful country where all men are equal before the law, and where the peasant had as much right to own the land as did the wealthy class. Since those early mes-

is so different from that of his native land. In all the hill towns the writer has visited there have been scarcely a dozen farms in the possession of Italians. On the other hand, if you ride over the old Blandford post road from Westfield, passing along the edge of the picturesque, beautiful Little River valley, you will find unpronounceable Slavic names on the rural free delivery mail boxes. Even the old Atwater tavern in Westfield, near the Russell town line, has been the home of an industrious Hungarian for some years. In this building George Washington is said to have paused to rest while making a journey from Albany to Boston, but that has no effect on the present occupant, if, indeed, he knows that the immortal Washington was ever a guest in the house.



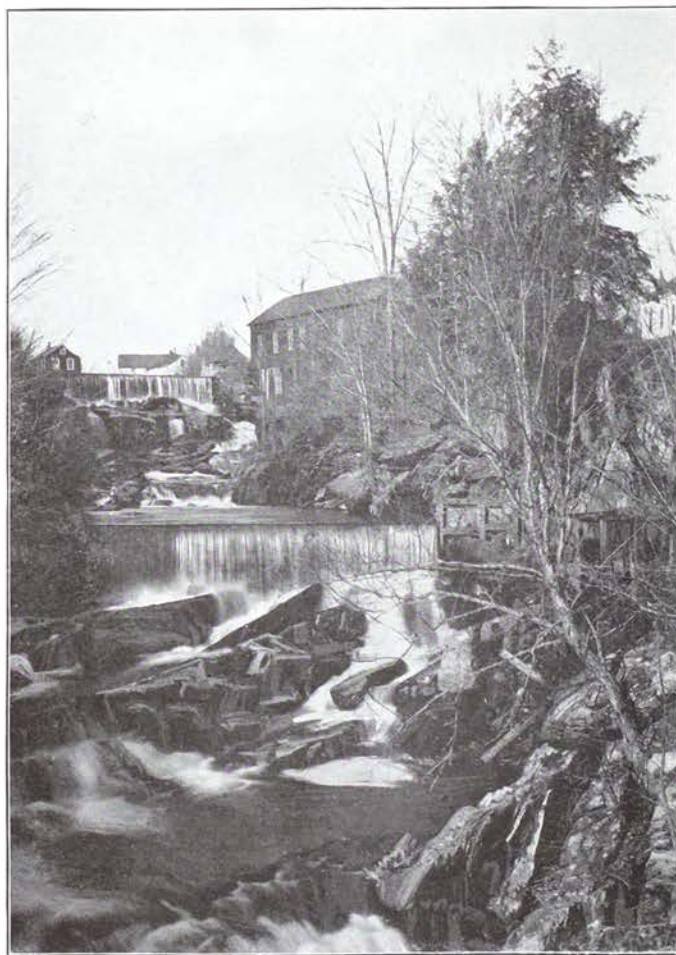
THE OLD ATWATER TAVERN, WESTFIELD

This house in which Washington is said to have stopped is now the home of a Hungarian farmer

sages were sent to Galicia, the Poles have been coming to America by thousands. They work in the mills until they have earned enough money to pay for a little farm; then, working day and night, they put it in good condition, gradually becoming more prosperous until at last they absorb their neighbors' lands and take the places of men and women whose ancestors for generations had occupied them and had been proud of being "one of the first families in the town."

The Swedes are also making progress as landholders. They are industrious and intelligent, and quickly grasp American ideas. There is quite a colony of them in Southwick, where they have been successful at raising tobacco; but as a rule they have a greater liking for industrial activity than they have for the farm. The reverse is true of the Pole. His employment in the mills is temporary—in a few years some other race will take his place as a cheap laborer, just as he took the place of the French Canadian, and as the French Canadian took the place left vacant by the advancement of the early Irish immigrant.

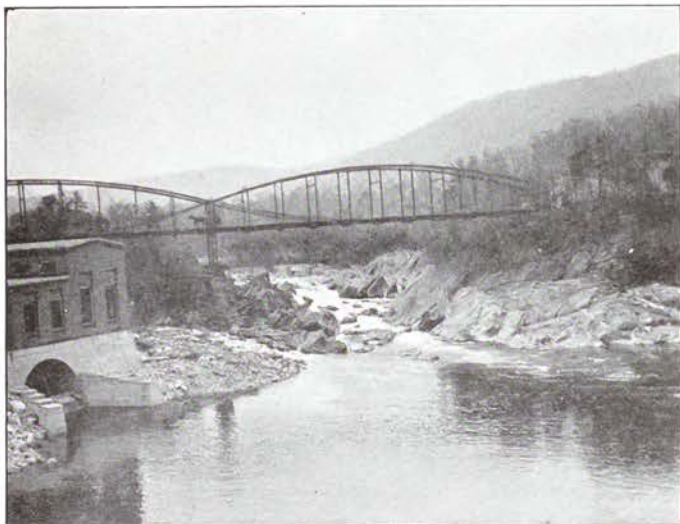
The Italian immigrant in New England will always be a laborer, a merchant or an artist. He does not seem to be adapted to farming here, probably because the climate



