



THE CHRONICLE QUARTERLY

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Weston Historical Society

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

A CONNECTICUT YANKEE

"Yankee axes, that's what they were. Designed, shaped, and forged by Yankee stock. The Bradley axe made in Weston for 100 years was the finest axe of it's time and there still live many who helped make it—the axe unsung, that went into the making of the pioneer west."

Greshom Warren Bradley
1931 age 73

I don't think we could add anything to this concerning our story on the Greshom W. (Wakeman) Bradley Edge Tool Factory.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

COLEY MUSEUM UPDATE

Good things must surely be worth waiting for. We have been waiting for over two years for the town boards to rule on granting your Society an official residence and museum at the Coley property on Weston road. In most towns a Historical Society would be welcome with open arms and the words "What can we do for you?" But not in Weston. The Democratic Process is wonderful and we would not change anything—well, we might add a little common sense and understanding once in awhile.

WESTON'S HISTORICAL NOTEBOOK

THE BRADLEY AXE FACTORY

We mentioned the G.W. Bradley Edge Tool Factory in the last issue of the Chronicle. Over the past 10 years several newspaper articles have related the history of this famous axe factory. In this issue of the Chronicle we will only try to refresh your memory by highlighting the main parts of the history of the Bradleys and their factories. Actually, it was more than an axe factory as the correct name implies. The index to the catalog issued in 1896 listed over 70 items sold, most of them things other than axes.

The original mill was started by Wakeman Bradley on the banks of the Saugatuck river in 1812. He learned his trade from his grandfather, David Wakeman in Southport. When he had mastered his trade he moved to Weston, bought a house and an out building in Valley Forge and set up his business. He made all his axes and tools by hand and alone. He produced goods of such superior merit that his name and reputation became well established and he had a prosperous business. His wagons would carry his axes to the freight station in Fairfield (eight miles away).

Because not many people travelled from Weston to Fairfield and beyond, the wagon driver became the bearer of news from the outside world. The election of James Monroe in 1816 was first told in Weston by the driver of the Bradley ox team.

The growing business brought the thought of machinery to the Bradley's and in 1832 Gresham W. Bradley (Wakeman's son) established a factory further down the river. He built the finest machines obtainable for the production of his tools. He also worked alone for the first few years. This plant on Bradley street was named for his grandfather Gresham W. Bradley (Bradley street is now Lyons Plains Road).

As his business grew he hired men to work in the forge, man the fires, and handle the polishing, crating, etc. Many of these workers lived in houses along the road. Some of these are still standing but have been renovated and remodeled.

In the spring of 1854 snow fell heavily in Weston and spring brought a rushing of water that completely destroyed the factory. The Bradleys rebuilt immediately and business was resumed as usual. Miles Bradley, Gresham's oldest son took over and ran this factory and the one in the Forge. The tools were forged in the plant on Bradley road and were polished and finished in the factory in Valley Forge. After the Civil War, the Bradley road site was expanded and the Forge factory was closed. Miles Bradley's two brothers, Gresham and Dewitt, with the aid of their brother-in-law, Henry Ogden, took over the management of the factory when their brother died.

PICTURE QUIZ

Can You Name This?



If you can name the item in the picture, send your answer and your name and address to the Editor:

THE CHRONICLE
P.O. Box 1092
Weston, CT 06883

LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ

The item in the last issue is a Pleater, sometimes called a goffering machine. Heated rods were inserted into the rollers through which a strip of cloth was passed by turning the handle. Ridges crimped and heat set pleats or ruffles in the strips, which was then sewn back on the garment.

No one sent in a correct answer.

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In 1886 Gresham Warren Bradley and his brother Dewitt bought out all the other heirs and took over the ownership and management of the factory. They operated the axe factory until 1905 when Dewitt died. This broke up the long time brother partnership and the following year Gresham sold the firm to William G. Staples and William S. Adams.

The Bradley axe factory was destroyed by fire on May 1, 1911. The cause of the fire remains a mystery; however, Gresham told of seeing the building where the grinding was done fall first and he said that the stove in that building caused the fire. All that was saved was the iron house, the box building, the office and the store room.

Eventual liquidation of the business closed a page in the history of Weston that will always remain colorful.

What made Bradley axes so much in demand? They were made by the best Yankee craftsmen from specially-tempered iron and steel from Sheffield, England. The metal bars, each weighing about 800 pounds, were transported by oxen teams to Weston from the old dock across the street from the old Staples High School on Riverside avenue in Westport.

