

The

GRISWOLD COTTON MILLS . . .

Times historical . . .

Initial remarks:

Recent times—within the last 20-years—have unfortunately given us a dire look at the demise of an industry that was a viable and valuable entity in the history of a town that was modeled after the great manufacturing city of Holyoke, Massachusetts, during the 19th Century.

The Griswold Cotton Mill played a significant role in the support of more than 200 people who in turn would play an essential role in the support of a burgeoning town on the banks of the Connecticut River in Western Massachusetts.

Turners Falls would become well known for its ability to manufacture pulp for paper-making and paper-making itself. The United States was experiencing its industrial revolution and the paper-making industry here would offer an extremely important service to the country's needs for that commodity.

Other industrialists/manufacturers and entrepreneurs would establish businesses along the rocky strip of land that paralleled the Connecticut River to the west and the power canal to the east. Joseph Griswold would take the initial step to incorporate textiles into that mix of industries. A Silk Mill would additionally occupy space on the canal's east bank. It will be briefly mentioned in this paper.

I look forward to the prospect that this document will enlighten the reader regarding the "Cotton Mill." Its inception will be reviewed along with later occupants of the property. Its physical demise will be revealed as an illustrative essay.

Ed Gregory



EMINENT MEN OF COLRAIN.

Extracted from: 1792-1892 Centennial Gazette Greenfield, Mass.

MAJ. DANIEL WILLIS.

Daniel Willis was of the sixth generation in descent from George Willis, who emigrated from England about 1030 and settled in Cambridge, Mass. He was the son of Hopestill Willis, an ardent patriot, who performed most creditable service in the Revolutionary war, and was born in Sudbury, Mass., March 25, 1772. He was in Colrain in 1795, engaged in fulling cloth and also carrying out the clothing business. Later he utilized the important water power at the Willis place with various industries, built the brick house, which, until his death, in 1845, was ever afterward his home. Maj. Willis served his town in many official capacities and was a man greatly trusted and beloved. His wife was Martha Snow, a family of twelve children blessing their union. Mrs. Willis died. March 8, 1847.

The attempt went vain in a brief sketch to portray the rare and striking totalities and achievements of this most remarkable man, who, for a full half century in this community, in the face of related and almost overwhelming disasters, carried forward to success his business purposes, exhibiting a most wonderful versatility of genius, combined with indomitable courage and untiring energy, qualities which in an eminent degree centered in him.

He was a great public benefactor and to him more than to any other is the town indebted for the degree of material prosperity she has enjoyed, his business operations being always in the line of her substantial advancement, while contributing largely to the comfort and welfare of her citizens. Nor this alone.— for full a quarter century past, more than one-fifth of the entire tax assessed in town has been laid upon the industries he founded, and which his genius created and perfected. Surely their obligations to him cannot be considered slight or insignificant.

The story of his boyhood and early life partakes of the qualities of the day and generation that produced him. Born in Buckland, Mass., Aug. 1, 1806, the fourth in a family of fourteen, children of Maj. Joseph Griswold, a man of prominence and influence in his day, who had been honored by his townsmen in various ways. His early education was such as was afforded by the schools of his native town, of which opportunities his keen and retentive faculties made the best use. At the age of sixteen his father gave him his time during his minority, and while devoting much of it to laboring at his trade as carpenter, joiner and cabinet maker, he attended Sanderson academy and obtained a more advanced education, including a knowledge of Latin, having in view the study and practice of medicine.

About the year 1826 he visited the important cities in Central and Western New York State, even journeying as far west as Detroit, Michigan. At Rochester, N. Y., he first witnessed the application of power to woodworking machinery in the manufacture of doors, window sash, etc., causing him to abandon his plans for a professional career and engage in the manufacture of these articles at Ashfield. His business capital at this time was small and he engaged somewhat in school teaching in Ashfield and later in Colrain, at which place occurred his first great good fortune in forming the acquaintance and later securing the affection of Miss Louisa W. Denison of Stonington, Ct., their marriage occurring. Nov. 23, 1828. He soon after removed his business from Ashfield to Buckland and also in connection with his brother started a shop at "Erving's Grant." In the spring of 1830, Mr. Griswold is elected a member of the school committee of Colrain and seems to have definitely decided to make this town his home. During this year he built his house at Griswoldville and also a shop for the manufacture of doors, window sash and blinds, to which the year following he added that of making wooden "lather boxes," and a little later the making of gimlets and augers. These buildings he built himself, as he was a tireless and prodigious worker, toiling at this period of his life fourteen to sixteen hours a day. He shingled his barn, which required seven thousand of shingles to cover it, without assistance in one day, laying the shingles himself and even carrying them up the ladder. Said my informant, "I helped shingle it thirty years later; it required several days then," and the writer has serious doubts if there are *three* men in Griswoldville to-day who can perform the feat of Mr. Griswold even with the shingles brought to them.