FALLS IN SOUTH WORTHINGTON

In the town of Sandisfield, tucked away in Southern Berkshire county, we have a most remarkable example of the change that immigration is working in some New England hill towns. Conditions here a dozen years ago were much the same as those that exist in many other towns today. The descendants of the men who cleared the hills and worked the farms had left the old places, and they became sadly run down. Then came the Jews, a race which most city people would not consider adapted to farming, but who in fact are as able in the pursuit of agriculture as in trading. When they began to come the hill town farms could be bought for very small sums. The Baron Hirsch fund made it possible for them to acquire hundreds of acres in Sandisfield. Immigrants whose health was being ruined in the festering tenements of New York's east side were sent to the farms. For a time they boarded with others of their race who had pre-

ceded them, but gradually they acquired farms of their own, until today there is a considerable colony of Jewish farmers in Southern Berkshire. They have reclaimed land that was practically abandoned by native-born Americans. If they could do this in Sandisfield, many miles from the nearest railroad, why cannot the young American do as well? There are many towns in Western New England that offer better opportunities, awaiting the coming of energetic, earnest men possessing scientific knowledge of agricultural methods to turn them into money.



THE BRIDGE AND FALLS AT WORONOCO



LOOKING UP THE SCANTIC RIVER TOWARD HAMPDEN VILLAGE



A COMFORTABLE HILL TOWN HOME

This house, containing sixteen rooms, with a fifty-acre farm in good condition, recently sold for \$2,500

These are substantially the conditions that exist in our Western New England towns, for what is true in Massachusetts is more so in Connecticut, Vermont and New Hampshire: the young people leaving the farms because they think they lack opportunity there for personal advancement, the consequent deterioration of the property and reduction of value; the coming of the industrious immigrant and the planting of a new race on the farms whose former owners boasted of Mayflower lineage.

The Conditions in Hampden

Let us look at them and see what they offer to others than the immigrant. Take the town of Hampden, only ten miles from the business district of Springfield. Some years ago this was a thriving place. Its woolen and shoddy mills were busy; its tenement houses were occupied, and the stores did a good business. The Scantic river, flowing through a narrow valley between beetling hills furnished power for the mills, just as it now does in Somers and other places in Connecticut. The town's location is as beautiful as one could wish for; yet there is no business worthy of the name. The water power, up to the present, has not been obtainable cheaply enough to offset the cost of hauling coal, raw material for manufacturing and the finished products to and from the nearest railroad point, East Longmeadow. The profits of business were eaten up by transportation expenses; or, to put it another way, the margin of profit was so small that when fire came and consumed the mills there was no incentive to rebuild them, and fire has done much harm to Hampden.

A discouraging outlook, you may say, so let us look at the situation from another angle. That is what the Rev. Charles B. Bliss did when he came to be pastor of the Congregational church. He found things pretty well worn down, but he started in to improve them. He caused several neighbors to build a telephone line by means of which they keep in touch with what is going on. He sought to improve the general condition of things, but chiefly, he aimed to bring people to Hampden. He saw an opportunity for prosperity through turning the vacant houses into summer homes for city people. He found the air pure and the scenery unsurpassed. No fairer vista can be found in old New England than the one that meets the eye as the visitor turns the bend in the road, passes through the notch in the Wilbraham hills and comes into view of the distant village. Mr. Bliss began to interest city people in Hampden, and kept everlastingly at it. His efforts have been rewarded. Several once-deserted places along the main street have been taken by city people for summer occupancy. A great farm on the westerly slope of the mountain range was bought by two wealthy young Springfield women, who have made the land a game preserve and have turned the old house into a comfortable summer home. Only a week or two ago the newspapers carried an item telling of the purchase by a wealthy man of another great farm. He is going to turn the place into an exclusive summer resort. The grounds will be laid out in a natural park, and the house will become a thirty-room hotel. It looks like a good venture, too, for one can go from Springfield to Hampden in half an hour by automobile. It is reasonable to suppose that in a few years the deserted houses in this town will be few and, with the growth of the easterly section of Springfield and the rejuvenation of Hampden, must come the trolley line and with it that panacea for small town business ills, the electric express.

Something About Blandford

Blandford and Otis are well known to the people of New England cities as summer resorts. Blandford village looks down upon the mountains of the Westfield and Connect-

icut river valleys; it is a beautiful, clean, true New England town. North Blandford is glorious. The people here make a comfortable living on their farms, even though they have had to haul their products four miles from Blandford postoffice to the Boston & Albany railroad at Russell in order to have them reach the city markets. Thousands of barrels of apples are shipped out of this town every fall. But the people are not satisfied with their present condition. They want better transportation facilities, so they are endeavoring to prevail upon the New England Investment & Security Company to change the layout of the proposed trolley extension to connect the Berkshires with the Connecticut valley. Instead of having the line continue from Huntington up the Westfield river valley through Chester and Becket to the connecting point in East Lee, they want the line to run from Russell to Blandford and North Blandford, Otis and then on to East Lee. They foresee the advantages the trolley will bring them, chiefly through the medium of the electric express. If they can get that service, all the time that is now lost in slowly hauling produce down the long, steep hill to Russell, and the tedious journey back again, will be saved; and in the busy season time means money to the farmer. By being more accessible the town will take on new prosperity; its products will be in greater demand and its advantages as a summer resort will be enhanced. Otis will fare equally well. Fields that now raise nothing but blueberries will become tilled land, and the famous Otis ponds will draw more summer visitors than ever before.

