



Whitinsville, MA -1891

The Village of Whitinsville presents a remarkably complete picture of one of the distinctive by-products of the Industrial Revolution in New England; the COMPANY TOWN. Maintained & controlled by the Whitin family for over 100 years. Whitinsville today reveals its evolution from agrarian settlement to industrial giant and offers a fascinating glimpse of the powerful family behind it all.

Following the Revolutionary War, Colonel Paul Whitin came from Dedham, Mass., to serve as an apprentice in an iron forge in the budding community then known as South Northbridge. James Fletcher owned the forge, along with most of the land that now comprises Whitinsville. Eventually, Paul Whitin married Fletcher's daughter, Betsy, with whom he had five sons and a daughter.

The Whitin-Fletcher alliance was further solidified in 1816 with the establishment of the Whitin and Fletchers Cotton Mill. In 1826, Whitin bought out the Fletchers and went into partnership with his sons Paul, Jr., and John C., under the firm name of Paul Whitin and Sons. Both sons were astute businessmen, but it was John's inventiveness and marketing acumen that led to the development of Whitin Machine Works, which

would overshadow the family cotton mills and become the world's largest textile machine shop by the 1920's.

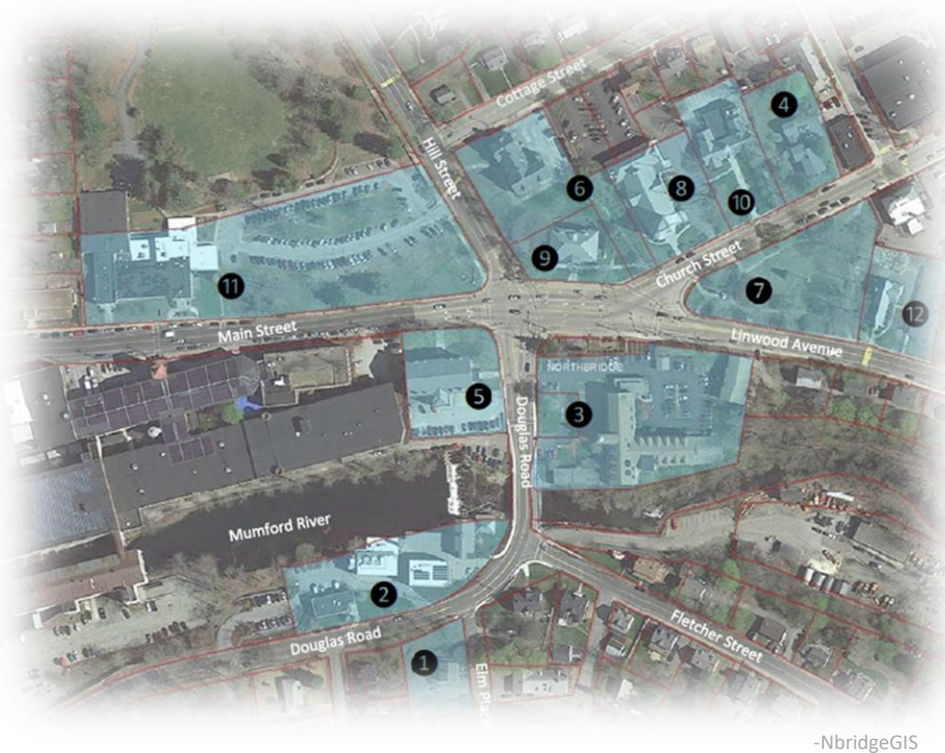
Explosive industrial growth throughout the Blackstone Valley during the 1800s resulted in ongoing labor shortages in this region. To staff their burgeoning enterprises, the Whitins brought in workers -Irish immigrants beginning in 1847, followed by French Canadians, Dutch, Polish, and Armenians. And to house their employees, the Whitins built over 1,000 worker dwellings between the mid-1820s and mid-1920s. In addition to housing, the Whitins built or subsidized the town's schools, churches, town hall, library, and recreational facilities. Like lords of the manor, the Whitins erected grand homes from which they dictated many aspects of the town's political and social life. They perpetuated a system of benevolent paternalism, providing job security and an orderly environment in exchange for worker loyalty.