Nor Mr. Griswold alone; for during all these years his estimable and devoted wife was equally helpful and energetic, and during the spring they commenced housekeeping she performed the labor of making three hundred pounds of maple sugar from the trees about her door, and in many ways greatly assisted the young manufacturer in preparing his goods for market, and this in addition to the care and attention of her young family. In casting about for a permanent and more enlarged industry, from knowledge gained through acquaintance with manufacturers in North Adams and elsewhere. Mr. Griswold decided upon that of manufacturing cotton fabrics, to which, with slight interruptions, he ever after devoted his energies. In 1832, he built his first cotton mill of sixteen looms, doubling its capacity before the close of the year, Mrs. Griswold making the harness and aprons for the looms, and three years later he built a much larger brick mill of one hundred and forty-four looms. Both of these factories are familiarly recalled in the boyhood remembrance of the writer. They were destroyed by fire, the former in 1851, the latter in 1856. In the financial crisis of 1837 Mr. Griswold was carried down like many others and in the reorganization of the business the Griswoldville Manufacturing Company was formed, though in after years, by purchase of the stock, Mr. Griswold became sole owner. In the year 1846, he opened a commission house in New York city and the same year purchased and fitted up a model farm at Stonington. Ct., where for six years his family resided, he carrying on his manufacturing, at the same time interesting and identifying himself with shipping and whaling interests. In 1852, he removed back to Colrain and rebuilt the burned mill. In 1855, he became extensively engaged in agriculture, buying several farms on Christian Hill and elsewhere in town, in which operations he displayed a characteristic enthusiasm. In 1856, he rebuilt his second burned mill, which he started up in 1858 with an equipment of two hundred and ten looms. In 1865, he erected and equipped the extensive brick mill at the Willis place, with tenement blocks, etc., thus doubling his manufacturing capacity; also at this time he associated with himself in the business three of his sons, Ethan D., Joseph, Jr., and Lorenzo, thus rendering possible its uninterrupted succession, when he should have passed away. Having now exhausted the power of the Colrain river, he turned his attention toward Turners Falls, purchasing a valuable tract of land embracing ample water privileges, and in 1874 he commenced operations at that place, which were completed about the year 1879.

To the carrying out of this his last extensive building operation he went himself, accompanied by Mrs. Griswold. the energetic and devoted wife of his youth, now the faithful and efficient counsellor of his mature years, and while her husband superintended every detail of construction, she assumed entire charge of the accounts and finances, a task she performed with exceeding capability. This superior and accomplished woman, whose whole life was a source of sunshine to her family and associates, and whose memory the poor and unfortunate of her acquaintance gratefully cherish, did not survive the completion of this enterprise. November 23, 1878, with Mr. Griswold and the six surviving children of the thirteen she had borne him, and very numerous friends, they celebrated their golden wedding, and March 17, 1879, occurred her death. It was a beautiful and pathetic tribute her husband paid to her memory on the day of her funeral, when at the door of his house he met some friends he had long known, he said. "The head of the household is not at home."

Without doubt Mr. Griswold was during his career the most influential man in town, yet, while often urged, he with very rare exceptions declined all public office. In nothing, perhaps, was a phase of his many-sided genius more strikingly displayed than in his building operations, the timber cut on his own land being prepared in his own saw mills and the sand and clay from his own premises being formed and burned into brick, all under his own supervision. His literary tastes were marked and of a very high order, disclosing in his writings that rare and remarkable facility of wit and anecdote, which made him ever the entertaining member of any circle. He occasionally contributed articles for the press and on several occasions addressed public assemblies of his fellow-citizens. In 1879, he delivered an address at the centennial celebration of his native town, a gem of its kind. The town records had been destroyed, but aided by his retentive memory, he recalled many interesting facts and incidents in its history, with reminiscences of his boyhood,

illustrative of the customs of those early times, and which, when furnished by one who had been a part of the scenes, described, constituted an effort of remarkable interest and entertainment.

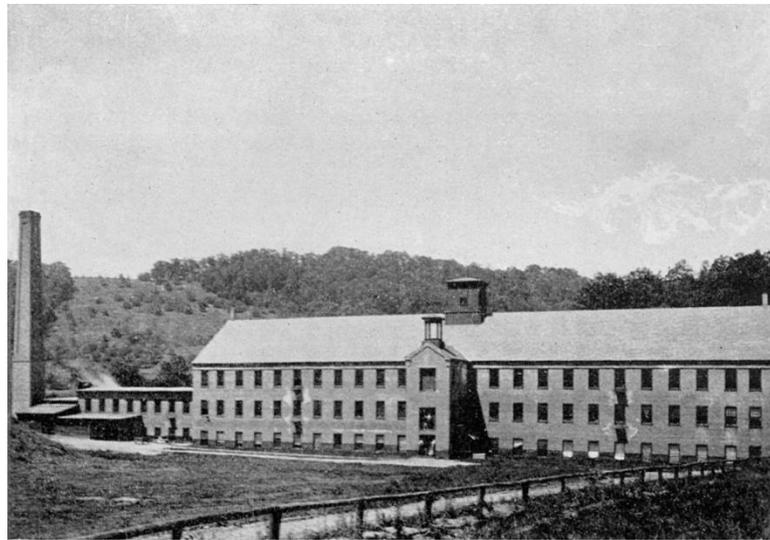
He was thoroughly original in all he said or did, a great reader, in early life of books and periodicals, and in later years of the daily newspapers, and though always pressed by business, yet upon all political and financial questions he kept himself thoroughly posted and abreast of the times.

