

CHAPTER IX.

**Business Enterprises<sup>1</sup> — Mills:** The Waltham-Richards-Bates Mill, Tide Mill, Tirrell's Mill, Reed's Mill, Loud's Mill, Vinson's Mill, Dyer's Mill — **Turnpikes:** Weymouth and Braintree, New Bedford, Hingham and Quincy Bridge — **Railroads:** Old Colony, South Shore — **Expresses — Telegraph — Telephone — Financial Corporations — Banks:** Union National, National of South Weymouth — **Savings Banks:** Weymouth, South Weymouth, East Weymouth — **Weymouth and Braintree Fire Insurance Company — Manufactures:** Boots and Shoes — Weymouth Iron Company — Fish Company — Weymouth Commercial Company — **Ice Companies — Bradley Fertilizer Company — Ship Building — Bay State Hammock Company — Howe & French — Fire-Works — Mitten Factory — Miscellaneous.**

**MILLS.<sup>2</sup> —** Weymouth has always, from its settlement by the English, been noted for its excellent mill privileges. Mill River, from its departure from Great Pond to its mouth at tide-water, abounds with valuable sites which have been improved during almost if not quite its entire history. The mill of William Waltham is mentioned in his will in 1640. In the following January, 1641, a difficulty arose between Henry Waltham, to whom the

<sup>1</sup> The portion of this sketch devoted to business matters is necessarily very brief, the space allowing only a bare outline of important interests. Many are omitted entirely, among which are all of that class engaged in supplying the material wants of the inhabitants, very large in the aggregate, employing much capital and many individuals. Several of the smaller manufactures are also unmentioned for want of room. The compiler believes, however, that he has treated the business interests of the town as fully and fairly as can be reasonably demanded in a work of this magnitude.

<sup>2</sup> The sketch of the mill property has been gathered from the town, county and private records, and from Quincy L. Reed, Esq., to whom the compiler is especially indebted for much valuable information, much of which has been omitted for want of space.

property had passed, and Wealthean Richards, wife of Thomas Richards, whose husband was absent from the country and had left her in charge of his interest. This was submitted to a reference consisting of Rev. Mr. Newman, James Parker, Esq., and Edward Bates. In 1642, Henry Waltham sold one half of his grist mill (the same property) to Joseph Arthur, of Weymouth, England, for one hundred and forty pounds, with other property. In 1651, after the death of Mr. Richards, who seems to have obtained possession of the whole property, the mill was set off to his widow. The town records of that date say it "was on the road to Hingham Plain." This locates it at Back River, below Whitman's Pond. The mill (or mills) seems to have passed into the hands of Elder Bates, and was used as a grist, saw, and fulling mill, probably in two different buildings and a short distance apart. After several changes the privileges passed into the possession of the Weymouth Iron Company in 1837, which has since improved them.

*The Tide Mill.*—As early as 1669 the "tyde mill" is mentioned. In 1682 it is called "Nash's grist mill." In 1696, James Nash, the second of the name, left it to his grandson, James Drake, from whom it passed into possession of the Burrells, and soon after, the Webbs, with whom it remained for a hundred or more years. It was used for mill purposes until the present generation. It is now dismantled, and the privilege is not used. Its location was on Mill Cove, on the easterly side of Fore River, and not far from the original Weston settlement.

*Tirrell's Mill.*—This mill is situated very near the centre of the town, and dates from 1693, when the town granted a permit to Gideon Tirrell to set up a fulling mill at "blade mill." Whether the latter name refers to the name of the owner or to the kind of a mill previously there is not known. It remained in the family of its original builder until quite recently, when it was bought

by J. Loud & Co., and by them sold to Howe & French, the present owners.

*Reed's Mill.* — Following the course of the stream for about two miles towards its source, where it crosses the old Plymouth road, Reed's Mill is found, built near the close of the last century by Jeremiah Shaw. It came into the hands of Ezra Reed about 1811, and was used as a grist mill until 1855, when the present building was erected, which was occupied by E. & C. Sherman as a box factory for a dozen years. The upper mill was built in 1866, and was used as a saw mill until 1877, when it was leased to Cyrus Sherman and used for the manufacture of boot and shoe lasts, at which business he employs about twelve hands.

