



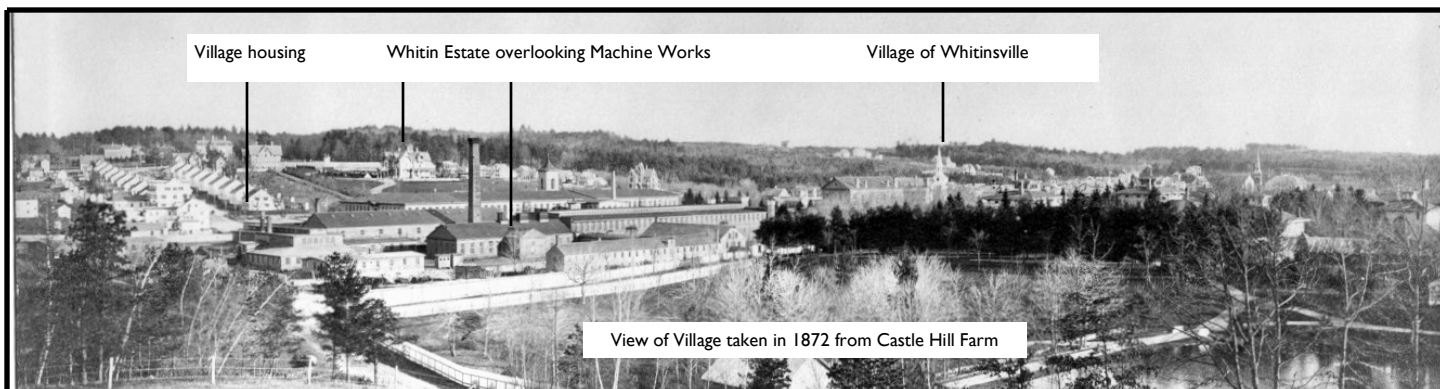
*Columbus Day Weekend 2005*



**WHITIN COMMUNITY CENTER**  
60 MAIN STREET  
WHITINSVILLE, MA 01590  
[WWW.OURGYM.ORG](http://WWW.OURGYM.ORG)

## Welcome to Historic Whitin Park

## & the George Marston Whitin Memorial Community Assoc.



Welcome to the Whitin Community Center. Located in the historic district, we are a private, non-profit recreational facility built by members of the Whitin family and gifted to the community in 1923.

In 1872 this property was home to John C. Whitin founder of the Whitin Machine Works (which, located directly across from the Whitin Community

Center on Main Street, closed operations in 1967).

In the 20th century, Whitin Machine Works was the largest producer of textile machinery in the world. The mill employed over 5000 individuals and supported the growth of vast company housing and many smaller local industries.

Begin your visit with us by looking across Main Street to the expansive brick building that once housed the Whitin Machine Works. Although this complex is now home to many contemporary businesses, the shadow of what it once was is visible from its exterior appearance. Although neither the shop whistle still blows nor black smoke billows from the tall stack, the landscape has changed little from that enjoyed by the mill owner who welcomed people such as yourself to his home.

Beginning at the Whitin Community Center's parking lot, proceed in the direction of Main Street, down the slope and into the grassy area that lies above Main Street. Note the odd display of jutting rocks. What could make such a formation?

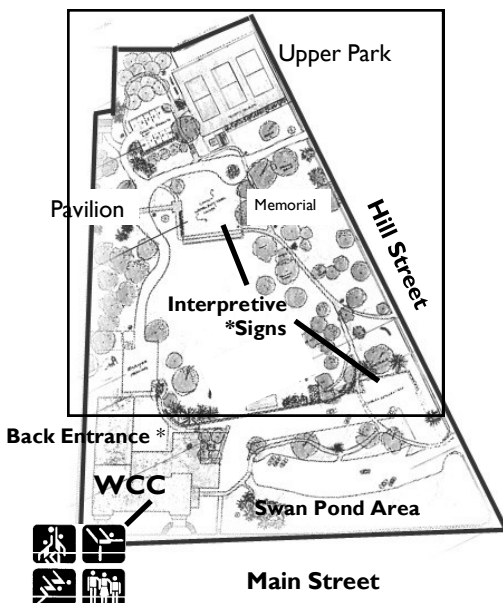
At one time, a private home was located here. These were the foundation stones of this house. The house was torn down to make way for Whitin's Estate. The stones were used as part of the landscaping for a

one-acre man-made swan pond from which a fountain sprayed upward.

While standing in the parking lot, notice the masonry retaining wall along the upper property. The square doorway opens into a circular domed room. This was a chamber "kiln" for the manufacture of methane gas. This was state-of-the-art technology in 1875. When darkness fell, illumination of the house and property was made possible by piping the gas uphill to fuel the lamps. The gas was produced at a distance from the house as a precaution in case of an explosion.

Follow the retaining wall toward Hill Street, and enter the walking path into Historic Whitin Park. Please take a few minutes to read the interpretive sign that describes the English landscape design that was the footprint for Whitin's "country" estate, the footprint of which is still visible in the layout of the park you visit today.

