The first account of A Weymouth Mineral Resource was by Thomas Morton who lived at Wessagusset in the 1622 Colony. In his book, New English Canaan (1637), his statement, "There is good Limestone," was not believed by the Massachusetts Colony. Yet we find in our Town Meeting record of 26 January 1666; "Thomas Duss shall have six pole of land next to Randall's to make lime pits" (quarries).

The Braintree Iron Works used Weymouth bog iron ore in their furnace according to a 1644-45 Inventory. Our town meeting of 2 March 1690/91 "Voted to let Mr. Hubert (Hobart) dig Mayon (Mine) on the town common." Great, Whittman's and Whorleberry Ponds yielded considerable bog iron ore from 1771 to 1809. Most of it went to Abington (now Whitman) to make cannon balls, 1775-76, and churchbells. The Weymouth Iron Company inherited the Old Arc Lots Mine from their predecessors 1837-38 to 1888 plus, but imported the rest of their ore. The limonite from the mine was used for making shovels.

We also had a Mineral Paint Mine (ochre). I recall many houses painted "Cowlick yellow" color; the Clarence Houseing Mann on Grove Street was the last, in the 1930's. The powder sold for three cents (Burnt Umber) and six cents (Yellow Ochre).

The Old Silver Mine (1870's) presented their total output to the largest share holder, in the form of a silver spoon. Then the operators, "Folded their tents like the Arabs, and silently STOLE AWAY!" Later prospecting by the author proved that this abundant ore is the richest in the state. Houses were built over it, since, however.

There was a Gold Mine operating near Bedford and Orange Streets, in Abington, in 1889. Some of these gold-bearing quartz veins crossed our Weymouth line. The late Clement Bates of 500 Front Street, worked with "The Old Painter" in the Fore River Shipyard, just before World War I, who used to mine enough gold there "to feed and clothe him every winter".

The quartz veins in the Middle Cambrian slates of the Islewell Railroad Cut have yielded some beautiful transparent quartz crystals. These adorn collectors' cabinets all over the country. The late Clarence W. Fearing, our famed M.I.T. geologist, of South Weymouth, discovered a large cavity full of these, when the second railroad (inside) track was put through in 1897-98. He found a monazite (rare-earth) crystal at that time which was used by the great mineralogist, Charles Palache of Harvard, in his "Calculations by the Goldsmith" Two-Circle Method, in Studies of the Monochromatic System." This was when Professor Fearing discovered a new mineral, microcline. Another monazite crystal found at Haddam, Connecticut by my friend Professor Alfred C. Lane of Tufts College, "Grandfather of Atomic Energy," figured with our crystal, in the method of dating the ages of rocks, in this, one of the first steps into the "Atomic Age." Some of our quartz crystals are "paper-thin" and have been used in the study of how to grow them for transistors.

"Weymouth's rocks will speak out, and... may rival Plymouth Rock's Story of the Pilgrim." H.B. Reed. (1923) Hist. of Weymouth.

The making of shoes or "boots" as they were called in the early days, goes back to the beginning of Weymouth's settlement. Each new group of colonists consisted of at least one cobbler who could care for their needs. Our early town records indicate "cordwainers" as they were often called, in the 1600's. These men provided the incentive for the perpetuation of a craft which has lasted for over three hundred years.

Up until the 1800's, boots were made by these "cloggers", who journeyed about from farm to farm, staying only long enough to convert the farmer's cowhides into footwear for the family's needs. Gradually, more and more of the farmers understudied the cobbler and became quite proficient in making their own boots. Soon, small shops sprang up on the farms, known as "10 Footers" by their relatively small dimensions. The farmer was now able to work his land and in spare time, supplement his income by making and fitting boots for his family and neighbors. As the demand became greater, with the increase in the town's population, many took to specializing in one or two operations of the boots' construction; passing it on from one to another until it was ultimately finished and sold.

The feasibility of moving the unfinished product several times was soon outweighed by the establishment of small factories where the skilled men could hire stalls and perform their individual operations under one roof. By 1820, factories were increasing in size, and 369 out of 450 heads of families in Weymouth were employed making boots. They sold from 75¢ to $2.00 per pair. In 1850, just 30 years later, Weymouth boasted over 1,000 men and women making boots and a good man could earn $2.00 per day!

