

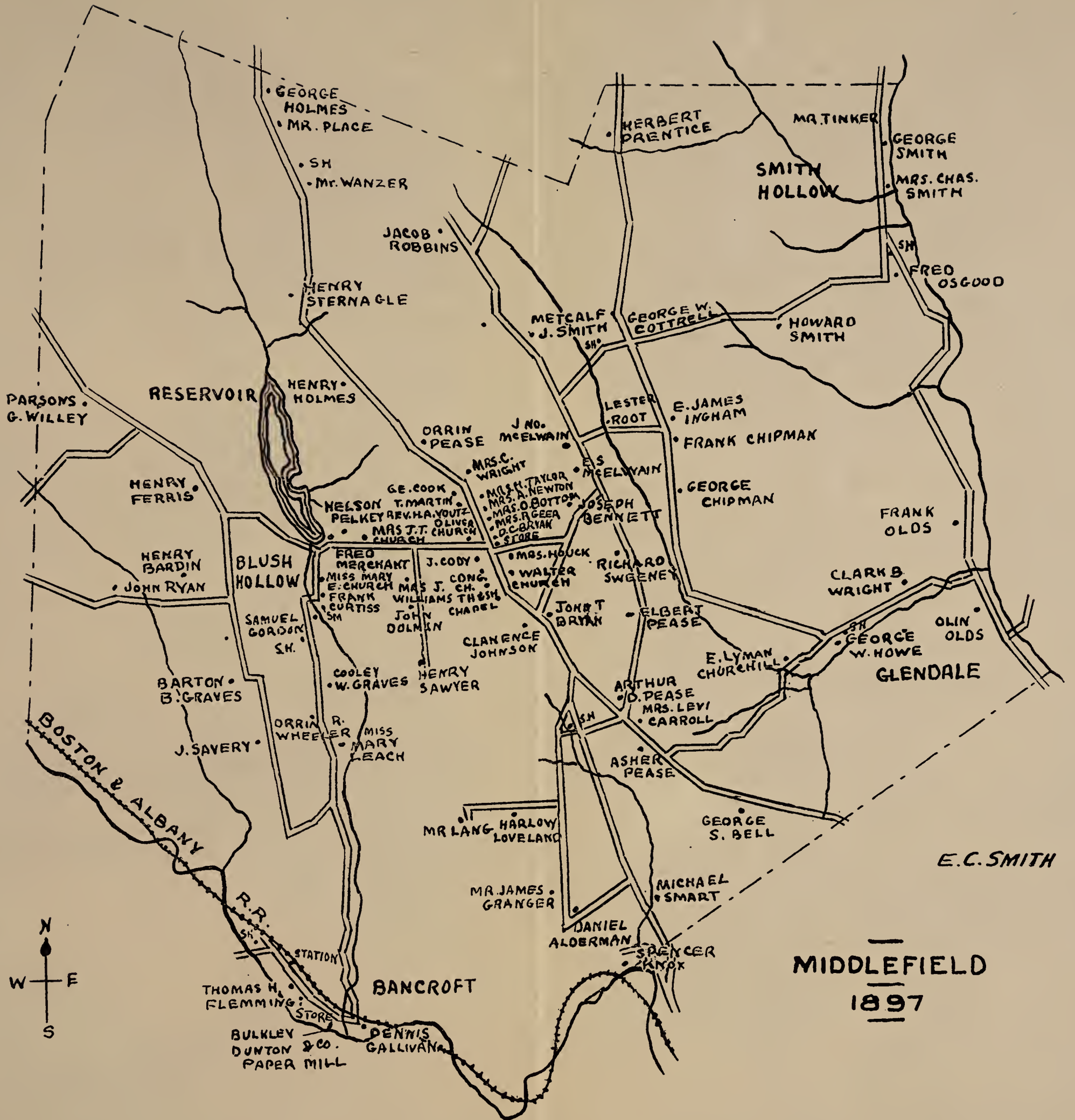
## CHAPTER XII

### THE FLOODS AND THE INDUSTRIAL DECLINE

**T**HE beginning of the period extending from 1870 to the end of the nineteenth century found Middlefield a busy hive of industry, with manufactories humming, with many farms in a high state of cultivation, and the mountain pastures supporting large herds of high grade stock. The two church societies were in a flourishing condition and large numbers of school children were being educated in the district and select schools. But as a result of economic changes, only gradually realized, combined with a series of misfortunes, this prosperity began to decline. The settlement of the far West had progressed so rapidly that the increasing production of cattle and sheep on the vast ranges began to compete seriously with that of the eastern stock raisers. The development of the factory system caused industrial enterprises to concentrate in the cities and larger towns where a more adequate and contented labor supply was to be obtained. It was not strange, therefore, that many of the younger generation throughout western Massachusetts should look to the West and to the cities for their livelihood.

In Factory Village a succession of untoward events gradually reduced the activity of the woolen manufacturing business. In December, 1871, the Upper Mill of the Church Brothers plant at Factory Village caught fire from sparks in the picker. The structure, which was dry as tinder and soaked with oil from top to bottom, made a brilliant and striking spectacle as it burned, but the destruction was complete. This mill was, however, rebuilt within the next two or three years. Then came some loss due to the destruction of a large amount of goods in the Boston fire of 1872, and this was followed by a season of poor business resulting from the panic of 1873. On top of these discouragements came as a climax the flood of 1874.