*Loud's Mill.* — This was probably the oldest mill above Tirrell's. It was built near the beginning of the last century, and was known as Sayle's Mill. That family is now extinct in the town. At that period quite a village clustered about this mill, of which only the ruined cellars remain. The present mill was erected in 1836 as a grist mill by Mr. Loud, where, in 1850, he commenced making boxes. He still carries on the business there, employing about ten persons. This mill is a short distance above the Reed Mill.

*Vinson's Mill.* — This mill, formerly known as Colson's, is located not far from Great Pond, and was erected about 1765. It passed into the hands of Mr. Vinson, and was used as a grist mill until about 1837, and afterwards for a time as a bucket and shingle mill. The property is now owned by Mr. Elon Sherman, and used as a box factory, with about fifteen workmen. A few years since the old mill was burned and a new one erected. Mr. Sherman has also, within a year or two, commenced the manufacture of paper cartons for shoes.

*Dyer's Mill.* — This mill is located on Marsh River, on Pleasant Street, and was probably built by William

Reed before 1700. In 1716 it is named in the will of John Porter as the "saw mill." It subsequently passed into the hands of the Dyers, and was used by them as a grist mill. It has not been used for mill purposes for about fifty or sixty years.

TURNPIKES, RAILROADS, ETC.<sup>1</sup> — The primitive means of communication with Boston and other towns was by private conveyance, horses, ox-wagons, and afterwards carriages, — with the sailing packets, the latter being the main dependence for this purpose. From the earliest times the packet was the favorite, being quicker, cheaper and more convenient, and was in constant use for more than two hundred years, one or two of them always finding ready employment in passengers and freight. As the roads improved, and the needs of the people became greater, the stage-coach made its appearance and ran regularly between this town and Boston, until the necessity of still better roads for the accommodation of the increasing travel became apparent. Turnpikes were projected in various places, and several were proposed that should pass through Weymouth. The conservative element prevailed so strongly that the town strenuously opposed every attempt to locate any through it, especially those crossing the rivers. Notwithstanding all the endeavors of the town, charters were granted for three.

*The Weymouth and Braintree Turnpike*, crossing from Weymouth Landing southeasterly to Hingham, on the line from Boston to Plymouth, was chartered March 4, 1803, and opened for travel in 1805. This was continued for nearly fifty years, when, owing to the changed condition of things with new modes of conveyance, it

<sup>1</sup>The turnpike and railroad statistics and history are compiled from the town, State and corporation files.

was thrown upon the town, July 15, 1852, and became a public road, now known as Washington Street.

A second, the *New Bedford Turnpike*, obtained a charter, 29th of February, 1804, and was laid out from the Weymouth and Braintree turnpike, beginning about a mile from the Landing, running nearly south to the Abington line, on the route from Boston to New Bedford. The northerly part of the road was never a paying concern, and before many years it lapsed into private hands and is now Main Street.

*The Hingham and Quincy Bridge and Turnpike Corporation* was chartered 5th March, 1808, and opened for travel, with its two bridges over Fore and Back Rivers, connecting Quincy and Hingham, in 1812. These bridges, with their tolls *from* travellers and tolls *to* vessels passing through the draws, were a continual source of vexation and contention, which did not cease until the whole property was thrown upon the towns as a public highway, 25th September, 1862.

*Railroads.* — Succeeding these, and the main cause of their failure, came the railroads; and the same spirit that had opposed the turnpike came forward in great strength against the railroad, and the town opposed every attempt to locate one across its territory, but the genius of progress prevailed, and in March, 1844,

The *Old Colony Railroad* received its charter, and located its track across the southwest corner of the town from Braintree to Abington, passing a little south of the village of South Weymouth. The road was speedily built, and was opened for travel Nov. 10, 1845.

The *South Shore Railroad* soon followed the Old Colony, its charter dating March 26, 1846, and was opened to the public Jan. 1, 1849. This road crosses the town near the villages of Weymouth Landing, North Weymouth and East Weymouth, the principal centres of population and business. It was run at

first connecting with the Old Colony at Braintree, and was afterwards hired by the latter. In May, 1877, it was bought by that corporation, and is now one of its branches.

