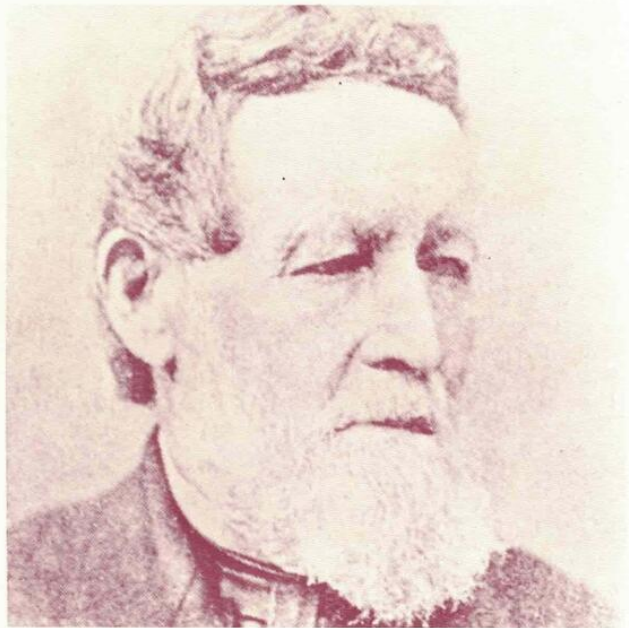


DIGITAL'S MILL 1847-1977



AMORY MAYNARD

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The mill buildings occupied by Digital Equipment Corporation in Maynard, Massachusetts, are modern examples of two old New England traditions. One is the classic mill town pattern: the development of industry and the growth of a community around it. The other is the "make it do" principle: the idea that it's better to get the most from what you have than to abandon it and buy something new and expensive.

The site of the mill was once part of the town of Sudbury, while the opposite bank of the Assabet River belonged to Stow. The present town, formed in 1871, was named for the man most responsible for its development, Amory Maynard.

Born in 1804, Maynard was running his own sawmill business at the age of sixteen. In the 1840s, he went into partnership with a carpet manufacturer for whom he'd done contracting. They dammed the Assabet and diverted water into a millpond to provide power for a new mill, which opened in 1847, producing carpet yarn and carpets. Only one of the original mill buildings survives: it was moved across Main Street and now as an apartment house is familiar to many DIGITAL people.

Amory Maynard's carpet firm failed in the business panic of 1857. But the Civil War allowed the Assabet Manufacturing Company, organized in 1862 with Maynard as managing "agent", to prosper by producing woolens, flannels and blankets for the army. This work was carried on in new brick mill buildings.

Expansion of the mill over many years is evidenced by variations in the architecture of the structures still standing.

The oldest portion of Building 3 dates from 1859, making it the oldest part of the mill in existence today, but several additions were made afterwards. Buildings constructed in the late 1800s frequently featured brick arches over the windows, and at times new additions were made to match neighboring structures.

The mill's best-known feature is the clock donated in memory of Amory Maynard by his son Lorenzo in 1892. Its four faces, each nine feet in diameter, are mechanically controlled by a small timer inside the tower. Neither the timer nor the bell mechanism has ever been electrified; DIGITAL employees still climb 120 steps to wind the clock every week—90 turns for the timer and 330 turns for the striker.

Amory Maynard died in 1890, but his son and grandson still held high positions in the mill's management. The family's local

popularity plummeted, however, when the Assabet Manufacturing Company failed late in 1898. Workers lost nearly half of their savings which they had deposited with the company, since there were no banks in town. Their disillusionment nearly resulted in changing the town's name from Maynard to Assabet.

Prosperity returned in 1899 when the American Woolen Company, an industrial giant, bought the Assabet Mills and began to expand them, adding most of the structures now standing. The biggest new unit was Building 5, 610 feet long, which contained more looms than any other woolen mill in the world. Building 1, completed in 1918, is the newest; the mill pond had been drained to permit construction of its foundation. These buildings have little decoration, but their massiveness is emphasized by the buttress-like brick columns between their windows.