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MAIN RESERVOIR—LOOKING EAST

MAIN RESERVOIR—LOOKING NORTH

MAIN RESERVOIR AND DAM

part of Massachusetts, and it was always a source of worry. Draining a large area of mountain country where the rains run off rapidly and a sudden thaw in the spring sends unmeasured volumes of water down the narrow valley, this stream has had to be watched with a careful eye. It was often necessary to open the floodgates wide to prevent the water from flowing over the top of the dam and washing the roadway. One early experience with a fall freshet has been preserved from oblivion in the following brief notes made in a diary by Oliver Blush, the tavern keeper.

- “1835 Oct. 9 Rainy day. Great freshet hurt Uriah’s lower dam.  
 Oct. Rained hard all night. Greatest freshet known here. Uriah’s dam gone.  
 Oct. 14 Sunday. Great Freshet. Some rain this day. Great damage done.  
 Oct. 15 Repaired fence in Meedow that was washed off.  
 Oct. 31 Cold. Hept Uriah most of day on dam and other things.”

About two miles above the dam of the main reservoir, the Churches, in 1866, had built two more dams. One of these, constructed merely of earth, made a storage reservoir covering twenty-five acres on the main stream. The other, more strongly built of earth and stone, dammed a tributary at some distance up the mountain to the west of the Upper Reservoir, forming another body of water known as “The Goose Pond.”

For over thirty years the main reservoir had been fully able to control all the sudden increases in the amount of flowage caused by spring or summer rains, but on Saturday, July, 11, 1874, a hard storm set in which continued in torrents all Saturday night and a part of Sunday. Upon the high hills surrounding the sources of Factory Brook and the “Goose Pond” there was a veritable cloudburst. That a disaster was impending was first realized by Deacon Harry Meacham, who, fearing for the safety of the two upper reservoirs near his farm, went to see what the conditions were about four o’clock Sunday afternoon. He soon discovered that the “Goose Pond had broken loose.” While he stood looking at the dam of the upper reservoir he was horrified to see a heavy landslide on the lower slope of the embankment. Knowing at once what this meant, he hastened home, mounted his horse and dashed down the country road giving the alarm. As he approached the Center he enlisted the aid of

Orrin Pease in spreading the news. Mr. Pease, knowing he could make better time on foot than upon horseback, set off at top speed across lots. As he neared the Hollow he attracted the attention of John Metcalf, son of Walter Metcalf, who seeing Mr. Pease coming in the distance, gesticulating wildly and shouting the deacon's message, "Reservoir burst," ran to Factory Village and warned the inhabitants of the impending flood.

Upon hearing the news William Blush immediately had a horse saddled and sent George Brown down the valley road and on to "The Switch" to spread the alarm. When Brown came to return after fulfilling his mission he found the water so high and the road so washed away that he was compelled to travel over the hills.

Deacon Meacham, upon reaching the Center, shouted the news of the coming deluge and continued on his way to the Hollow. Matthew Smith, who lived in the Center, upon hearing the news, started out to the southeast, drove over the mountain in an hour and a half and warned the dwellers in Huntington of the coming flood. At about the same time that Metcalf learned the news, James Talmadge Church, who lived a short distance up the hill east of the main reservoir, caught sight of a great wave of muddy water dashing into the pond where the brook entered, and realizing that the upper dam had broken, ran down to the threatened village to announce the approaching danger. Happily the warnings were given in time and most of the residents took to the hills. Oliver Blush refused to leave his home, in spite of the prayers and entreaties of his friends and neighbors, declaring, "If I'm bound for Hell I'll go there swimming."

Probably the narrowest escape from loss of life occurred on the farm situated at the head of the Reservoir on which the Chamberlain family had just settled. Mr. Chamberlain, who was outdoors with the children, drew attention to the fact that the water in the brook was rising rapidly without realizing the reason therefor. His wife, however, saw the impending danger from the house and screamed to her husband that a flood was coming, ordering the children to run to high land, which they did. Miss Sarah Chamberlain, who was one of these children, recalls vividly the great wall of water towering above them, rolling along like an immense ball of mud with trees and



FLOOD SCENES IN UPPER FACTORY VILLAGE  
THE DAM AS REBUILT AFTER FLOOD OF 1874

branches moving up and down on its surface, and how it seemed to burst with a loud roar and swerve to the east, just missing the house, but carrying away all the fine soil and apple trees, leaving this once productive farm a desert of rocks and gravel.

As the rush of the flood from the upper ponds reached the lower reservoir in the Hollow the water rose rapidly and soon an immense volume was flowing smoothly over the dam. For a time it was thought that the dam would stand the pressure, but at last with a great crash and whirl of water the wall collapsed and through a gap sixty feet wide the mountain wave plunged roaring on. An eyewitness states that, as viewed from the surrounding hills, the catastrophe was wonderfully sublime and thrilling. As one building after another succumbed and was carried away by the torrent the excitement was intense. The first building to go was a tenement just north of Church Brothers boarding-house. Next the boarding-house was deprived of foundations and the lower story was torn out, and most of the household goods of Alfred Brown, a carpenter in the employ of the Churches, living there, were swept down stream. The Church Brothers Upper Mill, which was under construction at this time, replacing the old upper mill burned in December, 1871, escaped serious damage, the force of the waters being somewhat broken by contact with the boarding-house, but a valuable pile of lumber went with the waves. The old Church homestead opposite the mill, occupied by Jerome Blush, was greatly damaged. The ell was overturned and much furniture washed away. The residence of Sumner U. Church was fortunately left unharmed but his carriage house with valuable contents was completely destroyed. Two other buildings belonging to the Churches, situated on the west side of the street, one used for storage and one as a dyehouse, were demolished and all traces of their foundations washed away.