THE EXPRESS BUSINESS has grown in a half-century — at the beginning of which private teams were the only means of transportation aside from the sailing packets — until it numbers a dozen companies, employing scores of men and twice as many horses, requiring not far from \$60,000 of capital.

The *telegraph* and the *telephone* have also become indispensable to the wants of the inhabitants, several lines of the former running through the town, and the latter being freely used by many business houses. It is found very convenient also for families.

FINANCIAL CORPORATIONS.<sup>1</sup> — The increase of mercantile business and the springing up of manufactures consequent upon the revival of trade, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, demanded greater financial facilities than were previously enjoyed. In the circles immediately concerned there was not capital enough to do the necessary business, and exchanges were difficult. As the grand panacea for all these evils, banks were proposed and established, and Weymouth did not refuse to encourage such enterprises. Consequently,

*The Union Bank of Weymouth and Braintree* was proposed, \$100,000 capital contributed, an act of incorporation obtained, dated March 17, 1832, and the company organized on the 11th of April, with choice of Josiah Vinton, Jr., as president, and commenced business as soon as the necessary details could be arranged.

<sup>1</sup> These sketches come principally from the records of the institutions mentioned.

In 1853 an increase of \$50,000 was made to its capital. On Sept. 6, 1864, the bank reorganized under the United States National Banking Act as the Union National Bank of Weymouth, and Jan. 12, 1865, the capital was increased to \$300,000; and again, April 12, 1869, another \$100,000 was added, making its present capital \$400,000. It has a building of its own, and has always been located at Weymouth Landing.

*The First National Bank of South Weymouth* was organized Oct. 31, 1864, in consequence of the increase of business in that part of the town, and to employ a part of the capital rapidly accumulating there. Hon. B. F. White was its first president, and its capital was \$150,000. In 1866 it purchased the building it now occupies.

*The Weymouth and Braintree Institution for Savings* was incorporated Feb. 16, 1833. The original incorporators named were Asa Webb, Whitcomb Porter, and Warren Weston. It began business the following February, 1834, Dr. Noah Fifield being the first president. By act of Legislature, March 19, 1872, its name was changed to Weymouth Savings Bank. Its assets, Jan. 1, 1883, were \$565,432.06.

*The South Weymouth Savings Bank* was incorporated March 6, 1868, in the name of Benjamin F. White and others, and commenced business the following month. Its assets amounted to \$395,176.20 at the last report.

*The East Weymouth Savings Bank* was incorporated in 1872, and began business. On Jan. 1, 1883, its assets were reported at \$247,357.56.

*The Weymouth and Braintree Mutual Fire Insurance Company* was incorporated in 1833. Asa Webb was chosen president, F. A. Kingsbury, secretary, and Ezra Leach, treasurer. After fifty years of active business, it is now closing its affairs.

MANUFACTURES.<sup>1</sup> — For nearly two hundred years Weymouth was eminently an agricultural community. It had fine large farms, well cultivated and productive. A hundred years ago a much larger proportion of its area was under cultivation than at present, and many of the best farms of that date or earlier are now grown up to wood or bushes. Its dairies were celebrated throughout the State. With the introduction of manufactures a new condition of things was called into existence, and the young men, instead of following the occupation of their fathers, began to learn trades, and the farms being neglected, the town gradually changed from agriculture to manufactures, and is now almost wholly given up to the latter.

*Boots and Shoes.* — This interest largely predominates, and employs more men and capital than any other branch of industry. As late as the beginning of the present century there were probably not more than three or four persons who manufactured this class of goods for other than the home market, and those only gave employment to a few apprentices, besides what they could do themselves. These goods were carried to Boston market either upon the backs of the manufacturers, who made the journey on foot, or else in saddle-bags upon horses. The business gradually increased, until it became necessary to use wagons to carry in the goods and bring out materials. The beginnings of this trade were at Weymouth Landing, spreading thence to the north and south villages, reaching latest of all

<sup>1</sup> The materials upon which the following record is founded have been gathered from a large variety of public and private sources, and, where possible, have been carefully verified, and are believed to contain the more important facts connected with the business enterprises of the town. This has been a task of considerable difficulty, as many of the items are not a matter of record, but must be gathered from oral statement. It is thought, however, to contain no important error.



