Week 6

Leather industries

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http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/series/manufactures-industrial-revolution
Take-aways from Week 5, the hosiery industry

• Hand knitting largely by-employment artisan production
• Developed into putting-out industry in Wales in 1830s after mechanisation of wool carding and spinning, and as knitters became poorer
• Wealthy hosiers controlled framework knitting industry, especially supply of silk, and cotton thread and worsted yarn after mechanisation of spinning
• In 18th century, most knitters owned their own frame
• Involution of framework knitting proto-industry as earnings fell
• Mechanisation allowed frame rentals to be abolished, but women’s low-paid outwork continued until late 20th century
Outline

Leather production – growth of production centres
Leather crafts in the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries
19\textsuperscript{th}-century shoemaking proto-industry
Glove-making
Before 1800, industry with second highest output after wool industries
Other uses
Leather manufacture

Discussion topics: Describe in no more than 5 minutes the main points of one of the following readings:


- Clarkson, L., 'The organization of the English leather industry in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *Economic History Review* 13 (1960). In class Google drive, one class copy.


Location of leather industries in 16th and 17th centuries

Leather-making centres based on supply of hides:

- Pastoral areas
- Alongside iron industry and metalworking in south Yorkshire, West Midlands, Forest of Dean
- London the largest centre, based on city’s meat markets, concentrated in Bermondsey and Southwark
- Regional centres like Kendal, Hexham, Durham
- Leather trades estimated to employ 8-10% of working population of urban areas, 20% in some cities
Leather-making process

Heavy leather tanning a two-stage process:

1. De-hairing by soaking in lime solution to loosen hair, then scraping. Hair sold for making plaster

2. Soaking hides in solution of oak bark and water for 6 months to 2 years

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JePHz7yVijk

Light skins – sheep, goats, calves – dressed with train oil or alum. Suitable for gloves and leather clothing
Currying

- Currier replaced oils removed by tanning to make leather supple and waterproof
- Impregnated leather with train oil and tallow
- Shaved it to thickness required by shoemaker or other craftsman
Organisation of leather industries

- Tanners, curriers and leather craftsmen independent workers linked by market

- Tanners – required large circulating capital, up to 2 years from purchase of hide to sale of tanned leather. Low labour costs, economies of scale. Often part-time farmers in 16th century. Some tanners supplied oak bark to others

- Curriers might act as middlemen buying and selling leather

- Shoemaking a widespread bespoke craft, located near customers

- Gloving often on a putting-out basis by 17th century, especially in pastoral areas
Late 19th-century concentration

- Fewer, larger firms after 1850
- Splitting machinery introduced from 1850s to double area of hide
- More dependent on foreign hides and bark
- Greater urban concentration
Shoemaking becomes a proto-industry

17th-century beginnings in Northampton:


Impact of mass proto-industrial production:

Northampton becomes boot and shoe capital

• Shoemaking a local craft till 17th century

• London and Northampton shoemakers contracted to supply shoes and boots to Parliamentary army from 1642

• Army bought 28,000 pairs shoes in 1645

• Northampton continued to supply later armies

• In 1830s most employers small master shoemakers, but some large concerns - William Parker employed 800 workers making 80,000 pairs of footwear a year

• 39% of Northampton men worked in footwear in 1851
Growth of enterprises in 19th century

- Growing market in 1840s from increased home living standards, demand from colonies

- **1840s Leeds**: 67% growth in shoemaking, women increased from 5% to 20% of workforce

- Growth of large firms, e.g. Stead & Simpson, Conyers

- Curriers went into business on a large scale manufacturing footwear

- Initially on mix of workshop and putting out: boot uppers cut and stitched in warehouse, put out to journeymen to add the sole in their own homes or small workshops. Still helped by wives

- Efficiency based on extreme division of labour, employing more women and girls, and marketing to a mass national market

- Shoemaking provided new work opportunities for men in rural areas around Leeds displaced from woollen manufacture or weavers with declining earnings
Outwork

• Shoemaking spread to most areas of Northamptonshire and to Leicester in 19th century
• Provided work for men displaced from framework knitting
• From early 19th century, organised on a putting-out basis
• Clinking (cutting out) and rough-stuff finishing on manufacturers’ premises
Gradual industrialization

- Mechanization depended on series of separate technical developments – two-stage process
- Sole-cutting using presses first aspect to be mechanized
- Singer sewing machine modified to stitch uppers mid-19th century
- Some closing moved into factories, or masters rented out sewing machines to women at home
- Shoe manufacturers established shoe shop chains in 1880s
- Decline of the village shoemaker
Opposition to mechanization

- Machinery first introduced in Manfield’s factory in 1858
- Northampton Boot and Shoe-makers Mutual Protection Society formed to oppose mechanisation
- Lack of support for strike, as women’s work stitching uppers and closing was first to be mechanized
- Factory mechanisation with invention in 1858 of Blake’s and Mackay’s power-driven sewers for stitching on soles
- Followed by machinery for riveting, eyeleting, trimming
- 1890s lock-out
- Factories continued to put out sewing uppers or closing to women in their own homes
Organisation of gloving industry

- In 16th century glove-making serving national markets in West of England pastoral areas, Cheshire, Shropshire, using local hides and imports from Ireland

_Glovemaking in Oxfordshire:_
West Oxfordshire gloving industry

- Gloving area since Tudor times
- Expanded rapidly into surrounding area in early 19c
- In 1809, Young found 70 male grounders earning 21-30s a week, 1,400-1,500 women earning 8-12s a week
- Small compared to Worcester, where 30,000 employed in 1832
- Woodstock the main centre, work put out across Wychwood Forest area to women and girls from age 7
- Gloves still hand-sewn at end of 19th century
Processes

**Factory-based:**

- Leather tanned locally till mid-19th century, then cheaper to buy from large tanneries or the Continent
- Leather straked over a dull-edged curved blade to soften after dyeing
- Pared to reduce skin to a uniform thickness
- Punching glove parts

**Putting out:**

- Making up, lining, button-holing
Prep for Week 7
The metal industries

Discussion topics:

• Why did metalwork manufactures develop on a proto-industrial basis in the West Midlands and south Yorkshire?

• How were they affected by mechanization?

Reading

• Berg, M. The Age of Manufactures, Ch. 11, ‘The metal and hardware trades’, and Ch. 12., ‘The Birmingham toy trades’. Two class copies.


• Rowlands, M. B. Masters and Men in the West Midland Metalware Trades before the Industrial Revolution (Manchester, 1975), Ch. 2, ‘The variety of trades’. Two class copies.


• Plot, R., The Natural History of Stafford-shire (1686), Ch. IX, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A55155.0001.001?view=toc