



Louisa Maria Wells Monument

History

Louisa Maria Wells is born in Proctorsville, VT, in 1817. Her presence in Lowell is first documented in the 1836 Lowell Female Directory and existing payroll records indicate she starts working in the Card Room of Mill #5 at the Lawrence Mfg. Company in February, 1836. She opens a bank account at Lowell Institute for Savings in June 1836 with a deposit of \$27.00.

She works at Lawrence Mfg. Company for about 13 years. After that, there is no record of where she lives or works until she appears in the 1866 Lowell City Directory as living on River Road in Dracut (later annexed by Lowell as Varnum Avenue).

Louisa dies of heart disease in February, 1886, at the age of 69. In her will, she leaves money for a monument in the Lowell Cemetery. Her will is contested by family members and after 20 years of litigation, her wishes are upheld. Oliver Wendell Holmes rules that Well's \$8,000 would indeed be spent on her monument, for "if a single woman not otherwise distinguished should be minded to prolong the remembrance of her family name by a beautiful monument over her grave, we could not pronounce it unsuitable or improper as a matter of law."

Art and Architecture

The Wells monument is one of Lowell Cemetery's most popular and recognizable memorials.

It was designed and executed by Elizabeth Longman of the Daniel Chester French Studio in 1906. It is made from Knoxville Tennessee marble, sitting on a Vermont granite base. Longman created a full-size model in clay first and then sculpted the actual monument according to the clay representation. The monument was erected on site in the cemetery in 1907. Miss Longman received \$5,000 for her work.

The sculpture depicts the Angel of Death (or Mercy) comforting a tired mill girl who has an unraveling spool of yarn in her hand. The epitaph reads "Out of the fibre of her daily

tasks, she wove the fabric of a useful life.” Longman was also the artist for the Storey Monument near the Lawton Mausoleum.