

Cecelia Catcher

“...she must be a *factory girl*.”: Changing the Social Perception of Factory girls in Lowell, MA  
1840-1845

Through the study of publications in the *Lowell Offering* printed from 1840-1845, many of the writings show an acknowledgement by female operatives of the negative connotations placed by society onto the stereotype of *factory girl*. Through analysis of the stories, poems and songs published in the *Lowell Offering* magazine, a direct attempt by the female authors and subsequently the operatives of the textile mills in Lowell, Massachusetts is shown to counter act or disprove the negative stereotype of women employed in industrialization as immoral, uneducated, and unable to perform domestic responsibilities. Historians have used the magazine for its examples of women’s access to intellectual advancement, analysis of working and living conditions, fashion styles, comparison of content against other magazines of the time period, and for its sense of collectivism amongst the women. However, very little has been said about the motivations of the female authors behind the magazine and how they attempted to alter the way society perceived the women employed in industrialization while maintaining personal independence. The women of Lowell, Massachusetts used the *Lowell Offering* as a platform to voice their opinions while actively negating the negative stereotype held by society towards female factory workers.

Women in industry  
Female factory workers  
*Lowell Offering*  
Lowell, Massachusetts  
Stereotypes of female factory workers  
Nineteenth-Century Women’s Magazines