Wales and Holland

The automobile, too, will soon prove of value in the regeneration of hill town manufacturing. Hardly a day passes but some manufacturer of auto-trucks announces an improvement that makes these machines more reliable, speedy or economical. They have now reached the stage of development that was necessary before their general use could be expected; they can climb steep hills, make good progress over rough roads and haul very heavy loads. In a day they do many times the amount of work that could be accomplished by horses. The auto-truck should soon be the means of resuming manufacturing in hill towns that possess water power now going to waste. Towns like Hampden and Wales should benefit by it, and towns more remote.

Wales and Holland offer opportunities very much like those in Hampden, although manufacturing is not yet dead in Wales. The distressing feature of both these towns is found in the deserted houses along the roadsides, some of them still in good condition, others gone beyond the possibility of repair. Not many years ago it would have been unreasonable to suppose that there would be any chance of these deserted places being taken up in a generation, but the building of the Springfield and Worcester trolley line has brought transportation facilities within five miles of these towns and, once the trolley express business is at its height, this line should afford the people who will take up the available farms means of making a good living, for there is a good market at either end of this line for all the produce they can send.

Peach Growing in Wilbraham

Good proof of the tremendous value of lands that once were thought to be fit for nothing more than pastures or wood lots is found in the mountains of Wilbraham. On that very land there are hundreds of acres of peach orchards that produce the most luscious, the most beautiful and perhaps the most profitable peaches that are grown



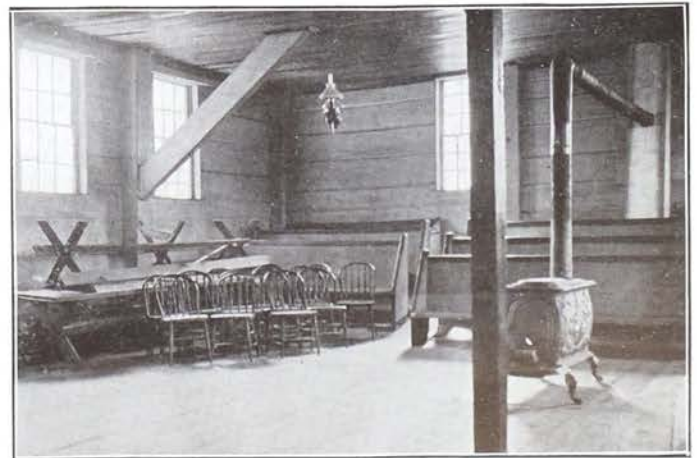
THE PRETTY COUNTRY CLUBHOUSE, BLANDFORD

This was until her death the home of a wealthy woman who chose to live in Blandford



ELM STREET, WESTFIELD

One of the most beautiful streets in Western New England. The road leads to the Berkshire hill towns



INTERIOR OF PELHAM'S ANCIENT TOWN HALL

The benches in the background have been in use over 160 years and still occupy their original positions