-Kenneth Warchol (Northbridge, MA)

Whitinsville

-DOWNTOWN CROSSROADS LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Local Historic District, known as the “**WHITINSVILLE -DOWNTOWN CROSSROADS**” is centered at the heart of the Village of Whitinsville, where six (6) main roads intersect at the Memorial Town Hall & the Mumford River (Main St, Church St, Hill St, Linwood Ave, Douglas Rd, & Fletcher St).



The properties selected reflect the growth of a paternalistic mill village from the early beginnings of the American Industrial Revolution, when a largely agricultural community was transformed into an industrial mill village planned & developed by the Whitin Family. The 12 properties represent housing, industry, government, civic, religious, educational, recreational, commerce, and community institutions.

- ① Col. James Fletcher House (circa 1770)
- ② Whitinsville Brick Mills & Forge /Paul Whitin Mill (circa 1826)
- ③ Whitinsville Cotton Mill (circa 1845)
- ④ Stephen F. Mary Ann Batchelor House /Parsonage (circa 1849)
- ⑤ Memorial Town Hall (circa 1872)
- ⑥ Aldrich School /original High School (circa 1890)
- ⑦ Town Common /Memorial Park (circa 1890-1905)
- ⑧ Village Congregational Church (circa 1897 & 1903)
- ⑨ Whitinsville Savings Bank (circa 1905-06)
- ⑩ Whitinsville Social Library (circa 1912)
- ⑪ George Marston Whitin Memorial Community Center (circa 1922)
- ⑫ Trinity Episcopal Church (circa 1925-1929)

The properties tell the story of how the early American Industrial Revolution transformed Whitinsville (once part of Uxbridge), into one of New England’s leading mill villages between the late-1700’s to the mid-1900’s.

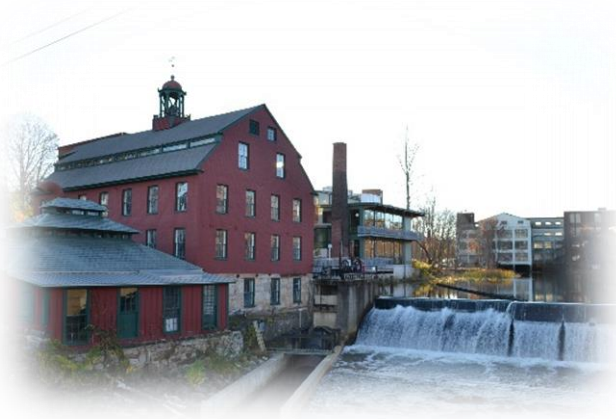
A Local Historic District Study Committee (LHDSC) comprised of Harry Berkowitz, Kenneth Warchol, Daniel O’Neil, Randi Zanca, Timothy Reiter, & Robert Laflamme was appointed by the Board of Selectmen to investigate opportunities for a local historic district for Whitinsville. The establishment of the LHDSC was done in conjunction with a General Agreement signed with the National Park Service for the purpose of creating boundaries for the Federally designated **BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK**, in which Whitinsville is included as a main contributing node.

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1 Col. James Fletcher Home (circa 1770), 1 Elm Place [Assessor Map 4A Parcel 46] is situated overlooking Douglas Road, now owned by the Northridge Historical Society. In the 1700s, Northbridge was predominately an agricultural community. James Fletcher's home was built towards the end of the 18th century. Fletcher married Margaret Wood, whose father owned the water rights on the Mumford River. Fletcher, a blacksmith, purchased and developed an ironworks forge along the Mumford River. One of his apprentices was Col. Paul Whitin, who married Elizabeth Fletcher (James' daughter). Fletcher set up the first iron forge & later established a cotton mill. Col. James Fletcher served in the Revolutionary War and held many town offices. Note the proximity to the Brick Mills across the street, where Fletcher built his iron forge in 1772, where it was then customary to live near place of business.



