

Obituary for Eli Whitney, in Niles Weekly Register, 25 January 1825

The late Mr. Whitney. Died at his residence in New-Haven, on Saturday morning 8th inst. after a long and distressing illness, Eli Whitney, esq. aged 57 years. Mr. Whitney was one of the most distinguished men whom our country has produced, and his loss will be deeply felt and lamented throughout the nation. He was a native of Westborough, Mass. and was a graduate of Yale College, in 1792. His inventive genius rendered him one of the greatest benefactors of the age, and was the means of changing the whole course of industry in the southern section of the union. Previous to the invention of his cotton gin, in 1793 or 4, scarcely a pound of upland cotton was raised for exportation. In the short period of twelve years, the export amounted to about 12,000,000 dollars.

Judge Johnson, of South Carolina, speaking of this invention, in 1807, says, "The whole interior of the southern states was languishing. and its inhabitants emigrating for want of some object to engage their attention and employ their industry, when the invention of this machine at once opened views to them which set the whole country in motion. From childhood to age, it has presented to us a lucrative employment. Individuals, who were depressed with poverty and sunk in idleness, have suddenly risen to wealth and respectability. Our debts have been paid, our capitals increased, and our lands trebled in value. We cannot express the weight of obligations which the country owes to this invention: the extent of it cannot now be seen."

The mechanical ingenuity by Mr. Whitney, in the invention of the cotton gin, was next directed, at the instance of the government of the United States, to the manufacture of fire arms. He undertook the execution of a contract to a large amount, before he had ever attempted to make a single musket. Here, as in every other instance in which the powers of his mind were directed to the accomplishment of an important object, he was eminently successful; and the benefit of the great improvements suggested by his genius, is now felt and appreciated by the government, in the national armories at Springfield and Harper's Ferry.

Mr. Whitney was a gentleman of extensive literary and scientific attainments, of liberal and expanded views, benevolent in his feelings, and mild and unassuming in his manners. While his death will be regarded by the nation as a public calamity, it will be felt in the circle of his private friends as a bereavement of its brightest ornament.

-Connecticut Herald

[Source - <http://www.teachingushistory.org/trove/whitneyobit.html>]