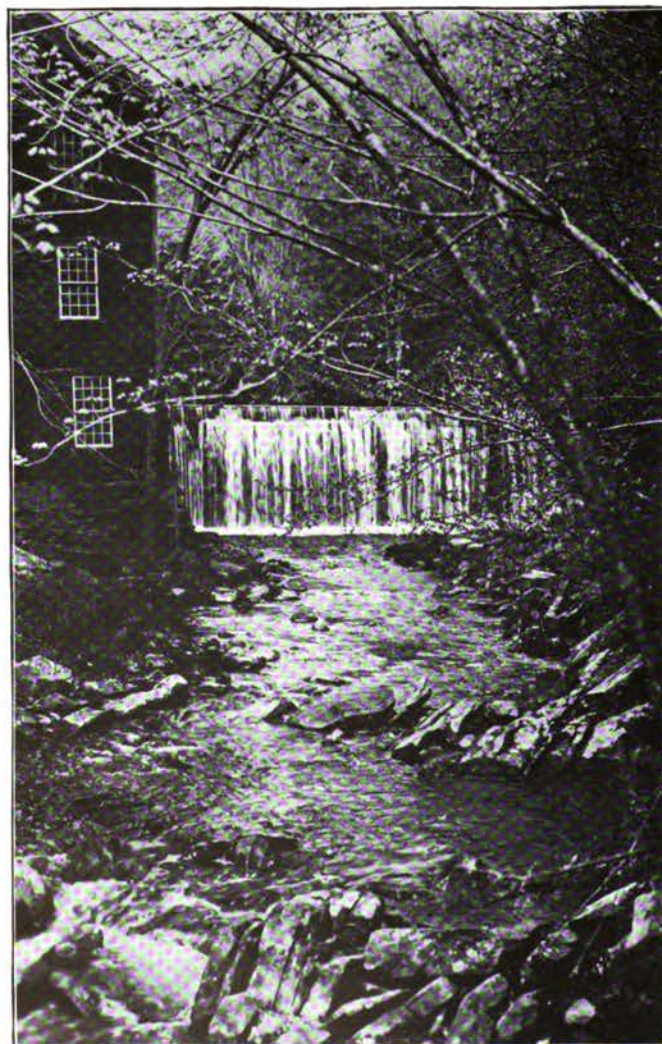


THE LITTLE SCHOOLHOUSE AT SOUTH WORTHINGTON



THE METHODIST CHURCH AT SOUTH WORTHINGTON

Typical of the simple and beautiful edifices of native wood found in several of the hill towns but which in many places being succeeded by more expensive and less beautiful structures.



HIGGINS FALLS AT SOUTH WORTHINGTON

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



WESTERN NEW ENGLAND FARMS CAN BE VERY CLOSE TO MARKETS
This fine farm at Island Pond is within the Springfield city limits

anywhere. The writer was told only recently by a man acquainted with the facts that several of the big peach growers in Wilbraham have each cleared \$10,000 and over in a single season. They have learned how to protect the trees from insect pests and disease, how to ward off the killing late frosts, how to fertilize the soil and how to market the fruit most profitably. Peach growing in Wilbraham has been going on for only fifteen to twenty

years, but it has made tidy fortunes for several men who used their brains as well as their hands. There are other hill towns in which peaches can be successfully raised, but it requires steady attention to business, push and intelligence to attain results like those that have made Wilbraham famous as a peach town.

(To be continued)

Editor's Note:—This is the first installment of an article which gives interesting and accurate information about the conditions in the hill towns of Western New England. In the June number Mr. Colton's article will conclude by calling attention to the opportunities for fruit raising, wood products and for profiting by other less known resources of some of the neglected towns.

Northampton Board Extending

The Northampton Board of Trade has taken steps to provide for extending its influence and activities by the election of George T. Smith as assistant secretary. Mr. Smith has had an experience which should be of great value to him in municipal development work. During a long experience as traveling salesman for a Worcester concern, he has visited all the principal cities and larger manufacturing points in the country, covering the territory between New England, San Francisco, Duluth and New Orleans. Mr. Smith has long been interested in what cities were doing so has profited much by the opportunities afforded him in his traveling.

Mr. Smith gives special attention to matters connected with the work of the ways and means committee which is composed of the chairmen of each of the other committees. He is thus in close connection with all the affairs of the board and able to greatly relieve the secretary, A. J. Morse.

Westfield Board Meeting

The Westfield Board of Trade is interesting itself in the problem of housing in that town. President George H. Sharp of the board of trade appointed a committee to investigate and report on this question. The municipal committee which has considered the question of improvements in the town hall building and the selection of a site for a police station has made good progress in its work and definite results seem assured. The Westfield Board of Trade has been interesting itself in the trolley development matters and is keeping in touch with the progress and doing what seems possible to make it assured that the new line projected to connect the Connecticut with the Berkshires shall pass through Westfield. A plan to unite the merchants association with the board of trade has been suggested and more of this is likely to be heard later.

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NO. 7

Golden Opportunities in Our Hill Towns

By John W. Colton

Editorial Staff, Springfield Union

Editor's Note:—The first instalment of this article in the May WESTERN NEW ENGLAND told of the conditions in several of the less known hill towns, showed the important bearing of immigration on their problems and indicated the appearance of signs of improved conditions, although the fundamental need, transportation, is yet unfilled.

A Word About Apple Opportunities

Fruit-farming is perhaps one of the most logical and profitable pursuits for the newcomer in the hill towns to take up. The state agricultural college is paying particular attention to it and, through the medium of experimental orchards in various towns, hopes to teach the hill town residents how to successfully raise fruit. We hear a good deal said about the apples that are grown in Oregon and Washington, and we know that they bring big prices in our own markets, yet there is no good reason why Western New England should not beat the world in apple culture. Our climate is right and our soil is right—all our apple growers need to do is to keep abreast of the times in the cultivation of the fruit and work continually for improved transportation facilities. Williamsburg, Conway, Chesterfield, Goshen, Ashfield, Belchertown and other towns right in our midst produce the finest apples in the world—apples that are sent to Europe and which the commission house buyers contract for almost before the fruit

has formed. The rocky soil and the climate of Western New England seem to give our apples an unusual lasting quality.