Directly south of these buildings stood the old fulling mill built by Amasa Blush and operated later by Oliver Blush, and Oliver Blush's woolen mill, operated at that time by Jerome Blush as a satinet factory and gristmill. The torrent made short work of both these structures. When the woolen mill went under a great cloud of dust went up like smoke from a fire. An amusing incident is told of Mrs. Oliver Blush, whose house stood



across the street from the mill. When the waters rose and began to cross her doorsill she tried to sweep them back with her broom. But the flood came so fast that she had to retreat to the upper story, coming down after the waters had subsided to find her carpets covered with mud, slime, and gravel. William Blush's carriage house containing several fine carriages was swept away. A short distance south of Blush's mill stood William Blush's felloe, shaft and wire sieve factory. It withstood the assault of the flood for some time, but finally succumbed and was left split in two at the bottom. Beyond this factory some distance down the stream, Church's sawmill and dam were carried away. At Church's Lower Mill an ell at the east end, used as a gigging room and filled with cloth was partly destroyed while a one-story dyehouse was badly damaged.

Between Factory Village and "The Switch" the only building destroyed was the grist and sawmill first started by John Ford about 1780, at this time owned by Charles West of Pittsfield. The whole plant including dam and mills was torn away and swept down stream. All the dams on the stream except one new one just above the Upper Mill were torn out. Every bridge over the stream was washed away. Lawns and gardens and orchards were stripped of their rich earth to the bare rocks. The highway through the Hollow was completely wrecked from the dam to the lower village and was badly damaged at places between the Hollow and "The Switch." Fortunate indeed it was that the flood happened on Sunday when the travel on the road was light. As it was everybody escaped and the only living thing known to have perished was a pig drowned in Chester.

The financial losses at Factory Village were at the time estimated as follows: S. U. Church and Brothers, \$65,000 including over \$30,000 on the reservoir, \$6,000 on the dam, water connections, etc., \$5,000 on the Lower Mill. Oliver Blush's loss was estimated at \$13,000; William Blush's \$15,000; at West's sawmill the damage amounted to about \$5,000.

After wrecking the mills, houses and highways at the Hollow, the waters with their burden of wreckage swept down the narrow valley toward Middlefield Station. Here the Boston and Albany Railroad crossed the stream on a double arch stone bridge, which also spanned the highway. As the flood reached

this bridge the driftwood choked the arches damming the waters for a time only to insure more completely the destruction of the bridge at last. The arches at length gave way and about two hundred feet of railway embankment was washed out. The damage to the railroad at this point was at least \$100,000.

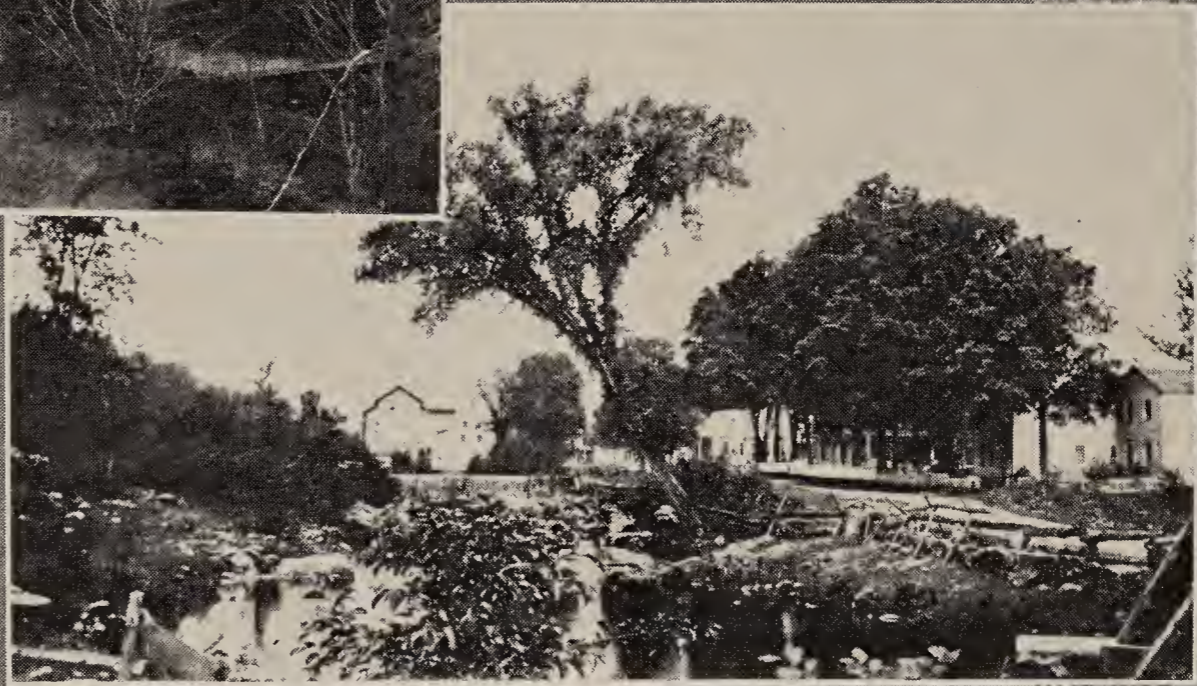
South of the embankment two tenements owned by Bulkley, Dunton and Company, the New York paper mill firm, with a little office building, were swept away. The waters set back to the paper mill near by and did some damage raising the floor. It was estimated that \$2,000 would cover the damage to this firm. Two barns in the neighborhood were also swept away.

