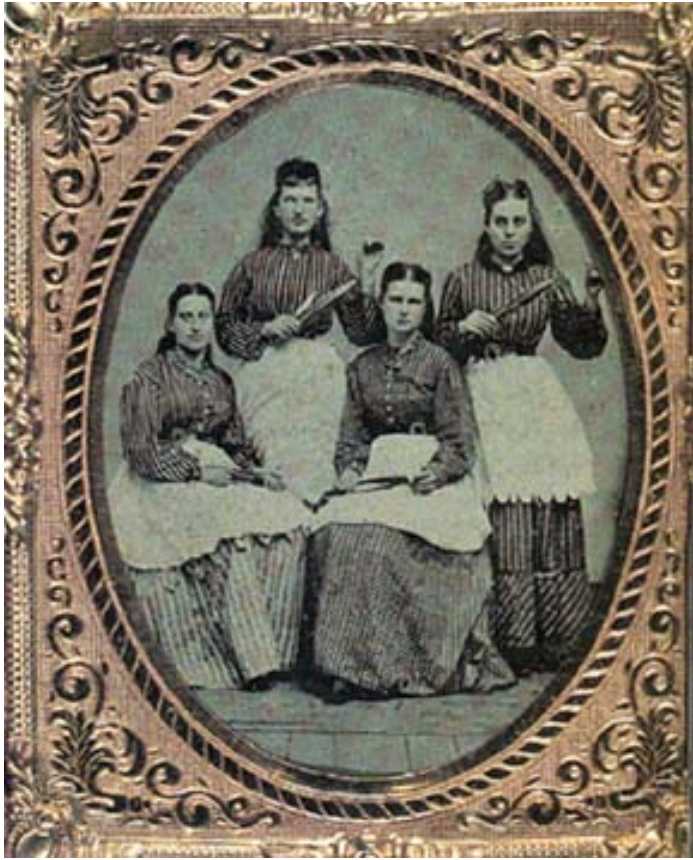


## Letters From a “Lowell Mill Girl”



Mary S. Paul, born 1829 in Vermont, left home at age 15 for a job as a domestic servant. Next, she spent four years working in the Lowell, Massachusetts textile mills.

Her letters to her father detail her life as a “Lowell Mill Girl”, including buying her own shoes and paying the boardinghouse fees from her wages. Her letters also provide a window into the awful working conditions in factories. Women were faced with dangerous and exhausting conditions, long hours, and low wages. It is clear to see from Mary Paul’s letters why women at Lowell organized turn-outs and petitions to get better treatment from their managers.

**As you read the letters below, consider what you would do in Mary Paul’s shoes. What would you do to try to inspire change?**

21 Dec. 1845

Dear Father

I received your letter on Thursday the 14th with much pleasure. I am well which one comfort is. My life and health are spared while others are cut off. Last Thursday one girl fell down and broke her neck, which caused instant death. She was going in or coming out of the mill and fell down it being very icy. Last Tuesday we were paid. In all I had six dollars and sixty cents paid \$4.68 for board. With the rest I got me a pair of rubbers and a pair of 50.cts shoes. Perhaps you would like something about our regulations about going in and coming out of the mill. At half past six [the bell] rings for the girls to get up and at seven they are called to the mill. At half past 12 we have dinner are called back again at one and stay till half past seven. I get along very well with my work. I can doff as fast as any girl in our room. If any girl wants employment I advise them to come to Lowell.

This from,  
Mary S. Paul