In Williamsburg a farmer who now picks from five hundred to one thousand barrels of apples a year, according to conditions, told the writer that when he settled on his property forty years ago it was a barren waste of rock. Dynamite and oxen and toil cleared it, however, and apple trees were planted just as soon as it was possible to get them in the ground. Each year a new lot was set out, until now the profits on the apples are great enough to enable this man to retire, if he cares to. The new-comer to the hill town must not imagine that it is easy to make a success, for if he has that idea his awakening will be rude. No success can come in any venture without hard work, but the energetic man who will grasp one of the opportunities for fortune that abound in our towns, and will go to work earnestly, has mighty good chances of a profitable career and comfortable old age.



LONG POND ON THE UHL ESTATE IN BEAUTIFUL NORTH BLANDFORD

New Fangled Notions

In Belchertown there is a young man who mulled over the problem of profitable farming a long time before he finally realized that there was something to be learned about it that tradition did not hand down. He spent part of a winter in taking a "short course" at the state agricultural college in Amherst and learned many things his elders did not know. For example, when it came time the next spring to plant his potatoes he soaked the seed in a mixture of water and corrosive sublimate. A neighbor



BRADLEY FALLS, SOUTH WORTHINGTON

whose potato lot was just over the fence from the young man's watched him cover the "doctored" seed and laughed at him.

"All foolishness," he said. "Jest a new-fangled notion. I tell ye, bub, there ain't nothin' that'll keep the 'taters from gettin' scabby if they've a mind to. 'Taters planted in this kind of land jest naturally grow scabby."

"All right," the boy laughed back, "have it your own way. In the fall we'll see which of us has the best potatoes and the biggest yield."

Surely enough, when the boy dug his crop the potatoes were large, abundant and free from the detested scab. There were few "nubbins" to be boiled and fed to the hogs. His neighbor on the other side of the fence dug the same kind of crop he always had—irregular-sized, scabby, unprofitable potatoes. The college ideas had made good.

There is a lesson in this incident for every city man to

learn before he goes into the hill town, or any other town, to wrest dollars from the soil, and that is that there is just as much science about farming as there is in any profession or calling. The would-be farmer, to be successful, must know something about his work. It does not do to plant corn where potatoes will grow better, nor is it profitable to set cabbages where strawberries might be grown for early cash returns. While everybody who is interested in the repopulating of our hill towns is anxious to have the unworked farms reoccupied, those with the community's best interest at heart do not want to hear of any more discouragements or failures.

At a gathering in Pelham recently a middle-aged woman mentioned that she had but recently come to the town from North Carolina. "We have been here two years," her husband said, "and in that time my wife has been very successful at poultry raising. She takes care of the hens herself and has made considerable money. I have tackled the farming, but up to date everything that I have harvested has cost me more than the returns from its sale."

From the man's statement one might believe that the experiment of this couple in hill town life was not successful, and of course this is true to a certain extent. But inquiry developed that the man had not devoted all his time or study to the farm—he had made a tidy sum by taking photographs and selling them, and he found Pelham rich in scenery and other material for his camera. In fact, the profits of his wife's poultry business and his photography yielded enough in two years to enable them to purchase seventy-six acres of woodland—a shrewd investment—so the experiment may be considered successful after all.

Some Instances from Pelham

Despite the fact that Pelham is only six miles from Amherst, there is probably no hill town in Western Massachusetts that is in greater need of the injection of new life. There are two hundred and fifty cellar holes in this town—cellars which were covered by more or less comfortable homes, houses that were destroyed by fire or were deserted and have disappeared. The town's population has dwindled from 1278 in 1820 to about one-third (467) in 1910, chiefly because of conditions stated in the previous installment of this article and summed up in a few words—lack of adequate transportation facilities; yet there is opportunity there for the man with brains and push.

Mr. Keith, whose long-standing offer to the trolley company was quoted in the beginning of the article last month, is one of those hill town men most keenly alive to the necessity of getting into easier communication with the large centers.

"There are good farms here, for sale very cheap," Mr. Keith said recently. "I do not tell visitors from the city that if they will move here and take them up they will soon be wealthy. What I do say is this: that a man can be independent on these hill farms, and in time can amass enough money to enable him to pass his old age at least in comfort, even with conditions no better than they now are."

Proof of this statement is found in a resident of the town who is credited with a fortune of between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars, made entirely through the sale of two loads of wood every week day for many years. Another man, although crippled, is earning considerable sums through the manufacture of chairs and other furniture which he skilfully decorates with inlaid work. He finds a ready market for his product, and as his expenses are low he is enabled to save considerable. Still others are contented to live with the least possible effort, and some of the stories of conditions that the visitor to the hill towns hears are hardly believable.

The greatest success in this town, however, and the best proof of the wisdom of taking advantage of opportunity, is found in the fish-rod factory in West Pelham. The proprietor of this profitable business began it many years ago in a small building in a deep hollow. Orient brook furnished power, and as the business grew the factory was enlarged, until now it gives employment to many hands and has brought about the building of a sizable, neat village about it. Only last summer the dam was raised and there is now more power available than before. This man years ago realized the value of the water power, and instead of using it in the manufacture of staple goods he found something in good demand but not commonly manufactured in New England, with the result that he is known today as one of the wealthy men of Hampshire county. Other towns have just such opportunities waiting for men with a little capital and a lot of business sense to come along and turn them into money.