Leaving "The Switch" the flood swept down the course of the Westfield River and at the foot of Mt. Gobble burst around the ends of the wooden dam belonging to the new shoddy mill of John C. West, Jr., of Pittsfield, tearing out a part of the raceway and doing so much damage that the plant was abandoned when two years later another freshet tore out the dam entirely. The house belonging to Leander Jeaneroux was swept away with its contents. The Boston and Albany Railroad suffered heavily all the way down the valley, the tracks crossing and recrossing the stream by no fewer than nine bridges between the one destroyed at Middlefield and Chester Station. The first two bridges east of Middlefield were unharmed but the third, a stone deck bridge, was badly broken and had to be replaced at an expense estimated at the time of \$40,000. Another stone bridge was cracked though no visible break was seen. \$10,000 was needed to repair a wooden deck bridge whose abutments were washed away, and similar damage was caused at various points farther east. The railway embankment at many points was torn out and traffic was tied up for fully three days.

The flood reached Chester at six P. M. where it did \$10,000 damage tearing out four town highway bridges. Dr. Lucas's emery and ax works were damaged to the extent of \$5,000, many houses and stores were flooded, and fences and small buildings were changed and intermingled. The river cut itself a new bed at one point causing \$2,000 damage to the farm of Newton Cowles. The Highland Mills at Huntington sustained damage, their basement being flooded and machinery and flannel mixed with debris in great confusion.



