

An Andover Inventor in the Early Industrial Age, 1817-18

John Bryant won patents in textile manufacturing

**John A. Hodgson
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Today we tend to think of the Industrial Revolution as an urban phenomenon, a great social and cultural change associated with the rise of the "mill towns" of New England. The places that epitomize that revolution in our regional landscape would then seem to be the planned factory cities on the Merrimack River, preeminently Manchester, New Hampshire and Lowell, Massachusetts. But the very fact that these cities were planned – were, two centuries after the founding of Boston, "new" – should remind us that their origins lie elsewhere. The great mill complexes of those hydropower cities arose because new technologies of manufacturing made them possible and even inevitable; those cities represented the flowering of the Industrial Revolution, not its roots. The revolution was born and nurtured in the little mills and workshops and barns where local tinkers set their minds and hands to the task of mechanizing or improving a familiar process such as spinning, weaving, carding, or napping cloth.

Wherever a mill stood, then – and this could be almost anywhere an adequate head of water was available – some inquisitive and enterprising owner or worker or neighbor might be toying with schemes to upgrade or even transform its operations. Especially throughout the northeast – the innovating spirit was less powerful in the mid-Atlantic states and never took hold in the Deep South -- mechanical tinkering of this kind was widespread. During the period between 1810 and 1820, for example, many successful

patents relating to the manufacturing of cloth were filed from the larger cities – Boston, Philadelphia, Providence, Hartford. But a great many such patents also came in from a remarkably wide variety of little villages, places like Poultney, Vermont; Manlius, New York; and Andover, New Hampshire.

The Andover inventor who won a patent for his cloth shearing and napping machine was John J. Bryant, who lived and worked in East Andover. He was a young man – indeed, surprisingly young for a skillful machinist and patentee: when he invented his new machinery he was only eighteen or nineteen years old, and he was still no more than twenty when he received his patent in 1818. He and his slightly younger brother, Jeremy Y. Bryant, left their home in Newmarket in 1816 or 1817 and came to Andover to build new lives for themselves here. Since neither of them had yet reached the age of majority, their father must have cooperated with them to "give them their time" until they turned 21; this kind of not-unusual legal arrangement would enable his sons to keep their own wages and enter into contracts, while also making them liable for their own debts. Presumably, all the Bryants were confident that these two resourceful young men were already fully capable of making their way in the world independently.

John and Jeremy Bryant seem to have lived somewhere on Maple Street, for an old court record notes that John's property was bounded on the south by "lune Pond" – that is, Loon Pond, the old name for Highland Lake. They worked in the small complex of mills at the outlet of the lake. Eastman, in his history of Andover, tells us that they were "proprietors of the full-

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LITTLE TRUMP OR THE Rocky Mountain Diamond

BY THE
ANDOVER DRAMATIC CLUB

At the Opera House, Andover, N. H.

Thursday Eve., May 29th, 1913

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Rex Kenyon, a young miner.	Harold F. Swett
Philip Cranston, a gambler.	W. F. Swett
Manuel Sanchez, his Mexican comrade,	H. Burham
Gushington Splatterbee of Boston,	Ralph Davis
James Percivale, an Eastern tourist,	Frank Currier
Old Rube Pettingill, Little Trump's	
guardian.	William Cody
Higgins, Percivale's English servant.	Victor Phelps
Grace Percivale, daughter to James.	Grace Russell
Miss Minerva, her aunt, a maiden lady.	Grace O. Swett
Old Pepita, a Mexican hag, living in the	
mines, Hacienda de Morales.	Edna Nelson
LITTLE TRUMP, a Rocky Mountain	
Diamond.	Florence Severance

SYNOPSIS

ACT 1.—Little Trump's home in Colorado. Claimed by her real grandpa. Death of Old Rube. Abduction of Little Trump. Shoots now, cussa you.

ACT 2.—The haunted hacienda in New Mexico. The escape. Re-captured. The duel. Just in the nick of time. Last of the haunted hacienda.

ACT 3.—James Percivale's residence, New York City. Twenty-five thousand dollars or you will never see your grand daughter. Plain Smith and seven small children. Little Trump returned. The villain foiled. Suits me away up to the handle, and just you make a note of that.

THE POPULAR LYRIC QUARTET

will sing between the acts. Music will be furnished by

Turcotte's Famous Orchestra

Dancing until 2 o'clock, S. W. HEATH, Floor Manager.

ICE CREAM AND CAKE

will be on sale in the dining room. Proceeds to go towards a drinking fountain in Post Office Square. General admission 25¢. Reserved seats 35¢. Children under twelve years 10¢. Dancing tickets 50¢ per couple. Reserved seats on sale at F. E. Emerson's. Doors open at 7 o'clock. Overture at 8.

OLD NEWSPAPER CLIPPING (note 1913 date) from a family scrapbook now owned by Karen Hanson of Andover. Anyone know where the "the Opera House" was located?

Larry Chase



735-5232

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