

## Made and Grown in Whately: the history behind the signs. April 2021

 <p>Gin</p>	<p>What is believed to be the first gin distillery in Massachusetts was established c1789 on West Brook near the Hatfield line by a company formed by Gen. Seth Murray, General Dickinson, Seth Bardwell, Samuel Belden, Aaron Dickinson and one other. A gristmill on the river ground the rye for the gin, and the town laid a road from the Hatfield bridge to the mill “for the convenient turning of teams”. (Crafts, p. 253)</p>
 <p>Pottery</p>	<p>As early as 1776 Stephen Orcutt had a shop on West Brook for making redware and he likely trained Thomas Crafts, Whately’s master potter. Crafts was known for his redware teapots with a metallic black glaze. Redware was cheap to make from local clay but brittle and broke easily. By the 1820’s and 30’s the local potters had largely moved to the more expensive but longer-lasting stoneware that we associate with Whately pottery today. Twenty-one potters worked in Whately until the industry died out in 1861. (Cane, pp. 61-64)</p>
 <p>Broom Corn</p>	<p>Broom corn (actually a variety of sorghum growing 6-9’ tall) was Whately’s first cash crop. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was found to grow well in Whately’s fertile flatlands and West Brook provided the power to turn broom handles. The Belden Brothers were the first manufacturers. By the 1820’s both cultivation of broom corn and broom-making were widespread. Crafts claims that there were as many broom-makers in Whately as shoemakers in Lynn. The railroad and the Erie Canal made larger and straighter corn from the West available to local manufacturers and corn growing in Whately gradually dwindled away. Broom manufacturing continued longer, however, with Eliphet Wood having annual sales of up to \$30,000 in the 1870’s. (Cane, p. 71; Crafts, p. 266)</p>
 <p>Wallets</p>	<p>The production of pocketbooks or wallets was a major Whately industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with factories doing the cutting, pasting and pricking the holes for the stitches and women and children sewing the wallets together. Col. Harwood had the largest factory, which employed 5-7 men and a dozen or more young women, with a much larger force of stitchers scattered around town. Stephen Belden and Lemuel Graves had smaller factories. Between them they likely employed as many as sixty families in stitching, paying thousands of dollars for the work. (Crafts, p. 262)</p>
 <p>Tobacco</p>	<p>Whately’s soil and microclimate are highly suited to tobacco. Native Americans grew it as a cash crop for them and it was the only crop cultivated by the men of the tribe. In 1771 the minister grew it to supplement his salary. Acreage was limited until Stephen Belder introduced broadleaf seed in 1843. By 1855 there were 97 tobacco barns in town. Shade tobacco was introduced in 1901 by Lemuel Graves and greatly expanded by Moses Swift. By the 1940’s photos show East Whately covered in cheesecloth. But tobacco has always been a highly cyclical and a very risky crop. Homogenization of cigar wrappers in the 1960’s shrank the market and tobacco acreage has never regained those highs. (Cane, pp 71-74)</p>