The industry thrived with the demands brought on by the Civil War, and the advent of the machine age opened yet another era in the industry for Weymouth. The medium-sized factories were replaced by 1875 with huge buildings where every operation of the boot could be completed under one roof. There was great rivalry and the labor market was soon exhausted of skilled workers. This stimulated the influx of a great immigrant population from Europe to work in the factories. Weymouth's boots and shoes became an export product to the entire world.

Competition failed to diminish a great sense of pride of craftsmanship and by 1920, this quality maintained the shoemaker's scale at Weymouth at .75¢ per while its rival, Brockton, making an inferior product had a .57 scale in comparison.

The cheaper labor costs forced an eventual shift of the shoe crown from Weymouth to Brockton until by 1930, only 3 of the huge manufacturers remained. The foreign import competition, and the increased costs of shipping the leather from the tanning plants of the mid-west, have contributed steadily to the decline of the shoe manufacturing here until now we have but one last vestige of the more than 75 factories once operating in Weymouth.
Part I — "The Shops"

Weymouth's largest industry depicted here - showing its humble beginnings, rising to its achievement as a world leader in shoe production...and the steady decline thereafter.

Typical old "10 footer" where bookmaking first began

Oldest Shop
built about 1808 by James Tarrill, Sr.

near Reed Cemetery, Front Street

S.W. & E. Nash Shop
built about 1857 corner of
Summer & Federal Streets

Sheehy's Shop
Broad Street, East Weymouth

Stetson's First Shop
Main Street ca 1880

First Clapp Factory
corner of Middle & Essex Streets
built 1853

Photos Courtesy Weymouth Historical Society

Part II — "The Factories"

C. & P.H. Tarrill's Factory
built 1854 corner Pleasant & Central Streets
(remodeled in 1907 for a private residence)

Alexis Torrey Factory
Bridge Street, North Weymouth

Hollbrook & Burrell's Factory
Washington Street
Lovell's Corner
(taken about 1875)
Part I — “The Shops”

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Typical old “10 footer” where bootmaking first began

Stetson’s First Shop
Main Street ca 1880

First Clapp Factory
corner of Middle & Essex Streets
built 1853

Oriental Slipper
Shoe Toe

Oldest Shop
built about 1806 by James Tirrell, Sr.
near Reed Cemetery, Front Street

S.W. & E. Nash Shop
built about 1857 corner of Summer & Federal Streets

Sheehy’s Shop
Broad Street, East Weymouth

Photos Courtesy Weymouth Historical Society

Part II — “The Factories”

Notice to Workmen

On and after this date the following rules will be strictly enforced in this factory.

A reduction will be made for inferior work, and for mistakes.

When goods are damaged the party who lets them pass without showing the same will be charged for them.

Smoking not allowed.

C. & P. H. Tirrell & Co.

C. & P. H. Tirrell’s Factory
built 1854 corner Pleasant & Central Streets
(remodeled in 1907 for a private residence)

Alexis Torrey Factory
Bridge Street, North Weymouth

Hollbrook & Burrell’s Factory
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Lovell’s Corner
(taken about 1875)

Photos Courtesy Weymouth Historical Society
Part III — "The Giants"

M.C. Dizers Factory — built 1881 corner of Madison, Fillmore & Broad Streets, it was sold about 1910 to Alden, Walker & Wilde who were then situated at North Weymouth. It was torn down in 1929.

Edwin Clapp & Sons built in 1882 on Charles Street, East Weymouth, was next to the last operating factory in our town until the 1960’s.

The Last of the Giants — Sole Survivor of over 100 factories & shops

Factory #8 on Wharf Street, East Weymouth was but one segment of the George E. Keith Company of Brockton, manufacturers of world-renowned "Walk-Over Shoes". Built 1907-8, it gave the lagging industry a much needed boost and many jobs resulted from its establishment.

The Sexton Shoe Company Main Street
(picture taken about 1930 and is essentially same today)
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Preface

This booklet, published by the 350th Anniversary Committee, is dedicated to the citizens of Weymouth; past, present, and future. We regret that space limitations have necessitated the brevity, and occasional omission of many colorful events in Weymouth's history but we sincerely trust that these pages will present to the reader, a glimpse of the past, a touch of the present, and an inspiration for the future of Our Town . . . . .

The Editors

Acknowledgments

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