

# INVENTORS

## Eli Whitney

### HIGHLIGHTS

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1. In the late 1700s, independence from England meant far more than just political freedom — it also meant economic freedom.
  2. American farmers and manufacturers were restricted by heavy taxes and requirements imposed on them by the British government.
  3. A decade after the Revolutionary War, vast acres of rich agricultural land waited to be farmed.
  4. What was needed was another revolution — a revolution in tools, machinery, and production methods.
  5. Eli Whitney would play a major role in the success of America's second revolution.
3. As a student at Yale, Eli was drawn to science, then called Natural Philosophy.
  4. Whitney's inventing led to the cotton gin, but he spent many years in court trying to stop patent infringements and netted little money from it.
  5. He finally became wealthy after creating his mass production system.
  6. He married at age 52, became the father of four children and died January 8, 1825, at the age of 59.

### THE PERSON

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1. Eli Whitney was born December 8, 1765, in Westboro, Massachusetts.
2. Eli was known for his mechanical skills as a child. As an adult, he could fix anything.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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1. He invented the cotton gin, revolutionizing cotton production in the United States. The cotton gin reduced the time it took to extract seed from cotton from one hour to one minute.
2. He invented mass production and made it work.
3. Eli Whitney was the first to approach invention as a business and to make industries of his creativeness.

### UNIQUE INFLUENCE

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1. There is debate as to whether the cotton gin or mass production has had the greatest influence on American history.
2. The cotton gin, inadvertently, made slavery profitable by creating a demand for cheap labor to harvest cotton from the fields.
3. Later championed by Henry Ford, mass production transformed the United States into the leading industrial nation in the world.
4. Whitney was the first to exemplify the combination of inventiveness and ambition, the desire to contribute and also to profit, that became so much a part of the American character.

### QUOTABLE QUOTES

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*A biographer described Whitney's desire to receive an education and his determination to earn the money to pay for it: "Eli would not give up. He studied harder. He went to work on neighboring farms to earn a few extra dollars. He repaired violins; he carved bowls and boxes, butter paddles and wooden plates."*

*"I will make you proud of me!" Whitney's promise to his father after his father consented to help pay for his education.*

*"I believe he will make a mark in the world." Yale College president Ezra Stile's assessment of his student Eli Whitney.*

*Whitney spoke somewhat prophetically about his new mass production system: "I am not only building a factory, I am building a new world."*

*"One more try!" Whitney's motto whenever he encountered failure.*