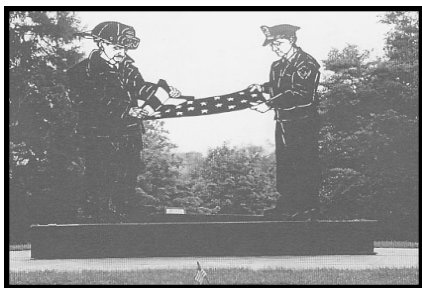
As you begin your walk up hill, note the large and graceful specimen trees that make this property a special place year-round. Many of these trees are labeled with their common and botanical names for your enjoyment and still thrive today because of a on-going effort to preserve them. With less leaves on the trees, you can see the support cables installed in the heavy branches overhead.



Historic Whitin Park contains the largest variety of specimen trees of this maturity in Central Massachusetts. You will find a 150-year old Katsura tree, an ancient Japanese maple tree, a collection of beech specimens, and massive sugar maples planted when the house was completed 1872. Additionally there are cherry trees, one of which, was awarded Heritage State Champion as it was measured to be the largest Higan's Cherry in the state.

The property is bounded by a perimeter wall that measures a mile in length. This wall was built by Italian stone masons brought to Whitinsville by Whitin specifically for this project. The brick wall at the rear was the back wall of a tremendous greenhouse—the shadow of the fireplace that kept the hothouse hot is still visible in the brick.

At the top of the walkway, stands a memorial to the heroes of 9/11. Shortly after our national tragedy in 2001, members of the



community came together with the goal of doing something locally to commemorate the heroic response. A nationally known artist was commissioned and the Northbridge fire chief and police chief modeled for the sculpture. It is created out of steel—as was used in the construction of the World Trade Center; it stands on a granite pentagon—symbolic of the attack in Washington, D.C.; and by being located in a setting such as this, it is meant to be reminiscent of the field in Pennsylvania where American heroes sacrificed themselves by bringing down the plane before further horror could take place. Please take a moment to think about that time and how blessed we are to have people who answer the call for help—our everyday heroes.

Near the sculpture you will see a Weeping Beech tree. Beech trees are easy to identify as each has a gray sagging bark that looks like elephant skin. Each type of beech has distinct leaves different from the others.

Ascend up the steps onto the flat area at the top of the park. Here you'll find a second wayside sign that illustrates the history of this property.

In front of the tennis courts, a copper beech tree was planted in 1998 in memory of Lawrence Keeler - the last descendant

of the Whitin family who resided locally. Mr. Keeler loved the park and worked to maintain the grounds for others to enjoy.

If you proceed across the foundation, you will notice construction has commenced for the Gerry Gaudette Pavilion. Mr. Gaudette worked to preserve this landscape during his lifetime and to create a regional identity for the Blackstone Valley. He was the chairman of the WCC Board of Trustees until his death in 2003. The pavilion will serve as an outdoor classroom for our summer camp and childcare programs and will provide a community gathering place for club meetings, family picnics, and personal respite.

The pavilion is built on the site of the original tea house that was part of Whitin's estate. In the late 1800s, the tea house provided a retreat from the summer heat of the main house and was a place to entertain and engage in social discourse. In the 1950s and 1960s it became the meeting place for girl scouts and was used by the Northbridge Recreational Program. It was torn down in the 1970s when it could no longer be maintained for safe occupancy.

If you head down the driveway to WCC, you will descend several steps past a modern Japanese garden installed as a gift from our past trustees, Pam Siderevitz and Mary Mansfield. Please enter the door into the building (pull hard it is heavy) and proceed forward through a second door into the lobby.

The Whitin Community Center has one of the oldest swimming pools in the state still in use for aquatics training. The swimming pool boasts a long and meritorious history of hosting important swim meets, training Olympic medal winners, and teaching almost every child in the region to swim.

Other areas in the building to visit include the members' lounge that was once the original lobby for the "gym & swim". When the shop whistle blew across the street signaling the end of a shift, the workers would file across the street, pay a dime for their towel at the desk (that is now a counter for the mini-kitchen) and head into the gym for a rousing game of B'ball or out to the showers and into the pool to refresh before heading home up the street.

The photos on the walls show some of the athletes who broke

records, acted as role models, and went on to coach, teach, and support a community in athletic and recreational pursuits.



You are also invited to take the stairs from the main lobby up to the second floor to view the

Historic John C. Whitin Photo Gallery. The photos provide an intimate tour of the original house before it was razed in 1940. This took place when there was no Whitin left in town who wanted to live there. The upper grounds were then deeded to the Whitin Community Center and for recreational use. The artwork and antiques documented in these photographs illustrate the wealth of the family who founded the town and many of the resources in it.

Unlike other mill towns in which the mill owners took more than they gave, the Whitin family will be remembered for their generosity, their personal investment of time and talent, and to leaving a legacy of benevolence and charity.

The Whitin Community Center is a non-profit organization that operates based on a budget established through membership dues. All capital projects including the preservation of the building and grounds, the construction of the Gerry Gaudette Pavilion, the creation of the memorial, and the addition of the entry way and Japanese garden are provided through charitable gifts from people who appreciate our mission and our resource value within the community.

Thank you for visiting the George Marston Whitin Memorial Association, Inc. today. For more information about our history, programs, and goals for the future, please visit us at [www.OurGym.org](http://www.OurGym.org).

## Historic Pool Pass

**\$2.50**

**WELCOME TO THE WHITIN COMMUNITY CENTER**  
Per person recreational swim reduced rate

Tel: 508-234-8184

Expiration Date: 12/31/05