2 Whitinsville Brick Mills & Forge /Paul Whitin Mill (circa 1826), 54 Douglas Road [Assessor Map 2 Parcel 7] complex marked the beginning of the large-scale industry in Whitinsville. Paul Whitin & sons built the mill as a cotton and textile machine shop in 1826, on the site of a much smaller cotton mill owned by Col. James Fletcher. Where in 1729, wrought iron works, made up forges, trip hammers, grindstones, and an ore yard, were present in the vicinity of today's 54 Douglas Road. Some products were bar iron, hoes, scythes, and other agricultural tools & house hardware. The Brick Mill originally employed 40 workers most of whom were from the village. Expanded in 1830 and employed 146 workers at the height of operations in the early 1840s. By 1845, Whitin cotton manufacturing had outgrown this mill. A much larger mill was constructed and John C. Whitin began using the Brick Mill exclusively for machine production and repair. After partnering in the iron industry, Paul Whitin Sr. along with father-in-law James Fletcher began the Northbridge Cotton Manufacturing Co. (1810-1824). The current federal-style cotton brick mill

with about 1200 spindles was built to produce textile material and textile machine fabrication. The federal mill is where John C. Whitin invented the cotton picker machine, patented on July 20, 1832. By 1834, the Whitin Company was producing 1 cotton picking machine per month that sold for \$500. By 1845, the brick mill had approximately 93 employees dedicated to manufacturing cotton picking machine, spinning frames, looms, rolls, and machinery for ring spinning. By 1913, the Whitinsville Spinning Ring Co. there were 14,096 spindles & 150 employees. In the 1970's the company closed and transferred the property to Alternatives Unlimited, an organization that builds community for a cross-section of special needs clients.

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3 Whitinsville Cotton Mill (circa 1845), 17 Douglas Road [Assessor Map 5 Parcels 77 & 75] at the banks of the Mumford River (tributary to the Blackstone River) stands the massive stone building, the Granite Cotton Mill built by the Whitins in 1845. Built of local granite, the mill increased the company's production four times over what had possible in the Brick Mill. By the 1840's, the Blackstone River Valley, birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution was in rapid transformation, both in the realm of transportation bringing goods to market, via the 45-mile Blackstone Canal (1828-48), Providence-Worcester Railroad (1847) and the scale of the textile industry. As the demand for cotton products increased, the Whitin family kept investing locally, building the 1856 granite mill in Rockdale & Riverdale Mill. The world market for cotton exploded after the post-Civil War period. In 1864, approximately 25,000 square-foot addition was built onto the 1845 Cotton Mill. By 1879, another 4,000 square-feet addition was added. Post-Civil War, the Whitin family built the 1866 Linwood Mill (Italianate-style) just downstream on the Mumford

River. After the Civil War, circa 1868, Charles P. Whitin's three sons, Charles E, William H, and Arthur F, partnered to operate the 1845 mill and other cotton mills in the region. The Whitinsville Cotton Mill housed spindles; just prior to the Civil War, the cotton mill had approximately 7,500 spindles. With modernized and new Whitin Machine Works' textile equipment by 1913, the 1845 Whitinsville Cotton Mill had over 14,000 spindles with 150 employees, including a 25-man fire brigade and night watchman. During World War I (1914-18), there was an increased demand for cotton tents, bedding and other cotton military items. The Whitinsville Cotton Mill eventually closed operations, after the Whitin Machine Works purchased the site in 1924. In 1976 the Cotton Mill was converted to apartments.



4 Stephen F. Mary Ann Batchelor House/Parsonage (circa 1849), 31 Church Street [Assessor Map 15A Parcel 136], the site perched above Church Street, with the south lawn defined by granite piers with chamfered tops and granite panels in between, is considered a high-style Greek temple form residential home. Stephen F. Batchelor, born 1807, lived at 31 Church Street with his wife, Mary Ann Fletcher. Batchelor was employed as a carpenter-mechanic, who produced several Whitin textile spreaders between 1833 & 1844. This structure had a strong historic relationship to the Village Congregational Church, the original Greek Revival Congregational Church was destroyed by fire in the 1890's. The church was replaced by the Village Congregational Church. There is one other Greek Revival high-style temple form at 10 Chestnut Street; it was moved to make way for George Marston Whitin Memorial Community Center at 60 Main Street. In 1864, the Batchelor-Fletcher family donated the property to the Congregational Society as a parsonage.