the east, which now surpasses all of the others in the magnitude of its business in this line. It was a whole generation before it became necessary to employ a "baggage wagon," the clumsy pioneer of the present express, and the buildings used in carrying on the manufacture would hardly suffice for offices at the present day, the goods being made wholly at the homes of the workmen, nearly all of whom had little shops in or near their dwellings, the work being prepared and packed only at the factory. As late as 1840, it was a large factory that produced \$500 worth of goods in the week. About that period South Weymouth received an impetus from its Southern trade (some of its manufacturers having gone to New Orleans and established salesrooms in that city), which placed it far ahead of its rivals at the Landing and North Weymouth. The increase in the volume of the business was, however, very large in all parts of the town, especially after the opening of California, in 1849; and the large demand from that State for this class of manufactures the town was forward to meet. From these small beginnings the trade has increased, until there are now forty establishments, employing upwards of 2,500 persons, and using more than a million dollars of capital. The annual production of the various classes of goods is about four millions of dollars in value. Six or eight of these factories furnish work to one hundred to five hundred people each.

*Iron.* — In the spring of 1771 iron ore, in sufficient quantities to pay well for gathering, began to be found in the ponds of the town, and a contract was made with Thomas Hobart, of Abington, by a public sale, for the ore found in Great Pond at forty shillings per ton, with an agreement to defend him against any claims for damages that might be advanced by other parties should any contest the town's right to the ore; a committee was

also chosen by the town to prosecute any others who should be found taking ore from this pond.

This contract remained in force until the 20th of May, 1773, when a lease was given to Mr. Hobart for thirty years, at sixty pounds per year, for the privilege of taking ore from Great, Whitman's, and Whortleberry Ponds. Ore has been found at various times and places besides, and attempts made to utilize it, but the quantities were so small and the expense of getting it so great that competition with more favored deposits could not be maintained, and the enterprises were abandoned. After the expiration of Mr. Hobart's lease the town appears to have made no other.

*The Weymouth Iron Company* is one of the largest manufacturing establishments in the town. It was incorporated March 4, 1837, with a capital of \$150,000, which has since been increased to \$300,000. It owns the splendid water privilege at Back River, at the foot of Whitman's Pond. For many years it was exceedingly prosperous, making enormous dividends. From various causes its business gradually declined, and it ceased for a time to pay a profit; but quite recently its trade has begun to revive, and its prospects are again more encouraging. At present it manufactures only nails, and these have a very wide reputation. It employs two hundred and seventy-five men, when running full.

*Fish Company.* — In the early part of the eighteenth century a company was formed by a number of the prominent men of the town for the purpose of carrying on "a fishing trade to Cape Sables," and the town granted to it the use of "so much of Hunt's Hill, with the lowland and beach adjoining, at the mouth of Fore River, as may be necessary for the purpose." As far as the record shows, this was the first joint-stock company formed in the town. Of its history but little is known.

After this, by nearly a century, came the "Weymouth Commercial Company," in 1805, formed for the purpose of carrying on a foreign and domestic trade. This company employed a capital of not far from twenty thousand dollars, the shares of the several stockholders varying from three hundred to three thousand dollars each; Eliphalet Loud, Esq., being the treasurer. It owned several vessels, among which were the ship "Commerce," Capt. Joseph Tirrell, the brig "Adamant," and the schooner "Venus." This company does not appear to have had a prolonged existence.

*Ice Companies.* — The ice business is carried on to considerable extent, there being several companies in various parts of the town engaged in supplying the local demand, while the "South Boston Ice Company" cuts large quantities for export. The ice-houses of the latter are located at Great Pond, and have a holding capacity of forty thousand tons, from which they ship to Boston about twenty-five thousand tons annually. The season for cutting lasts from four to six weeks, during which the company employs from seventy-five to one hundred and fifty men, and from twenty to thirty horses, the quality of the ice being the finest in the market. The company commenced business here in 1874.