FACTORY VILLAGE FROM WEST HILL

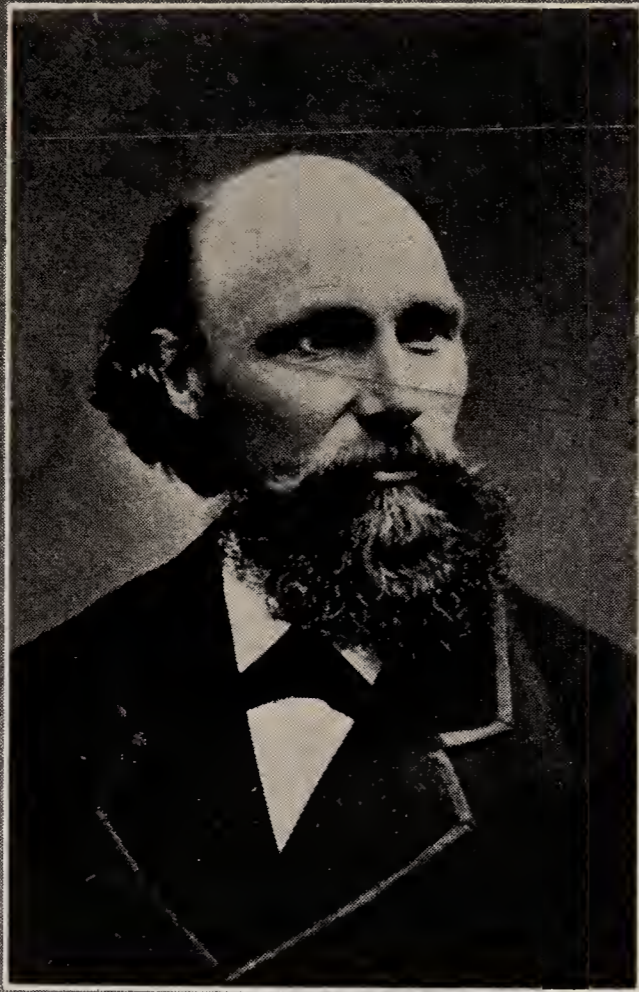


FACTORY VILLAGE FROM THE BRIDGE

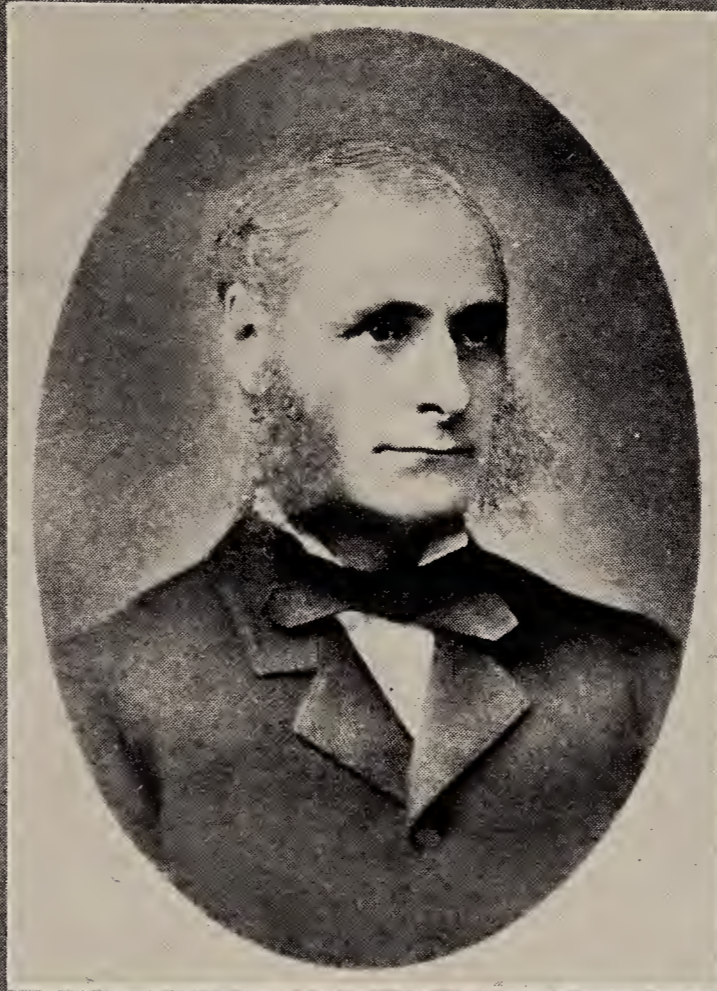
In spite of these discouragements and losses and in spite of the fact that they were advancing in years, the Church brothers, without outside encouragement or assistance, rebuilt the dam at the lower reservoir and continued business, and for a while things went on much as they had before the flood. Under the circumstances no neglect was attributed to the Churches and no restraint was placed upon their rebuilding the dam. The part not swept away remained and was considered strong enough not to require rebuilding. The broken part was rebuilt and when finished was accepted by the County Commissioners. The masonry work was put in by the Churches to make the dam doubly safe.

The fact that there were nearly as many families in Factory Village in 1880 as there had been in 1870 indicates that business must have been fairly good after the resumption of manufacturing. Nevertheless, the supplanting of broadcloth by worsteds in the popular taste, the competition of factories situated nearer labor centers and equipped with steam power, and the withdrawal of James T. and Lyman Church from the partnership, brought about a gradual decrease in output.

When the year of 1883 arrived the Middlefield people realized that their town had been in existence for one hundred years, thus acquiring a certain historical interest. At this date many of the prominent sons and daughters of the town were still alive, living for the most part on the farms which had been handed down by their fathers and grandfathers. In the memories of the older residents the recollections of the pioneers were still fresh. It was therefore decided to hold a centennial celebration. As the actual date of incorporation fell on the twelfth of March,—a most unfavorable season of the year,—the festivities were postponed to August 15. The Committee of Arrangements consisted of M. J. Smith, Matthew Smith, Charles Wright, Hiram Taylor and George S. Bell. The same meeting also appointed as president of the day, Metcalf J. Smith, as chief marshal, Arnold Pease, and organized the town into one vast committee on supplies for the collation, while special committees attended to the other details. Professor Edward P. Smith of Worcester was invited to deliver the historical discourse; several persons, mostly former residents of Middlefield and representatives from adjoining



METCALF JOHN SMITH  
PRESIDENT



EDWARD PAYSON SMITH  
HISTORIAN



ARNOLD PEASE  
CHIEF MARSHAL

OFFICERS OF THE MIDDLEFIELD CENTENNIAL—1883

towns which originally contributed of their territory to help form the new town, were invited to speak on special topics and Myron L. Church was appointed to provide suitable music. A tent capable of holding twenty-five hundred persons was procured and pitched on the summit of the Fair Grounds, a point from which nearly the whole of Middlefield can be seen, as well as all the surrounding towns.

The people of the town entered heartily and generously into the spirit of the occasion and, the day being perfect, the success of the celebration was complete. The attendance was large, and included very many, though too few, of the old residents and descendants of the town, and a multitude of friendly visitors from neighboring towns. The president had planned the program so well that everything was done at just the proper moment, and he opened the exercises with a gracious address of welcome. The historical discourse was so full, so interesting and so adequate to the occasion that it was listened to with eagerness. A centennial poem by Azariah Smith reviewed with kindly humor and deep feeling the impressions of a youth spent in Middlefield. So great was the interest aroused by these and other addresses that there was a general demand for their publication, which was generously provided for by the town.

The speakers in general seemed to sense the uncertain economic future for the town, and to feel that a distinctive service to its sons and daughters had been rendered by Middlefield in the past which had made its influence reach far beyond the limits of the township. In this vein, the president of the day spoke as follows in his address of welcome:

“We, the dwellers in Middlefield now, acknowledge that we have ‘a goodly heritage.’ We remember to-day that this town is what it is because of the sterling worth and character of the generations that have gone before. We also desire to be impressed with the truth that the Middlefield of the future will be largely what we of the present generation are making it. And, fellow citizens, impressed with some just sense of our responsibilities to those who shall come after us, be it ours to transmit to our children this goodly heritage, not only unimpaired, but still further enriched by our own manly, Christian living.”