POST OFFICE PLANS

A number of alternate plans have been offered regarding the renovation and moving of the old post office. These included the idea of leaving the post office where it is. These have been rejected for the most part and the Post Office Committee will be sending a proposal to the Selectmen's office within the next two months. This will recommend the moving of the post office to the Adams Farm barn site. Hopefully we can get the post office moved by this fall.

We are attempting to do some research on the various post offices in Weston. We know that the first post office was opened on February 20, 1818 with Jesse Wakeman as postmaster. We also know that Lizzie Adams was postmaster in the old post office on June 18, 1900 as evidenced by the registry receipt made out to John Morton (see below). What happened between these dates we are attempting to find out.

REGISTRY RECEIPT.			
Post Office at	Weston Conn		
Registered Letter Parcel	No.	9	Rec'd June 18 1900
of	John Morton		
	Weston Conn		
addressed to	First National Bank		
	Westport Conn		
	Lizzie Adams P. M.		

G.W. BRADLEY'S SONS, Edge Tool Factory



A picture of the factory buildings taken about 1904.



Remains of Bradley axe factory after the fire of May 1, 1911.

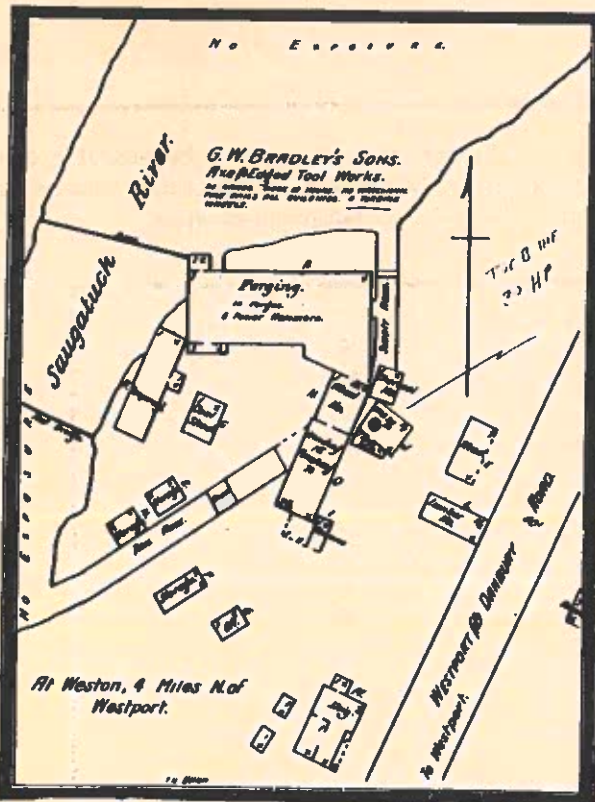


Diagram showing location of the buildings at the G.W. Bradley's Sons axe and edged tool works. From a 1891 Insurance map. Note the comments "30 hands—work 10 hours—no watchman. Fire pails all buildings. 4 turbine wheels." Each turbine delivered 30 horsepower. In later years when the water power was poor the factory was run on steam power.

Illustrated Catalogue
AND
PRICE LIST
OF
EDGE TOOLS
MANUFACTURED BY
G. W. BRADLEY'S SONS,
WESTPORT, CONN.

1896.

HATCHETS.

Broad Hatchets.



No. 0.	4	inch cut	per dozen.	\$10.00
No. 1.	4½	"	"	11.50
No. 2.	5	"	"	13.50
No. 3.	5½	"	"	15.00
No. 4.	6	"	"	17.50
No. 5.	6½	"	"	20.00
No. 6.	7	"	"	23.00

Claw Hatchets.

No. 1.	per dozen.	\$ 9.00
No. 2.	"	7.50
No. 3.	"	10.00

Shingling Hatchets.



No. 1.	per dozen.	\$8.00
No. 2.	"	8.50
No. 3.	"	9.00

Axe Hatchets.

No. 1.	per dozen.	\$ 8.00
No. 2.	"	8.50
No. 3.	"	9.00
No. 4.	"	10.00

Lath Hatchets.



No. 1.	per dozen.	\$8.00
No. 2.	"	8.50
No. 3.	"	9.00

Full Polished, add \$1.00 per dozen to list.

SIDEWALK ICE CHISELS.



