



Silk City/Industry

I. SYNOPSIS

The program begins at the Great Falls, where the Passaic River drops through a gap in the Watchung Mountains. The Great Falls is the reason for Paterson's location. Alexander Hamilton, who was secretary of the treasury when George Washington was president, encouraged a group of businessmen to build a factory center. They looked for a site near a city, where products could be sold, and near a river, where waterpower was available.

For many years, the factories in Paterson made a variety of things; but in the late nineteenth century silk became their most important product, and Paterson was known as Silk City. By that time the machines in most factories were powered by steam, not water. Jack De Stefano, director of the Paterson Museum, demonstrates how a power loom works. He informs us that in the early days of the silk industry in Paterson children as young as ten worked in the factories.

Then we visit Lambert Castle, the mansion of a factory owner named Catholina Lambert, located in the mountains overlooking Paterson. Mr. Lambert wanted to impress people with his wealth and power. In contrast, we visit the house of Pietro Botto in the streetcar suburb of Haledon. Mr. Botto was a skilled weaver from Italy. Bunny Kuiken, Mr. Botto's granddaughter, explains that her grandfather rented out apartments upstairs and took in boarders to make ends meet.

II. KEY WORDS

Fiber - a very fine thread

Skein - a length of fiber wound into a coil

Bobbin - a spool on which thread is wound

Loom - a machine for weaving thread into cloth

Weaving - to interlace threads to form cloth

Shuttle - a device in a loom that carries the crosswise threads through an opening made in the lengthwise threads

III. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

A. LOCATION

1. Objective

Students will analyze why Paterson was located where it is.

2. Before Viewing the Program

Download and reproduce the "Silk City" question sheet. Distribute the question sheet to the class. Go over the questions with the students, and ask them to pay special attention to answering these questions while they watch the program.

3. After Viewing the Program

Divide the class into work groups and ask them to fill out the question sheet together. Then reassemble the class to discuss their answers to the questions.

B. THE FACTORY OWNERS AND FACTORY WORKERS

1. Objective

Students will contrast the life of the factory owners to the life of the factory workers

2. Before Viewing the Program

Download and reproduce the "Silk City" Question Sheet question sheet. Distribute the question sheet to the class. Go over the questions with the students, and ask them to pay special attention to answering these questions while they watch the program.

3. After Viewing the Program

Divide the class into work groups and ask them to fill out the question sheet together. Then reassemble the class to discuss their answers to the questions.

C. ACCOUNT OF A "MILL DOLLY"

1. Objective

Students will analyze a primary historical document.

2. Before Viewing the Program

Download, reproduce and distribute the "Account of a Mill Dolly" document and the related question sheet. Distribute the document and the question sheet for homework the night before the lesson. The next day before showing the program, ask the class to discuss the answers they put on the questions sheet the night before.

IV. SUGGESTED READINGS

De Vries, Lini. *Up From the Cellar*. Minneapolis: The Vanilla Press, 1979.

Golin, Steve. *The Fragile Bridge: The Paterson Silk Strike, 1913*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988.

Gowaskie, Joseph. *Workers in New Jersey History*. New Jersey History Series. Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1996.

AMERICAN LABOR MUSEUM/BOTTO HOUSE NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARK (website)
<http://www.geocities.com/labormuseum/>

NEW JERSEY HISTORY PARTNERSHIP PROJECT (website)

www.nj-history.org

Click on "Market Revolution"

Click on "SUM"

Or click on "Interactive Feature: What Would You Do? Alexander Hamilton and the SUM"

Or click on "Interactive Feature: Paterson Raceways"

Or click on "Progressive Era"

Click on "Silk Strike"