In the Historical Discourse also after describing the periods of material achievement and prosperity, the speaker said:

“But in a most important sense the great of work of Middlefield has not been either agriculture or manufactures. Her best products, those by

which she gains her fairest renown, for which there is an unfailing demand, are her sons and her daughters. Nowhere more than in Middlefield has there been a more profound apprehension of the immense difference between getting a living and living. This realization has laid a more constraining grasp upon the subtle springs of action than any questions of profit and loss. Middlefield's first effort has been to make, not money, but men."

He testified to the excellent equipment acquired through the training in the schools, in the capacity for self-government developed in the small hill-town, and of farm life in general, emphasizing Middlefield's particular service to the country at large in the following words:

"If in the future this town could be only a nursery from which should be transplanted at fitting times the best growths it could produce, it would still do a work of inestimable importance. In this age of steel and electricity, this era of vast opportunity, it is probable the interests of many of Middlefield's children would be promoted by going forth to other callings than those here pursued. But for success in these callings nothing can surpass the lessons in cheerful industry, the wise economy of a simple training, the muscle of energy and victory that may be gained here. The departure of such young men is a loss to the town, but a gain to the world, that perhaps needs them even more. In just this way Middlefield has given to the West and to our towns and cities some of the best blessings they have received,—men of industry, business talent, and order, men of education and piety, who, wherever they have gone, have laid the foundations or upheld the structure of all that is hopeful or good."

On the other hand, an objective view of the positive achievements of Middlefield in the pursuits of agriculture was set forth in a letter from the renowned physician, Oscar C. DeWolf, of Chicago, formerly of Chester.

"Middlefield has always kept itself pre-eminent among the neighboring towns by the value of her agricultural interests; and the fact, taking into account her sparse population, that she has so long and so creditably sustained an agricultural society, with an annual exhibition, is sufficient testimony to the intelligence and enterprise of her people.

"Her young men should reflect long before they decide to exchange the independence and healthful occupation of a farmer's life for the uncertainties and wearing excitement of business in our cities."

The appreciation of the advantages of their early training in Middlefield felt by those who had gone forth to acquire a higher education was eloquently voiced by Dr. Judson Smith in the following words:

"It were vain to seek to tell a tithe of the debt that her educated sons and daughters owe to Middlefield, to the homes that gave them birth, to the

social life that flowed around them, to the schools where the firm foundations of later attainments were laid, to the churches where honesty and purity and every manly virtue and Christian grace were reinforced, to the teachers and preachers, to the men and women who inspired them with noble aims and furnished them with true ideals . . . Gladly, reverently, as if discharging a sacred service and a personal debt, I weave this chaplet of honor for our native town, and speak for the fathers and mothers, immortal now, these words of love and heartfelt praise.”

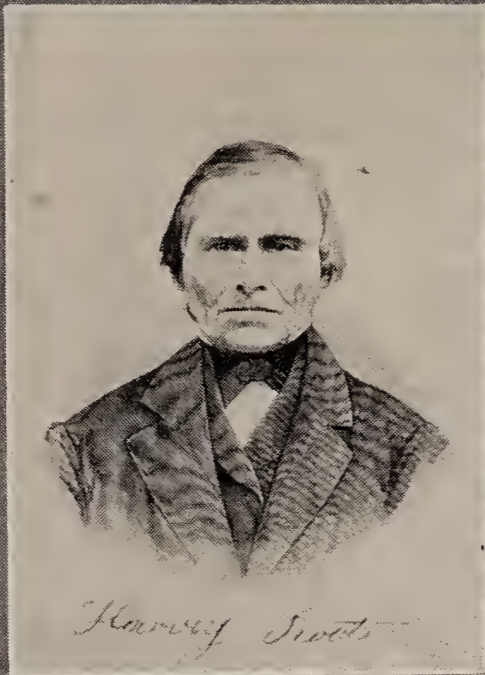
The movement of the younger people away from Middlefield on account of changed economic conditions, which was so strikingly emphasized in the Centennial addresses, began about this time visibly to affect the life of the community. Farms which for two or three generations had remained in one family began to pass into the possession of strangers. Scarcely a new building was built at the Center until toward the end of the century. No new roads were laid out and no new industries were established. In Factory Village, very little new building was done after the ravages of the flood of 1874 had been repaired.

The churches also felt the change. In 1878 the Baptist Church was able to raise only \$500 for pastor's salary and during the next decade it sank to \$400. But in the face of discouraging conditions, Mr. Rockwood never lost his serene optimism, never failed to maintain his high ideal, never allowed outer circumstances to conquer his spirit. When finally in 1890 he resigned the church decided not to maintain preaching any longer.