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5 Memorial Town Hall (circa 1872), 7 Main Street [Assessor Map 2 Parcel 9], the Northbridge Memorial Town Hall is perched above and adjacent to the Mumford River, prominently located at the corner of Main Street and Douglas Road, the major crossroads of the town. Construction began in 1872 and was completed in 1876. The Town Hall was conceived and financed by two sons of the Whitin Family (John C. & Charles P), built as a memorial to their father and mother (Paul & Betsy). The Whitin family homestead used to occupy the current Town Hall site, until the two sons had it moved to a new location on Linwood Avenue. The Town Hall was originally used as a social venue and as the location for the local library (between 1876 & 1912), now located at 17 Church Street (Whitinsville Social Library). The business of the town was moved down from the meeting hall at Northbridge Center to the new Town Hall in 1876. On May 13, 1958, the care of the Town Hall was transferred to the Selectmen of town and has functioned as the local seat of town government since opening in 1876. In 2013, the Memorial Town Hall underwent extensive

exterior work, including paint and comprehensive window restoration. In 2017, the Great Hall, located on the third floor was fully restored (paint, floor & plaster restoration). Today, the Memorial Town Hall stands well intact of the period during which it was built. The Northbridge Memorial Town Hall is one of the oldest civic buildings and may be one of the greatest assets of the town; not only does it serve as the town's municipal center but stands as a reminder of the prosperous 19th century mill village of Whitinsville.



6 Aldrich School /original High School (circa 1890), 14 Hill Street [Assessor Map 15A Parcels 133 & 131], the "Aldrich School" built in 1890, was constructed with funds given to the Town by the Whitin Family. The building served as the town's first high school. In 1865, Whitinsville established the first high school at the site of the Whitinsville Savings Bank (1 Memorial Square). In 1878, architects from Worcester were hired to design the stick-style Clarke School, which was demolished in the 1990's. By 1890, with the explosion of manufacturing and the need for more outside labor (by way of Irish, French-Canadian, Dutch, and Armenian born) the need arose for more classroom space for the town's growing population. The building was first a high school, then a grammar school and kindergarten before closing. The Aldrich School now serves as the Town Hall Annex, home to the municipal land use departments (Building, Conservation, Health, & Planning) as well as the Veterans' Services Office.

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7 Town Common /Memorial Park (circa 1890 - 1905), Church Street [Assessor Map 14A Parcel 34], the Town Common/Memorial Park is located at the crossroads of the five (5) village roads meeting at Memorial Square. The centrally located, prominent town common-memorial park is 1.1 acres. Around the turn of the 20th century, paternalistic industrial villages, like Whitinsville boomed economically, which created the development of civic spaces and institutional buildings influenced by the World's Columbia Exposition and the nation's City Beautiful Movement (1890's & 1900's). In Whitinsville, this once farmed hayfields was graded, grassed and converted into a formal park with clusters of bushes, flowers and walking paths. In the 1890's the extended Lasell and Whitin families gifted this "common village lot" to the town for civic events. The town common-park civic project took root as the national economic depression of 1907 slowly moved into the boom years of the WWI era with a new world demand for cotton products and new textile machines and repair of existing machines. The Paul Whitin Co. donated the plot of land to the

town in 1890 when it transformed from a pasture to a town park. The Civil War monument was built in 1905, to honor the Northbridge Civil War veterans who gave their lives. In 1922, \$5,501 was donated for the World War I monument. The Town Common/Memorial Park includes the Civil War Memorial donated by the Whitin family, the David P. Cassey Medal of Honor Monument and the War World I Memorial bench. Adjacent to the Town Common and within Memorial Square the Town dedicated the Northbridge Contingent in the Nation's Wars 1939-1955 to honor those who severed in World War II & Korean War and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.



8 Village Congregational Church (circa 1897 & 1903), 5 Church Street [Assessor Map 15A Parcel 134], this monumental structure was built from Indiana limestone in 1898 after fire destroyed the original white spire church that stood in the same spot since 1846. The original Congregational society in town was organized in Northbridge Center and had a church built in 1774 at the top of Northbridge hill. The society formed and met in homes some two years earlier before the church was built. The first Congregational Church (society) in the village of Whitinsville was organized in 1833, with 33 members and built its first church in 1846, a Greek Revival style church with a towering white spire. Most of the Whitins became members of the new Congregational Society and donated funds for the original white spired church and later the construction of the Village Congregational Church built in 1898.