Tom, Mt. Holyoke and the Mt. Holyoke ridge all lie before one, magnificent and inspiring. Persons who have traveled all over the world have stood beside the little schoolhouse on Pelham hill and gazed upon a scene which, they said, they had never seen duplicated. Only once or twice in a lifetime do most persons have the opportunity for such a view, and yet how few of our city people know of it—three hours from Springfield by train, trolley and stage.

The town hall was built so many years ago that the records of its first occupancy have never been found, although there are sentences here and there which indicate that it was in use in 1742–1743 as the meeting house. It is certain that every town meeting in Pelham for at least one hundred and sixty consecutive years has been held in this building. The very benches that were used when the hall was first put in service are still doing duty there. They are made of pine planks, fastened together



BUILDINGS OF THE ASHLAND EMERY COMPANY, CHESTER

Interesting Things About Pelham

Pelham is worth devoting more space to, if only because of the quaintness of the town and the historical facts connected with it. It is becoming increasingly popular as a summer town, because it is doubtful if there is any town so near at hand that commands such wonderful views or which affords such interesting study. Professor Morse of Amherst College has built a magnificent home on the side of Mt. Lincoln, and other Amherst men have taken over hillside farmhouses that were deserted and turned them into comfortable dwellings. It is confidently believed that Pelham has seen its worst times, and that an era of prosperity is at hand. The scene from Pelham village, twelve hundred feet above the level of the sea, is magnificent. Looking to the north and east one sees only mountains and woods, with hardly a house among them. On the crests of the distant ridges are the steeples of the meeting houses in Prescott, New Salem, Barre and other towns. Mt. Monadnock, sixty miles away in New Hampshire, stands out as clearly on a fine day as does Mt. Tom when seen from the Barney estate in Springfield. Mt. Wachusett in Princeton, Mt. Greylock in the Berkshires, Mt.

with hand-wrought iron nails. The backs are sternly upright, and made of single pieces of wood two feet wide and eight or ten feet long, while the seats are of two-inch pine about a foot wide. Many generations of boys have carved initials and designs on the backs of these benches until today there is hardly a square inch unmarred. The fronts were painted a drab color, but the backs have been left unprotected. There used to be "boxes" at either side of the entrance to the hall for the accommodation of the wealthier residents, but these, together with the canopy over the pulpit and the sounding board, were long ago removed, and the space in the center, around which the benches and boxes were arranged, has been boarded over. The walls are covered with wide sheathing, and at one end is a little kitchen where the women of the town occasionally prepare a roast goose supper (the very thought of which makes the mouth water) and a stage where entertainments are given.

In this ancient building Daniel Shays, the leader of Shays' rebellion, first uttered protest against the heavy taxation which followed the Revolution. Shays was a native of Pelham, and from the town he gathered many



AN ABANDONED FACTORY IN WALES

followers. A boulder on Benton lawn, Springfield, marks the scene of his battle with General Shepard and the militia when he attempted to storm the United States arsenal. In 1790 the notorious counterfeiter and criminal,

The congregation of the Old South church bought it, and Pelham people are informed that it still hangs in the tower of the famous Washington street edifice, a more historic resting place than the donor had any idea it would find.

What the Wood Lots Offer

The woodlots of Western New England offer good opportunities for investment. There can be no question that lumber will be more costly as the years go by and that there always will be a demand for it, no matter how remote from the railroad the lots may be. Many deserted farms in our hill towns are worth more money now than they were when the owners left them, because of the growth of the timber on them. This is especially true of farms that have chestnut lots, for there is a greater demand for this wood hereabouts than for any other. The railroads want chestnut ties—no other wood gives as good satisfaction. The telegraph, telephone and electric light companies want chestnut poles, because chestnut lasts so well in the ground. Thus the owner of a stand of good sized chestnut can always turn it into money, and it always grows more valuable.

Next to chestnut the best demand seems to be for oak, most of which goes to the furniture manufacturers or for



MONTAGUE CITY FISH ROD COMPANY'S PLANT AT WEST PELHAM

A prosperous industry developed by cheap power and business ability.

Stephen Burroughs, preached in this hall for nineteen Sabbaths before his true character was discovered. Robert Abercrombie, a sterling Puritan, and the first settled minister in the town, lies within the shadow of this building's walls.

There is a story connected with this building that may be of general interest. Originally Pelham was known as New Lisburne, and was settled by Scotch-Irish people from Worcester and vicinity. The name was changed when Lord Pelham was making a visit to Massachusetts, and so pleased was his lordship with the honor bestowed on him that he had a bell cast for the meeting house when he returned to England. In time the bell was received at Boston, but then came the problem of getting it to Pelham. There was no way of carrying it across country except by ox teams, and the time and hardships involved made it too expensive for any individual to volunteer the task. The bell remained in Boston until heavy storage charges had piled up, and finally it was sold at auction.



LOADING PEACHES IN WILBRAHAM

Thousands of baskets are raised every year on land that could be bought for \$25 and \$50 an acre a few years ago.