The turn of the century saw the changeover from gas to electric lights at the mill. Until the 1930s the mill generated not only its own power but also electricity for Maynard and several other towns. For years the mill used 40-cycle current. Into the late 1960s power produced by a water wheel was used for outdoor lighting, including DIGITAL's Christmas tree near Main Street. The complex system of shafts and belts once used to distribute power from a central source was rendered obsolete by more efficient small electric motors, just as inexpensive minicomputers have often replaced terminals tied to one large processor.

As the mill grew, so did the town. Even in 1871, the nearly 2,000 people who became Maynard's first citizens outnumbered the people left in either Sudbury or Stow. Maynard's first population almost doubled in the decade between 1895 and 1905, when it reached nearly 7,000 people. Most of the workers lived in houses owned by the company, many of which have been refurbished and are used today. The trains that served the town and the mill, however, are long gone—the depot site is now occupied by a gas station.

Most of the original mill workers had been local Yankees and Irish immigrants. But by the early 1900s, the Assabet Mills were employing large numbers of newcomers from Finland, Poland, Russia and Italy. The latest arrivals were often escorted to their relatives or friends by obliging post office workers. The immigrants made Maynard a bustling, multi-ethnic community while Stow, Sudbury and Acton remained small, rural villages. Farmers

and their families rode the trolley to Maynard to shop and to visit urban attractions then unknown in their own towns, including barrooms and movie houses.

Wages were low and hours were long. Early payrolls show wages of four cents an hour for a sixty hour week. Ralph Sheridan of the Maynard Historical Society confirms that in 1889 his elder brother was making 5½ cents an hour in the mill's rag shop at the age of fourteen, while their father was earning 16½ cents per hour in the boiler room. (As of 1891 one-eighth of the workers were less than 16 years old, and one-quarter were woman.)

Sheridan's own first job at the mill, in the summer of 1915, paid \$6.35 for a work week limited to 48 hours by child labor laws. The indestructible "bullseye" safe still remains in the old Office Building.

Sheridan remembers the bell that was perched on top of Building 3:

"... the whistle on the engine room gave one blast at quarter of the hour, and then about five minutes of the hour the whistle gave one blast again. And everybody was supposed to be inside the gate when that second whistle blew. And then at one minute of the hour this bell rang just once, a quick ring—and we referred to it as "The Tick" because of that ... everybody was supposed to start work at that time, at that moment."



