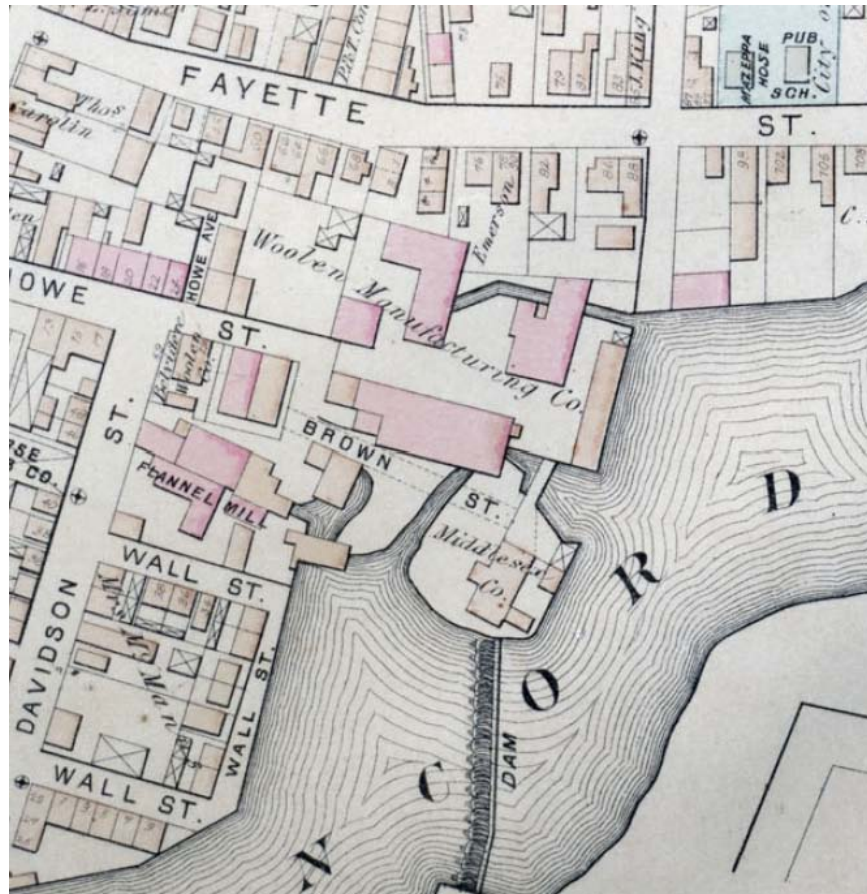


Belvidere Woolen Mill

Belvidere Woolen Mill No. 1

Among the most prominent families associated with the Concord River woolen mills was that of Charles Stott. Born in Rochdale, England, in 1799, Stott gained experience in the Lancashire textile industry before immigrating to the United States in 1826. For several years he managed a woolen mill in Dracut, Massachusetts, before joining the Belvidere Flannel Company, which operated a woolen mill near the Middlesex dam on the east side of the Concord River. The Stott family and related kin soon played major roles in the expansion of Concord River's textile industry.



The Belvidere Woolen Company's mills near the Middlesex dam are seen in the buildings marked in red in this 1879 atlas of Lowell.

By all accounts Charles Stott was an astute and talented agent. He had acquired enough of his own capital by 1851 to join with Walter Farnsworth, a wealthy merchant from Roxbury, Massachusetts, who had been a partner in the Belvidere Flannel Company since 1834, and assume control of the business. The property included the wood-frame "red mill," which had originally been built by Winthrop Howe, and the adjacent Whitney Mill, a stone building constructed around 1839 for a company that produced woolen blankets and was headed by Lowell attorney Joseph W. Mansur. No sooner had Stott and Farnsworth taken control of the flannel company when a fire destroyed the Whitney

Mill.¹ One year later Stott and his partner suffered another fire that left the “red mill” in ashes and killed watchman James Law. The mill, machinery, and flannel goods consumed by the fire were insured and the company rebuilt at the Howe Street location.²



This brick building, which served as a woolen storehouse, was the last surviving building of the Belvidere Woolen Mill No. 1 before it was demolished in the early 1980s. The brick tenement on the hill above was originally constructed by Stott for his employees. It still stands.

Stott and Farnsworth reorganized the company and began operations again in 1853. With Stott serving as agent, the Belvidere Woollen Manufacturing Company, capitalized at \$75,000 and producing 12,000 yards of flannel each week, proved highly successful. The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 led to a severe decline in Lowell's economy. This was due largely to the actions of the treasurers of Lowell's large cotton corporations, who sold virtually all of the bales of raw cotton from company warehouses and then shut down most of the city's mills. Yet the Spindle City's woolen manufacturers prospered.

¹ “Destructive Fire,” *Lowell Courier*, December 16, 1851.

² Charles Cowley, *A History of Lowell*, pp. 56-57; “Destructive Fire on Howe Street,” *Lowell Daily Advertiser*, November 27, 1852; “Fire and Loss of Life in Lowell,” *The [Amherst, New Hampshire] Farmer's Cabinet*, December 2, 1852.



Charles A. Stott (1835-1912) inherited his father's woolen mills and became an important political figure in Lowell's post-Civil War Republican party.

Belvidere Woolen Mill No. 2

In 1862 Stott oversaw the construction of second mill, located on Lawrence Street and powered by water from an extension of the Whipple Canal, soon renamed the Wamesit Canal. Assisting in the management of these two mills were Stott family and kin, including son Charles A. Stott, paymaster, and nephew John Stott, overseer.³ With his father's backing, Charles A. Stott presided over the construction and commencement of a third mill, located on the northernmost extent of the Wamesit Canal, but this enterprise failed in the early 1870s and the younger Stott returned to the Belvidere company. For many years he served as agent for the Belvidere Woolen Manufacturing Company and was elected mayor of Lowell on the Republican ticket in 1876 and 1877. Charles A. Stott became treasurer and agent of the company following his father's death in 1882. He remained treasurer until he died in 1912.⁴

³ "Stott's New Mill," *Lowell Weekly Journal*, August 1, 1862; Lowell city directories for 1855, 1861, and 1864.

⁴ "Major C. A. Stott's Useful Life Ended," *Lowell Courier-Citizen*, November 1, 1912.



Erected in 1862 and located off Lawrence Street, Belvidere Woolen Mill No. 2 was expanded a number of times by the Stotts during the family's ownership of the company.



This aerial view shows the largely intact factory buildings of Belvidere Woolen Mill No. 2. Hale's Brook extends around the northern perimeter of the mill property which now contains a number of businesses.