Per dozen \$12.00

NOTICE.

All goods stamped "G. W. BRADLEY" are made from best quality Norway or Burden's Iron, and Jessop's or Firth's English Cast Steel; our aim is not to make goods to compete in price, but to excel in quality.

WARRANTY.

All goods made by us are warranted free from flaws and not soft. When defective and returned to us without expense, we will replace with other goods. Goods showing evidence of long usage or having been injured by misuse, are not covered by this warrant.

Several pages from a Bradley catalog of 1896. Note that the address is given as Westport. This was probably because they either had an office in Westport to be near the freight station or picked up their mail there for the same reason, since their wagons were in Westport everyday. The Bradleys sold thru an agent in New York; Underhill, Clinch & Co., 94 Chambers street.

G. W. BRADLEY'S
SUPERIOR QUALITY
Cast Steel Tools,
WESTPORT, CONN.

Westport, Conn. Jan 28 1908

Mr John Morton

Bought of G. W. BRADLEY'S SONS,
EDGE TOOL MANUFACTURERS.

Terms, Net Cash, 30 Days. Per Cent. If Paid in Days.

<i>Balance on axes</i>	<i>1.35</i>
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A copy of a statement for John Morton for \$1.35 for axes he bought from G. W. Bradley's Sons. Note that although the name of the company remained the same as a trade mark, when Gresham and Dewitt took over they added the word Sons to the name.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

DEMOCRATS SCHEDULE BIG RALLY FOR THIS FRIDAY EVENING

The Democrats of Weston are scheduled to hold a rally in the auditorium of the new Hurlbutt school on Friday night at eight o'clock. Arrangements for the rally are in the hands of John Hartmann, president of the new Weston Democratic club and of Representative Willis Banks. Well-known speakers will be present and a large crowd is anticipated.

The rally will concern itself with both local and national politics. With regard to local affairs, the Weston Democratic Club seeks to better organize the financing of the town and to appoint a finance committee. This will be thoroughly discussed at the rally, together with other points of interest to Weston voters.

This rally will be the second within a week, the Republicans having one scheduled for this evening. This is a record and a precedent, for never in the history of Weston has there been a political rally here in connection with a state or national election.

The list of speakers for Friday night's rally will include Prof. Harry Morgan Ayres of Westport, Thomas H. Beck of Wilton, Mrs. Rose Russell and Bryon McMahon of Norwalk. Congressman William L. Tierney and others of prominence, Selectman James S. Coley is assisting with the arrangements. Everyone is welcome.

ARRESTED FOR NUDE BATHING

State Policeman Frank Shaw arrested two men on Bradley street Wednesday evening for bathing in the nude. They will be tried Saturday evening at six o'clock before Justice of the Peace Edward James and Grand Juror David Coley in Town Hall. They are charged with indecent exposure.

REV. CRAVEN CALLED TO NORFIELD CONG. CHURCH PASTORATE

The Rev. Gus John Craven of New Haven has been called to the pastorate of the Norfield Congregational Church and will begin his duties as permanent pastor today! The call was given Mr. Craven following a meeting of the church members on Sunday. He will take up residence in the parsonage with his family within the next ten days.

SUMMER AND FALL SCHEDULES

The Barn Museum will be open on several Sundays in July and August. Please watch the Forum for details.

We will have a Quilt show at the Museum in September. Publicity on this event will be forthcoming.

The annual meeting of your Society will be held on October 17, at the Norfield Church Parish Hall.

FROM MRS. COLEY'S RECIPE BOOK

HERMITS

1½ cups sugar

¾ cup butter

2 eggs

1 tsp soda dissolved in 4 tbsp milk

1 tsp each cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg

1 cup chopped raisins, salt, and about

2 cups of flour. (Use about one tbsp of batter for each cookie.

(The amount of flour needed for recipes was not always given, relying on the cook to determine how much was needed to make the best batter. Good luck!)

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The Society continues to present information on the history of Weston to students of Weston schools.

This past month some of our lady trustees escorted four 2nd grade classes thru the Barn Museum, explaining many of the items from Weston's past which are on display.

NEXT ISSUE

The Bells of Weston

New items in the Museum

Picture Quiz

The latest round with the town

THE

CHRONICLE

QUARTERLY

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FOUNDED IN 1961

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HIGHLIGHTS

Bradley axe factory
Post Office Plans
Upcoming events
50 years ago