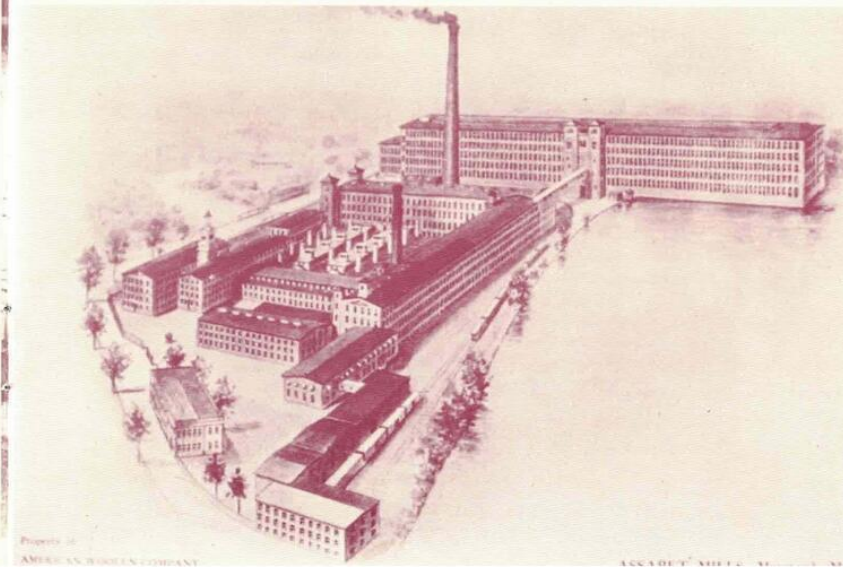
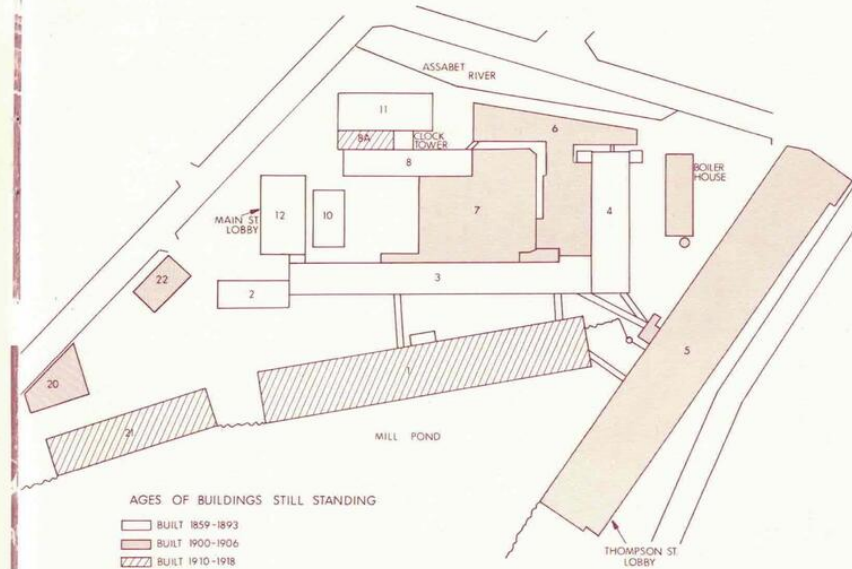
Ralph Sheridan

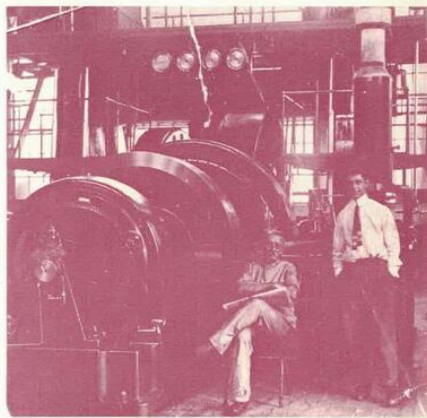
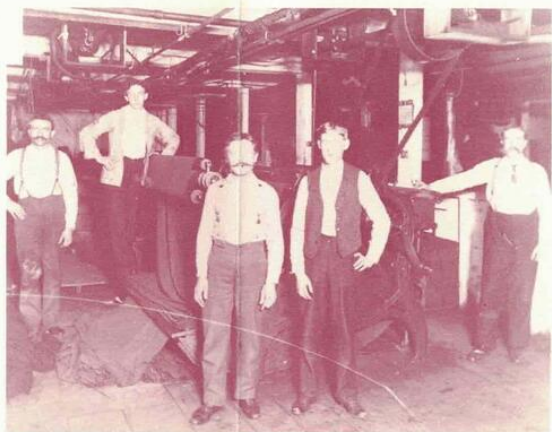
A worker was sent home if he'd forgotten to wear his employee's button, marked "A.W. Co., Assabet".

The millhands really had to work, too. Sheridan recalls one winter evening when there was such a rush to get out an order of cloth for Henry Ford that the men were ordered to invoice it from the warehouse, now Building 21, instead of from the usual shipping room:

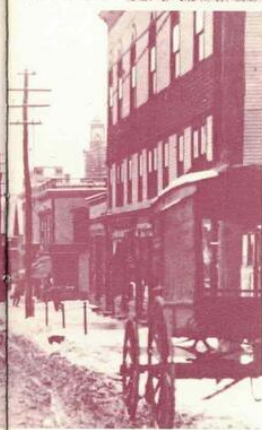
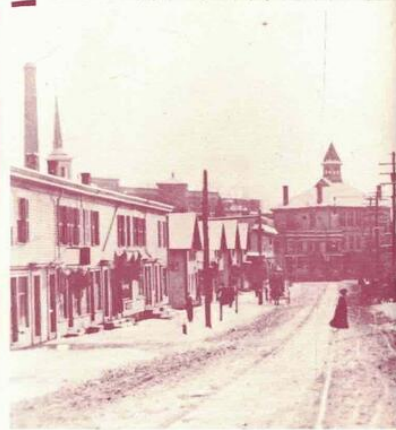
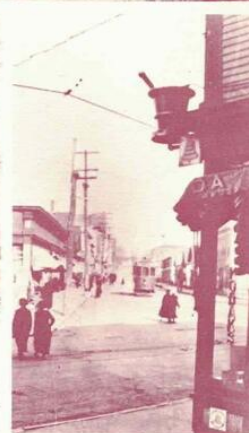
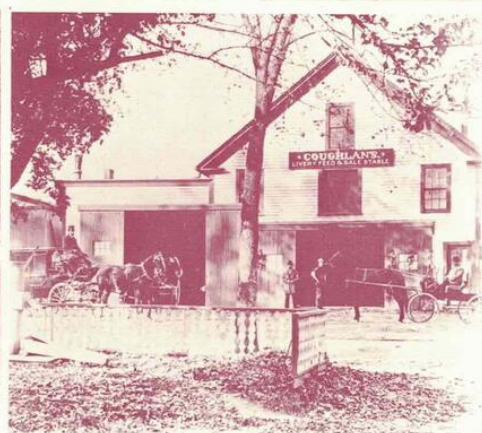
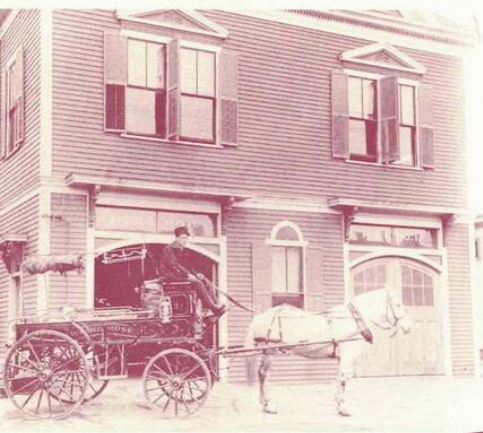
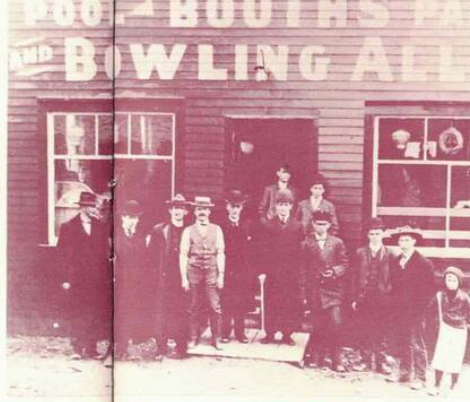
"There was no heat in the building, never had been. And it was so cold that I remember that I had to cut the forefinger and the thumb from the glove that I was wearing in order to handle the pencil to do the invoicing ... the yard superintendent at the time brought in some kerosene lanterns and put 'em under our chairs to keep our feet warm."

Building 21, built out over the pond, remained unheated until DIGITAL took it over.