THE ATTRACTIVE INN AT WORTHINGTON, ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL HILL TOWNS

house finishing. A considerable quantity of birch is sawed in Western New England, chiefly for furniture, and from our hills come walnut, ash, beech, pine, hickory, maple, some hemlock and spruce and other woods. The alder swamps of Northern Connecticut used to be valuable to their owners, when the gunpowder plant at Hazardville was busier than it now is, for they furnished the charcoal used in making the powder. The charcoal and cordwood industry is still important in this section, and has proved a factor in bringing money to Hampden and Berkshire towns in this state and to Somers and Stafford in Connecticut.

The owners of the woodlots have realized the importance of conserving them, and modern methods of forestry are doing much to perpetuate the native forests. The day is no more when the portable sawmill is hauled onto the lot and every stick is turned into lumber, whether a beam or a lath, leaving the land bare. Lumber dealers have found this practice to be suicidal, and the owners of the

land on the hills have found that the rains have washed all the topsoil from cleared lands, leaving them barren tracts of rock or sand where even trees can not soon grow again.

The Many Wood Industries

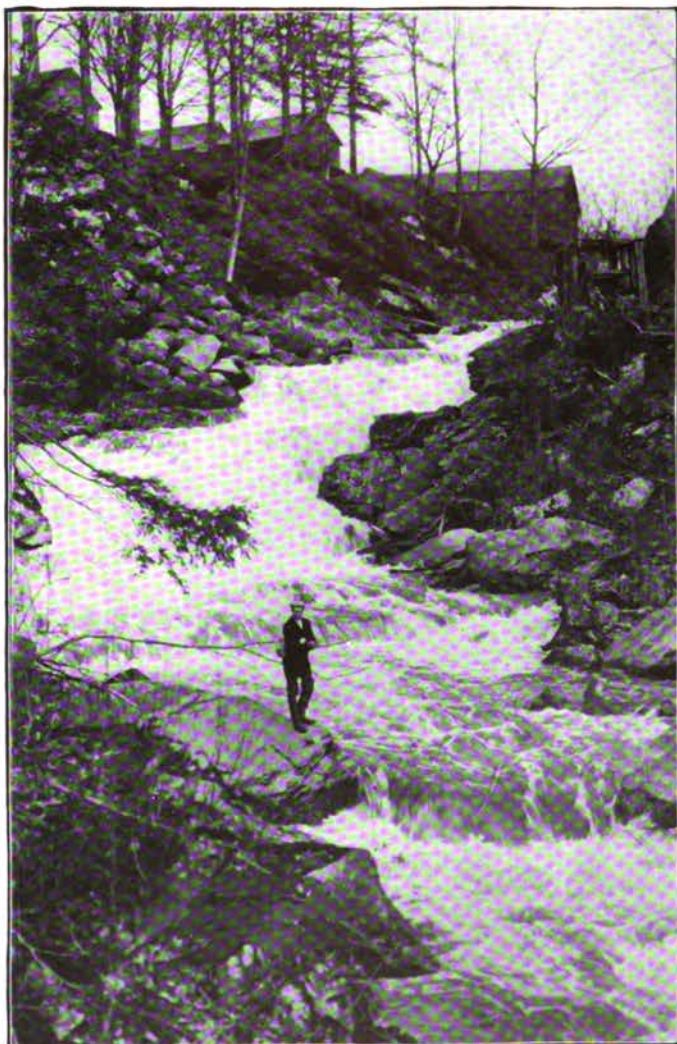
Many towns in Western New England, some of them small and others of considerable size, depend largely on wood industries for their prosperity. There are box mills, handle mills, basket mills, carriage shops, furniture factories and other plants sustained by wood industries. Readsboro, Vt., is a good example. This town is just across the line from Massachusetts, and is furnished with fine water power by the Deerfield river—that busy stream which turns so many wheels in Western New England, giving freely of its tremendous strength. Thousands of chairs and other pieces of furniture are made in Readsboro every year. Much of the lumber used is cut right in the town, but most of it is now brought down from Wil-



A GLIMPSE OF A PART OF THE HOWARD FRUIT FARM IN BELCHERTOWN

lington and beyond by the Hoosac Tunnel & Wilmington Railroad, a narrow-gauge road which runs between the places from which it gets its name. From the mills in Readsboro, Wilmington and Monroe Bridge it takes the finished product to the Boston & Maine road at Hoosac Tunnel station, and from there it is shipped to all parts of the world.

The upper Deerfield river valley is practically the only part of Western Massachusetts that contains any considerable amount of native spruce. It was this very fact that caused John C. and Daniel Newton of Holyoke to build



THE FALLS AT WORTHINGTON

the narrow-gauge road. The Newtons manufactured paper in Holyoke, and they wanted the pulp which these Deerfield valley hills could furnish. For a time the wood was shipped to Holyoke, but later it was found more economical to bring the mill to the forest rather than the wood to the mill. This led to the construction of a dam at Monroe, which furnishes power for the Ramage Paper Company's mill at Monroe Bridge. Here the spruce logs are ground into pulp, from which ticket paper is manufactured. At first the spruce came from the hills of the town of Monroe and from Rowe, on the other side of the river, but now the railroad brings it down from Southern Vermont, where there is enough to keep the mill in operation, day and night, for a good many years. The builders of this railroad and of the mills along it saw an opportunity

for wealth, which they grasped and which indeed has proved golden.