*Lumber, Grain, and Coal.* — The navigable waters bordering the northern part of the town have ever been improved by the inhabitants as sources of convenience and profit in the transportation of passengers and freight. From the early settlement sailing vessels ran with more or less regularity between this town and Boston, as well as other places about the bay, but it was not until the present century that there began to be anything like commercial adventure. Quite early in the nineteenth century the lumber trade was opened with the Maine ports, and several freights came annually

into Fore River. After 1820 the trade increased rapidly, and Weymouth Landing became the market for the lumber traffic of the towns lying for many miles to the southward. The business was carried on with enterprise and success for many years, and was a source of profit to the village, until the opening of the railroads diverted much of this trade to other places. There is still, however, a large business done in this line at the Landing. Following the opening of the lumber traffic, the importation of grain from New York and other places was begun, and soon after coal became a staple commodity. All of these branches of business have been continued until the present time, and are now prosecuted largely and successfully by several concerns, who employ large numbers of men and many vessels; and it is no uncommon sight to witness lying at the wharves half a dozen vessels laden with coal and lumber, some of them carrying a freight of four or five hundred tons each.

Among the various industrial interests not before named are the "Bradley Fertilizer Company," formed in 1872 for the purpose of manufacturing various kinds of fertilizers, successors of William L. Bradley, who had previously been engaged in the same business for eleven years. The company owns a large tract of land upon Eastern Neck, the northernmost point on the mainland of Weymouth, upon which they have erected about thirty buildings, with wharves and landings, where they employ about one hundred and seventy-five men, and are manufacturing about sixty thousand tons of their productions in the year. They also own and use the tow-boat "Peter B. Bradley," the largest and strongest in Boston Harbor, with five "lighters," two of three hundred tons each, one of two hundred tons, and two of one hundred tons each; also a brig of three hundred and fifty tons.

*Ship-Building.* — Although Weymouth has been during most of its history much interested in mercantile marine affairs, owning vessels and furnishing men, yet it has never been largely engaged in the construction of these vessels. About half a century ago a ship-yard was established at Weymouth Landing by Atherton W. Tilden, which he carried on for a few years, and built a number of vessels of various sizes, some of several hundred tons burden. From that time until 1876 but little if anything was done at the business. In the latter year N. Porter Keen commenced the construction of vessels in Old Spain, near Hunt's Hill, and since that time he has built eleven vessels, sail and steam, averaging a cost of about forty thousand dollars each. There is on the stocks at present a large vessel intended for a four-masted schooner (since launched). Mr. Keen employs about thirty men.

The Bay State Hammock Company, Augustus Beals, proprietor, has a factory in Old Spain. Commenced business in 1876, making about two hundred hammocks per year, and now produces twenty-five thousand annually, employing about fifty workmen.

Howe & French purchased, about ten years since, the old Tirrell Mill, where they manufacture fish glue, working about five months in the year, and employing about seventy individuals.

*Fire-Works.* — About the year 1850, Edmund S. Hunt, of this town, began his first experiments in the manufacture of fire-works, but it was not until 1856 that the business was fairly established. Since that time it has been carried on with success, and has a well-earned reputation for the quality and variety of its productions. The factory is at Weymouth Landing, and in the busy season employs about thirty operatives.

*Tanning and Currying.* — In former days these branches of business were carried on in many small

establishments scattered in various parts of the town; but these have nearly all disappeared, and are represented by three concerns, who employ in all from twenty to thirty men. One of these factories, that of W. Humphrey & Co., has been in existence, under various owners, for considerably more than a hundred years.

There are also three firms occupied in extracting the oil from the calf-skin skirtings collected at the boot and shoe factories, and in bleaching them. This business employs eight men, and extracts about two tons of grease per week. The work is done at East Weymouth.

At South Weymouth, Clarence A. Hunt has a large factory, in which, during the trade season, he employs one hundred and twenty hands, mostly girls and young men, in the production of various kinds of mittens and gloves, including all kinds of leather and yarn work, about one hundred dozen being a day's work.

There are also many small factories of different kinds of which space will permit only the mention, among them a furniture factory at North Weymouth; a factory at East Weymouth for the canning of fruits, vegetables, and meats; several stamping and gilding establishments; also others for making heels and counters for boots and shoes.