



## Some of early Stratford's jobs and industries

by Stratford Historical Society

Solomon Plant was one of the many Stratford men who fought bloody battles in the wilderness campaigns to conquer French Canada. He kept a diary (now on display at the Stratford Historical Society), which followed the final campaign to take Canada from the French in July, August and September of 1760. Three hundred miles away, colonial Stratford could now live without the fear of French invasion and by November her soldier sons would come home.

Solomon Plant, upon his return to Stratford, made spinning wheels for over fifty years, until his death in 1822. His account book for 1810 lists repairs and replacement reels, wheels, and double wheels for most of the town's households, still spinning their own thread and yarn. He also made a good many ax handles, hoe handles, and pitchforks for his neighbors.

"At Stratford they are establishing a manufactory of Duck, and have lately turned out about 400 bolts," reads President Washington's diary for October 17, 1789. Duck was made from hemp and linen from flax. Both were in demand for shirts, pants, and sailcloth.

Flocks of sheep still thrived in Stratford and supplied raw material for Tomlinson's fulling mill on the Far Mill River and for the weavers of woolen cloth.

Silas Burton, born at the end of the colonial period, was a prominent weaver in the early federal period. He operated from a building behind his home on Linden Avenue and employed several other weavers. He took orders for dress material and carpeting

and delivered bolts of woven cloth to customers as far away as New York where he was known for his Stratford Beauty, Irish Stitch and Diamond Diaper patterns.

Several small hat factories sprang up in the 1800s — one on lower Main Street, one next to Burritt's on the Ferry Road, and one behind Minor Higby's house on Church Street. Next door to Minor Higby's, facing Main Street, stood W.S. Booth's large hoopskirt factory.

To support the farmers who were supplying the flax, wool, corn, and wheat, Stagg and Parks imported phosphates (presumably from South America) and set up a superphosphate factory next to White's shipyard at the end of New Lane (Broad Street).

An 1819 travel brochure named *The Gazeteer of Connecticut* lists Stratford's industry as a tin ware factory, a tannery, two carding machines, three grain mills, and three merchants' mills for flouring wheat and grinding Indian corn and Plaster of Paris.

To honor the 375th anniversary of the Town of Stratford, the book *In Pursuit of Paradise*, by Lewis G. Knapp, former town historian, is available at the Stratford Historical Society for a discount at \$25.

Call 203-378-0630 for information.

Note: Lew Knapp, our former town historian, who wrote *In Pursuit Of Paradise*, passed away on May 15, 2014. It is the information from his book that we use for these articles.

He was also responsible for establishing the historic district in town and worked tirelessly preserving our town history while also serving on many town committees. He will be missed by the town.