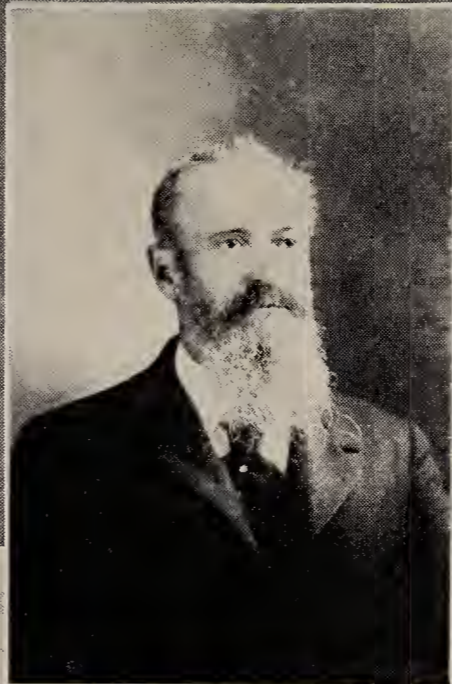
The Congregational Church was similarly affected by the altered conditions. The death of some of its generous members and the removal of others reduced the number of givers and the available income, and in 1879 Mr. Pierce was asked to accept a reduction of \$200 in his salary. He assented and remained pastor for two years more. In succeeding years the difficulty of supporting the church adequately increased but preaching was not discontinued except for short periods when there was no settled pastor.

With the death of Sumner U. Church in 1884, the company lost the foremost partner in the concern, and in 1890 Oliver Church, the surviving member of the firm, discontinued the business. Thus came to an end the woolen business in Blush Hollow, which had existed just about one hundred years since the erection of Herrick's fulling mill.





*Harvey Root*



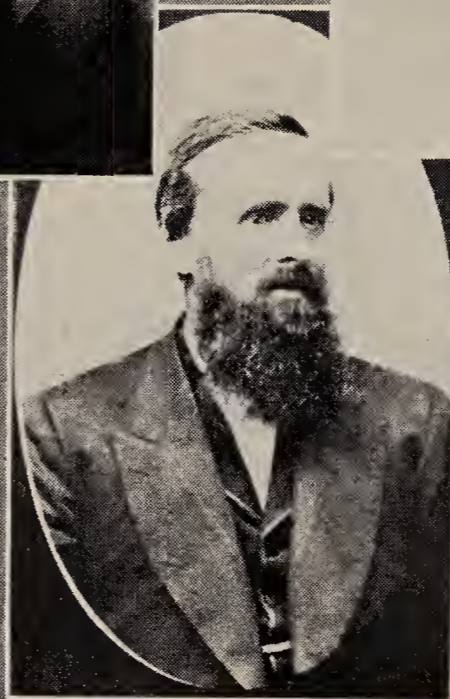
CHARLES M. COMBS



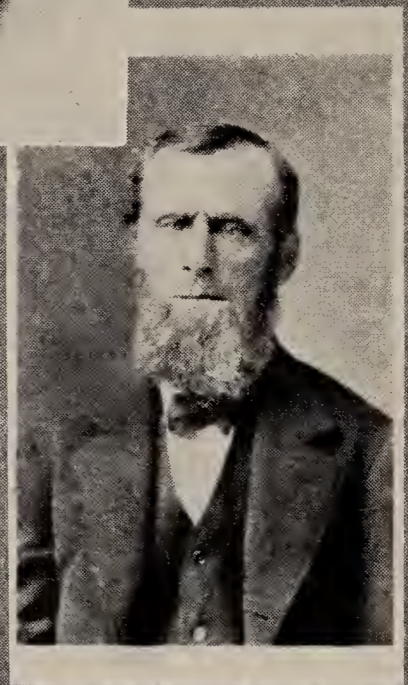
DEA. HARRY MEACHAM



ELDRIDGE PEASE



AMBROSE ROBBINS



MORGAN PEASE

By 1890 there were only nineteen families in the Hollow, just half as many as in 1880. During the following decade the ownership of the mills changed several times as a result of unsuccessful attempts to put the old structures to profitable use. A stocking-knitting enterprise was superseded by a wire goods business, and that venture gave way to a quartz-crushing industry, which fared no better than the rest. There was, however, a revival of the lumbering industry near the end of the period when Frank Curtiss built a large storehouse and sawmill on the site of the old William Blush wood-turning shop, a modern dwelling where William Blush's house stood, and several tenements south of the bridge.

But as though to make a complete end of industry, a second flood occurred in Blush Hollow on April 12, 1901. The mill property was at the time owned by Mr. G. W. I. Landau of Paterson, New Jersey, who was operating them occasionally as a quartz-grinding plant, employing but a few men. W. W. Carter, the foreman, lived in the old Uriah Church house. The care of the dam had now passed into the hands of men who had not the experience with Factory Brook freshets so well known to the Churches. A dry spell earlier in the season had led the owners to put all flood gates in place to conserve all water possible. Twenty-four hours of downpour after a week of heavy rains swelled the mountain brooks and the reservoir was very full by the afternoon of Sunday, April 12. Foreman Carter was at the Lower Mill, it was said, strengthening the dam there to withstand the water when the gates were opened. The general opinion is that the opening of the gates was delayed too long for when at four o'clock P. M. the foreman called for help from his neighbor, Frank Curtiss, and his men, the pressure on the gates was so great that no human power could raise them. While this work was going on the water reached the top of the dam. In a few moments it was trickling over the roadway and from that moment the structure was doomed. In one hour, almost to the minute, the great breach was made and within thirty minutes all the damage in the village had been done. Had the dam broken without warning and all at once, nothing could have saved the village from annihilation. When it was seen that the dam was doomed, Mr. Curtiss started down the valley on horseback to



OLIN OLDS

ASHER PEASE

HIRAM TAYLOR

JACOB ROBBINS

ROYAL D. GEER

DANIEL ALDERMAN

warn the residents to prepare for a flood and all the inhabitants had taken to the hills before the rush of waters came.