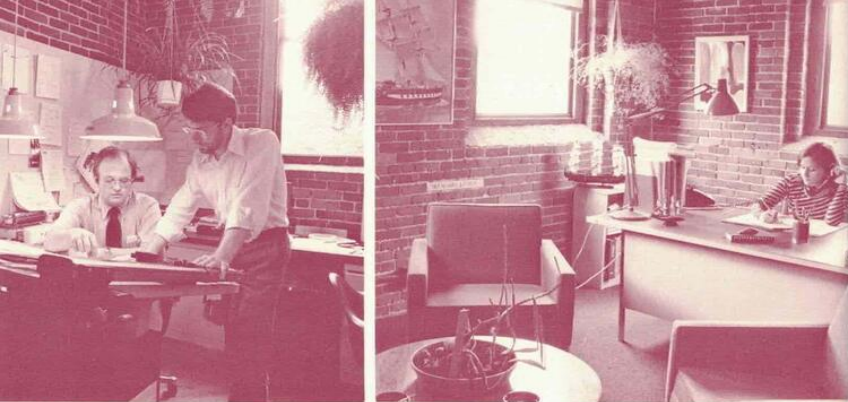




The Employees



The Town



The Mill Today

As in most Northern mill towns, labor relations were often troubled. In 1911 the company used Poles to break the strike of Finnish workers. When no longer able to play off one nationality against another, management for years took advantage of rivalries between different unions. The Great Depression hit the company hard, however. In 1934 it sold all the houses it owned, mostly to the employees who lived in them; and New Deal labor laws encouraged the workers to form a single industrial union, which joined the C.I.O.

World War II brought a final few years of good times to the woolens industry. The mill in Maynard operated around the clock with over two thousand employees producing such items as blankets and cloth for overcoats for the armed forces. But when peace returned, the long-term trends resumed their downward drift, and in 1950 the American Woolen Company shut down its Assabet Mills entirely. Like many New England mills, Maynard's had succumbed to a combination of Southern and foreign competition, relatively high costs and low productivity, and the growing use of synthetic fibers.

'Til then a one-industry town, Maynard was in trouble. In 1953, however, ten Worcester businessmen bought the mill and began leasing space to tenants, some of which were established firms, while others were just getting started. One of the new companies which found the low cost of Maynard Industries' space appealing was Digital Equipment Corporation, which started operations in 8,680 square feet in the mill in 1957.

While the present mill buildings were constructed over a period of nearly sixty years, DIGITAL grew so fast that only seventeen years after its incorporation it bought the whole mill complex. After becoming sole owner in 1974, DIGITAL moved to take over space still occupied by other firms once their leases had run out. As of early 1977 only two tenants remain.

Now that DIGITAL owns the mill, it has found that improving the property can pay. DIGITAL's business is computers, not renovations for the sake of renovating. Thus, large areas of the original brickwork, which for years had been hidden by paint, have recently been exposed. And where before all had been battleship grey, dirty off-white and powder blue, now pipes and utility cables stand out in bright contrast to the massive beams and columns.

Since the buildings had to provide large interiors for textile machinery, they offer flexibility to meet DIGITAL's changing requirements. Use of new "modular" office furniture and improvements to the telephone wiring system will make future moves and rearrangements within the mill even easier, faster and cheaper.

The cost of redoing portions of the mill to produce comfortable, modern workplaces remains far lower than that of building equivalent new facilities, let alone trying to duplicate the mill itself at today's prices.

Moreover, the very age of the mill makes possible certain operational savings which more recent construction has in many cases unfortunately precluded. Once deteriorated sashes are fixed or replaced, breezes from the windows, helped along at times by fans, can save energy—and money—on all but the hottest days.

The relatively large size of the mill's windows allows reduction of lighting costs. Some areas, such as the third floor of Building 12, have skylights that provide the same benefit. Standards for rearranging offices require that, so far as possible, partitions not interfere with natural light and air circulation.

DIGITAL has left the exteriors of its buildings largely unaltered. In some ways, though, the mill area looks better than ever. American Woolen's huge and dirty coal pile by the boiler house is gone. And while the Assabet River once was colored with the residue from the mills dyeing plant, DIGITAL is painstakingly careful with the leftovers from its electroplating operations. Sophisticated antipollution equipment not only keeps the river water clean, but also saves money by recovering precious metals.

Savings from another sort of recycling, the reuse of paper, is also encouraged.

As a company, DIGITAL has found making full use of the old buildings that were its birthplace to be well worthwhile.

DIGITAL EQUIPMENT CORPORATION
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