From the manufacture of cloth-covered wooden buttons sprang the prosperity of Easthampton and Williamsburg. The wife of Samuel Williston, the founder of Williston Academy and benefactor of Amherst College, began making buttons in her home in Easthampton so that she might have money with which to assist the village church and pay for the services of a woman to help about her own housework. Her husband was then a farmer, but he saw the possibilities of the button industry, and before many months had passed he had hundreds of families in the western Hampshire county towns at work making buttons for him. He interested the Hayden brothers, who were skillful mechanics, in the industry, and they devised a machine for the manufacture of buttons, having the assistance of a negro who had seen machines in operation in England. Then came the building of button shops in Haydenville and Easthampton, from which developed the other industries of these communities.

In Becket, Cummington, Blandford and other towns the manufacture of baskets from native ash is of importance. In Chester one of the first shoe-peg mills was established; in Chesterfield a mill makes all kinds of handles for paint brushes, scythes and other implements; bobbins and spools have been made of birch. Nearly all the hill towns have some wood products, and there remain opportunities to develop this line of industry.

Unique among the wood industries of Western New England is the "birch mill" at Huntington. This "mill" does not turn out spools or furniture. It is busy every winter producing oil of birch and extract of witch hazel. All summer it is idle, and the hillside farmers are busy with their dairy herds, their sheep and their crops, but when late fall comes and the leaves are off the trees, then they prepare to haul black birch brush to the mill. A good price is paid for this brush, and many a farmer has made good sums through the industry. When the birch runs out the mill calls for witch hazel brush, and this furnishes another source of income. Of course, the time comes when the supply of both kinds of brush is temporarily exhausted, and then the mill moves. It used to be located at Dayville, about six miles up the middle branch of the Westfield river from Huntington, but two or three years ago it moved to Huntington. When the supply about Huntington has been used up the brush in some other part of the valley will have grown again, and the mill will move to the best location. The oil which is distilled from black birch can hardly be distinguished from oil of wintergreen by any but experts, and possesses great medicinal value.

The Possibilities for Industrial Revival

In the foregoing pages an attempt has been made to show conditions as they are in Western New England, and to bring out some of the opportunities for development that exist. While the real hope of our hill towns unquestionably lies in proper agricultural development, there can be no question that there are many other resources that should bring good returns to energetic men possessed of a little capital and practical knowledge. It may be said with truth that we hardly know all our resources or how best to make them produce. In the last few years black marble has been quarried successfully in the outskirts of Westfield, and as men go into the remote hills other resources will be found. The iron of Cheshire and Richmond, the talc and sulphur ore of Rowe, the feldspar of Blandford and Russell, the granite and emery of Chester, the limestone of the Berkshires, the pure white marble of Lee, the famous East Longmeadow brownstone, the trap rock of the Mt. Tom range—all of them are of



IN THE BROWN SANDSTONE QUARRIES OF EAST LONGMEADOW

Many of the brownstone fronts of Fifth Avenue mansions in New York were quarried here.

tremendous value to Western New England and none has yet been fully developed.

The famous emery mine of Chester will yet be worked again, the people are confident, even though the artificial abrasives produced by the wonderful electric furnace have for the time being put emery in the background. The charcoal iron of Richmond finds a ready market, and the people of Cheshire feel sure that the iron mines in that town will be successfully worked again. The quartz sand from this town is a valuable asset, as it is used in the manufacture of the finest cut glass, analysis showing that it is almost pure silica; and the limestone of the town brings thousands of dollars into it. Feldspar quarries in Blandford and Russell are being worked to greater advantage than ever before because of the increased demand for heavy cleansing soaps, of which feldspar forms the chief ingredient. Pelham has asbestos mines which are not worked because up to the present a profitable use of the quality of asbestos found there has not been discovered; but scientists are daily finding uses for things which heretofore have been considered worthless, and who will say

at their lowest; the need of greater agricultural and industrial development is apparent—energy, business methods and intelligent action can now lay the foundations of a glorious future prosperity in Western New England if the people can only be made to realize the opportunity.

The End



THE LITTLE MILL VILLAGE OF THORNDIKE

A good example of the development which transportation can bring to villages that are now industrially dead; the stream, the Ware river, furnishes much of the power for the Thorndike textile mills. Contrast these prettily located homes with the crowded brick blocks in the big textile manufacturing cities.

New Hampshire ranks as the first state in the country in production per acre of corn, and Connecticut as a good second—the former with 42.1 bushels. Massachusetts with 39.4 bushels is ahead of Illinois with 38.8 bushels, and in Kansas the yield is only 27.8 bushels.