The first damage done was the wrecking of a tenement house east of the highway just below the dam. Next the foundations of the old Uriah Church house, occupied by Mr. Carter, were partly washed out. Some of the foundations of Miss Mary E. Church's house, all the lawn and part of the fence and garden were carried off. The water divided into two branches, one taking its course down the village street, stripping it of all its earth and leaving but a trough of boulders in its track; the other running farther east back of the houses destroying fences and gardens. It was this stream which carried off a barn belonging to Frank Curtiss. Curtiss's sawmill, a new structure, was not much damaged, but 150,000 feet of lumber and logs went with the waters bringing up his loss to \$7,000. Mr. Landau's loss including the dam and mill property damage was estimated at \$15,000.

The town of Middlefield suffered heavily in the disaster from the destruction of the highway through the Hollow and on to Bancroft. For two hundred yards the road was entirely destroyed. The iron bridge by the sawmill was lifted bodily from its foundation, swept down stream a hundred feet and rolled over and over before it went to pieces. A stretch of road, high above the stream by the watering trough beyond Mary Leach's house was undermined and swept away, and at many places between this point and "The Switch" this beautiful highway winding along the course of the brook was obliterated so that a large portion of the road was abandoned, and a new road built on higher ground. In all the town lost four bridges valued at \$3,000, and \$10,000 was estimated as cost of repairs to highways.

The greatest damage was done at Middlefield Station where the catastrophe of '74 was repeated. Lumber and logs from the sawmill with driftwood and other debris soon choked the opening of the stone arch bridge. The waters backed up and rising washed away the embankment until at last the masonry collapsed with a great crash and the impetuous torrent swept before it great blocks of stone, carrying some of them two or three hundred feet down stream and leaving but a portion of the west abutment standing and the rails stretched across the gap hang-

ing forty feet in the air. With some of the embankment carried away the Boston and Albany Railroad had to fill a gap 150 feet long and forty feet deep. This with other washouts of embankment along the Westfield River as far as Huntington cost the railroad, it was estimated, \$75,000. At "The Switch" the house of Dennis Gallivan was undermined, two other houses submerged, and damage to the extent of \$5,000 done at the paper mill of Bulkley, Dunton and Company, the floor being raised and covered with debris.

Chester and Huntington suffered much damage. The water reached Chester at six-twenty o'clock. The alarm had been sounded and the people had taken to the hills for safety. The bridges were carried away and together with damage to roads the loss entailed reached \$10,000. Many citizens and business concerns suffered more or less damage to buildings and stock.

It is not strange that after two such experiences with disasters caused by the breaking of dams at Middlefield, the railroad and the people of Chester should be opposed to the rebuilding of the dam at Blush Hollow. The New York Central Railroad has fought any movement to replace the structure, and the result is that manufacturing at Factory Village is practically dead, one sawmill only remaining. The once bustling village is quiet, scarcely half a dozen families remaining in the valley.

Many of the houses and buildings have disappeared, having been taken down or removed bodily to serve elsewhere. The Upper Mill was taken down and rebuilt as a stock barn, half a mile east of the Center at Cranberry Lodge. The storehouse which used to stand opposite the store is now rebuilt into the north wing of the Wayside Lodge. The store was purchased by Thomas Fleming and used to replace his store at "The Switch" which was destroyed by fire some years ago. Most of the tenement houses are gone. The timbers of the old double house just north of the Upper Mill Mr. Cottrell used for building a barn on his farm. John and Edward Savery used a four-tenement house in the lower village for improving the farm buildings on the old Ely place. Alfred S. Crane, of Springfield, shipped timbers from the old Rowen house to build his barn in that city. Many of the timbers of the Lower Mill have been taken for various uses, some of them being shipped out of town.



FLOOD VIEWS—1901

VILLAGE STREET

RUINED GARDENS—BROKEN DAM BEYOND

WHERE THE IRON BRIDGE STOOD

THE RUINED RAILWAY ARCH

The William Blush house was burned as was also the house Mr. Curtiss built on the same site. The Oliver Blush house next door and the house next south of that were burned at different times earlier. Such changes have entirely altered the appearance of Factory Village and no one passing through the quiet street to-day would imagine that this hamlet was once a busy hive of industry.

This period saw changes in agriculture as well as in the manufacturing industry. It saw a steady increase in the potato crops raised. The amount of corn raised did not show a falling off until 1895. The apple crop toward the latter part of the period was three times what it was in 1875. Maple sugar was an important product of the farms. In 1895 the number of eggs marketed was five times what it had been twenty years before. Increasing interest in dairy products was manifested and the production of butter, cream and milk increased steadily up to 1885. In the next decade the milk production was still further increased.

Thus the period which began in 1870 with Middlefield at the height of its prosperity saw a gradual but steady decline in prosperity, industry and population. While at its greatest<sup>1</sup> the town had a population of 877 (in 1800), its inhabitants continued to average about 735 until 1870 when the decline became more marked. By the end of the century the number had shrunk to scarcely 400 souls, and with the villages grown quiet and small, Middlefield had almost returned to its condition before 1815, a region of scattered farms.

<sup>1</sup>Not including 1840 when 1,000 temporary workers on the Western Railroad were enumerated in the census of that year.