

## VILLAGE OF MAPLEVILLE

The village of Mapleville had two mill privileges on both sides of the Chepachet River. Darius Lawton built a small mill and manufactured textiles in 1845. He also built a beautiful Gothic Revival cottage on the hill overlooking his mill. The cottage still stands today as one of the fanciest houses in Mapleville. In later years, James Legg purchased both mill properties forming James Legg & Company which was reorganized under the name of the Mapleville Manufacturing Company. Legg died in 1890 and his sons continued with the family business. Fancy cassimeres and cheviots were produced at the rate 4000 yards a week. In 1898, the property, which consisted of the mill, about 100 acres of land, two large residences, hall, boarding house, store, seventeen tenement houses, and several barns, was sold at auction.

In 1900 Joseph Fletcher purchased the mill property, and under his stewardship, the old mill was repaired, and a new brick mill named the Coronet Worsted Company was built. Fletcher repaired the old tenements and constructed thirty new cottages. Mapleville now had mills on both sides of the street, along with 54 tenements for the workers. Additional streets were constructed and electricity was installed. Now known as Metech, the Mapleville Mills are still flourishing under an entirely different kind of business, metals recycling.

The Mapleville Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated in October 1909. For the convenience of visitors to the dedication, carriages were sent to connect with the electric cars at the Oakland Center crossing. Because of the large French population working in the mills, it was decided to build a Catholic Church, Our Lady of Good Help, in 1907. This church serves both Oakland and Mapleville Parishes and appears the same today as it did when dedicated.

Half a mile beyond Mapleville on the Chepachet River is the deserted village of Gazza which for many years was one of the largest and most important manufacturing communities in Burrillville. The first mill at Gazza was built by Riley Steere. Later, Isaac Aldrich ran the mill and made an extra good quality satinet, dyed indigo blue. After several changes in ownership, Mr. Whipple ran the mill until it burned down early in 1845. Mr. Whipple then bought the upper privilege at Mapleville and proceeded to clear the land and prepare to build his own mill. He purchased the privilege at Gazza where the dam and trenches were already in good order in 1845 and immediately began to rebuild the mill at Gazza. Within 90 days he had the building up, the machinery in operation, and his manufactured goods on the market.

Soon after starting the mill, it became known as Gazza named for a particular kind of wool, known as Ben-Gazza, from the place from whence it came. Soon the name was abridged to Gaza or Gazza and was generally accepted as the title of the prosperous village. On Aug. 12, 1888, the mill was struck by lightning and totally destroyed by fire.

Like most of the villages in Burrillville, the prosperity of the residents relied on the mills. There were good times and bad over the years, but the spirit of the original settlers remains to make Mapleville one of our most admired villages.

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