His death occurred, Oct. 23, 1883. Rarely does a man leave so deep and lasting a mark upon his age and vicinity. Long may the industries he so abidingly founded endure, for yet longer will survive the memory and renown of this remarkable man—their founder.

The Mills at Colrain and Turners Falls



Mill No. 1 of the Griswoldville Manufacturing Company, at Griswoldville.



Mill No. 2 of the Griswoldville Manufacturing Company, Willis Place, Colrain.



Tenement block and boarding-house of the Griswoldville Manufacturing Company, Willis Place, Colrain.



Turners Falls mill; "L" east and north facades. c1900



"L" and east facade c1880



The east and north facades of the Turners Falls Cotton Mill. The building is 250 feet long, 72 feet wide, and four stories high, with an ell 100 x 50 feet, three stories high. The company has seven and one-half acres of land here upon a portion of which is built a building holding twenty employee apartments.

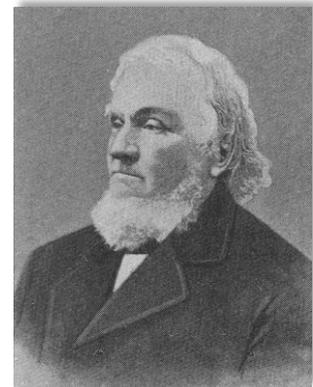
The Griswold Cotton Mill at Turners Falls and Colrain.

Located 75 yards South of the Turners Falls Paper Company, the Griswold cotton mills had their origin at Colrain, where Joseph Griswold began business as long ago as 1832. In 1840 he incorporated his interests as the Griswold Manufacturing Company. His first mill burned down in 1856. In 1858 he built his next mill at Griswoldville, Colrain and called it the No.1 mill. In 1865 he took his two sons into partnership and began to build the No.2 mill at Willis Place, also in Colrain. It went into production in late 1867. In 1879 Griswold and sons established the mill at

Turners Falls and incorporated the concern there as the Turners Falls Cotton Mills. He also constructed a brick apartment building directly across the canal on the east bank to accommodate 200 of his employees.

The mills produce a great variety of light weight and fancy goods and run about 30,000 spindles and 700 looms, and employ nearly 500 hands. E. D. Griswold is president of both companies and his son F. D. Griswold is manager of the New York end of the business, at 51 Leonard Street. Joseph Griswold, at Turners Falls, is treasurer and Lorenzo Griswold, at Colrain, is agent and executive manager of both mills, assisted by his nephew, James C. Deane. Joseph Griswold was a native of Buckland, Mass., and was born on August 9, 1806. Griswold died in October of 1883 at age 77.

Later uses for the complex had the Kendall Co. Manufacture it product from 1939 to c. 1948. The Rockdale Department Store – a Connecticut based business – occupied the space from 1953 to 1972. When Rockdale moved out the building was left empty for two years. The Railroad Salvage Company of Windsor, Connecticut utilized the building from 1974 to 1994. It remains today a hazard and in need of removal.



Joseph Griswold

For an in-depth resource pertaining to the industries along the Turners Falls Power Canal, please refer to:

THE TURNERS FALLS CANAL History and Description

By Ed Gregory

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Site Occupancy: Post T.F. Cotton Mill

- The Kendall Co. (Textiles) 1939-1948.
 - 1949-mid1953 Idle.
 - Mid 1953-1972 Rockdale Department Store.
 - 1973-to late 1974 Idle.
 - Late 1974-1994 Railroad Salvage Dept. Store.
 - 1994 to present; various owners.
- None were successful in the redevelopment of the property.

Mill Footprint: 56,090 sq. feet. = 1.3 acres

Annex Footprint: 5,300 sq. feet = 0.13 acres

Park Lot acreage: n/a

Idleness and natural forces have reduced the mill to a decrepit state. A substantial fire in January of 2017 has condensed the mill to a rubble pile. The Annex is in decent condition and is currently under redevelopment by Obeir Construction Company, Montague, Massachusetts.



Mill. 9.18.17

e.g. image

Annex. 1.24.16

e.g. image