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9 Whitinsville Savings Bank (circa 1905-06), 1 Memorial Square [Assessor Map 15A Parcel 132], Northbridge National Bank organized and incorporated in 1865, for workers of the Whitin family mills. Memorial Square was becoming the showpiece of Whitin Machine Work's international industrial growth at the end of the 19th and early 20th century. One Memorial Square was part of the City Beautiful movement; it was also a time when moving product or walking to work gave way to new transportation options (improved roadways, rail system & electric freight rail) connecting Whitinsville to Linwood. By August 1900, a regional electric streetcar system connected Whitinsville to the city of Worcester. The Whitinsville National Bank opened in 1865 and printed approximately \$2.7 million of national currency up until 1935 when the new Federal Banking Act took hold. The Whitinsville Savings Bank purchased other Blackstone Valley banks, such as Uxbridge Savings Bank and the Blackstone Valley Savings Bank. Both the Whitinsville National Bank and Whitinsville Savings Bank moved into One Memorial Square in 1906.

Whitinsville Savings was the national financial system's conduit for moving cash to and from the Whitin Machine Works company payroll department and, in turn, having employees deposit their wages into a safe holding bank. In 1988, the Whitinsville Savings Bank combined with Blackstone Valley Savings Bank and became today's UniBank.



10 Whitinsville Social Library (circa 1912-13), 17 Church Street [Assessor Map 15A Parcel 135], the Whitinsville Social Library was organized in 1844, by 1874 it was public and free, courtesy of Whitin's family underwriting. The beginning of the Whitinsville Social Library was on December 01, 1844, on this date several citizens of the town called a meeting to start a library. Miss Sarah Fletcher had left \$100.00 to be appropriated for a library. It was a private library located in the upstairs of the Dudley Block until 1876 when it was moved into the Town Hall and was made a public library. In 1913, Edward & Arthur Whitin donated \$130,000 and built the Whitinsville Social Library, donating it to the town in 1917. The Whitin brothers endowed the library with \$20,000 for future library purchases; their uncle, James Fletcher Whitin was Library Treasurer for many years. The library historical room houses a large collection of historic photos and town archives including Whitin records.

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11 George Marston Whitin Memorial Community Center (circa 1922), 60 Main Street [Assessor Map 7 Parcel 223], the historic mill village of Whitinsville and the Whitin Community Center exist today thanks to the success and generosity of generations of the Whitin families. Beginning in the early 1800's, the Whitins amassed their fortune milling cotton and manufacturing textile machinery. By the end of the 19th century, the Whitin family and businesses were focused on developing a middle-class family environment as societal norms evolved. The company's workers were cared for in a paternalistic style that went far beyond the provisions of wages and housing. The effort to create social order, the Whitin's and their companies promoted both social and recreational events and facilities like the community center. Carved out of the John C. Whitin estate along Main Street, approximately 3.5 acres of land was donated by several generations of Whitins. The project was financed by John Crane Whitin, 4 great-granddaughters as a memorial

to George Marston Whitin, who served as CEO and treasurer at different times for the Whitin Machine Works. Under George Marston Whitin's leadership, the Whitin Machine Works provided many of the social opportunities for the town, starting many clubs and social organizations and giving much financial support to the town.



12 Trinity Episcopal Church (circa 1925 - 1929), 31 Linwood Avenue [Assessor Map 14A Parcel 35], site of the Charles Edward Whitin family's Italianate estate which burned to the ground in January 1919 and sold to the Wardens & Vestry of Trinity Episcopal Church. The Whitin family lead the underwriting of many of the downtown cross-road downtown improvements including the design and construction of many of the institutional and religious buildings, with the Trinity Episcopal Church being one. The early 19th century was a period of great immigration and explosion of church development. During the 1890's to 1930's St. Patrick's Church (circa 1898), Village Congregational Church (circa 1903), Methodist Church (circa 1911 /rebuilt after fire), and the United Presbyterian Church were built.

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