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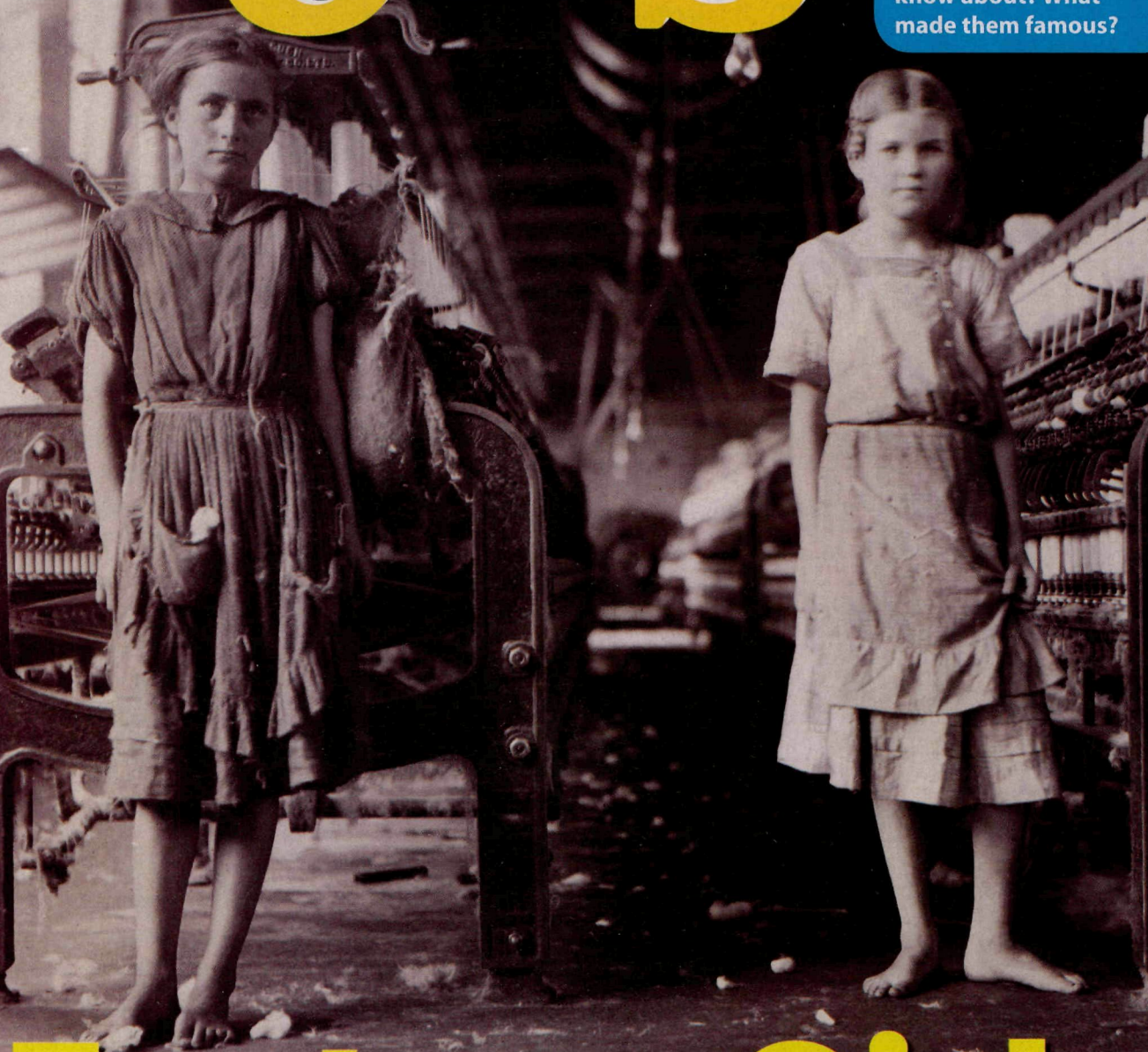
March 3, 2014

Edition 3

Brain Builder

What famous women from history do you know about? What made them famous?

News



Factory Girls

Girls as young as ten once worked in factories. Life was tough—so some of them fought for change.

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH!

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Factory Girls

A girl works at a thread-spinning machine in 1908.

What do you want to be when you grow up? A long time ago, women in the United States had only one choice. They took care of their family and farm.

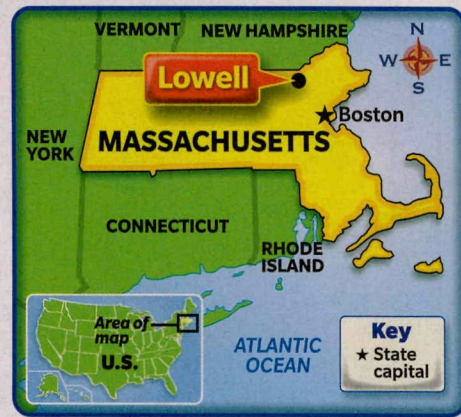
That started to change 200 years ago. In 1814, a **textile mill** opened in Lowell, Massachusetts. It was one of the first factories that sprang up in U.S. cities during the early 1800s. Thousands of women flocked to Lowell to work so they could earn money for themselves and their families. Most were between the ages of 15 and 35. Some were as young as 10 years old!

At the factories, they used dangerous machines and were paid very little. But the young women, known as the Lowell Mill Girls, had the courage to fight for change.

Life at the Factories

The job of the Mill Girls was to turn cotton into fabric. They operated fabric-weaving machines called looms. The women often worked for 12 to 14 hours a day, six days a week. And back then, there were no safety rules.

Each factory floor was packed with up to 250 machines, with little space between them. "There were many cases in which girls got



their dresses or hair caught up in the gears," Emily Levine told *Scholastic News*. She's an expert on the Lowell Mills.

Taking a Stand

In 1834, factory owners told the Mill Girls they would have to work more hours for even less pay. The girls had had enough. More than 800 of them went on **strike**. At the risk of losing their jobs, they marched through the streets.

The factory owners ignored their demands. But the fight was far from over. In 1844, the Mill Girls created the first **union** of working women. The union called for a safer workplace and a shorter workday.

In 1874, Massachusetts passed a law limiting the workday to 10 hours for women and children. More than 60 years later, the U.S. government passed a law that **prohibited** anyone younger than 16 from working in a factory.

"The Mill Girls proved that women could come together and demand their rights as workers," says Levine. "That paved the way for women in the workplace today."

A Lowell Mills work schedule from 1868

WELLS, RICHMOND, CO. MANUFACTURERS & TRADING CO.

TIME TABLE

1868.

OF THE LOWELL MILLS,

Arranged to make the working time 60 hours per week. The STANDARD TIME will be marked at noon, by the BELL of the MERRIMACK MANUFACTURING COMPANY.

Breakfast, at.....	6. A. M.
Commence Work, at.....	6.30 A. M.
Dinner, at.....	12.45 P. M.
Commence Work, after Dinner, at.....	6.30 P. M.
Saturday Evenings, at.....	6.30 P. M.

Words to Know

- textile mill:** a factory where cotton is turned into fabric
- strike:** a refusal to work as an act of protest
- union:** an organization of workers that aims to protect workers' rights
- prohibited:** banned

Bells.....

.....12.00 M.

.....12.45 P. M.

.....5 P. M.

.....5 P. M.

.....5 P. M.

.....5 P. M.

.....5 P. M.

.....5 P. M.

.....5 P. M.

.....5 P. M.

.....5 P. M.

.....5 P. M.

.....5 P. M.

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