

The "Old Drum Factory," Noble & Cooley

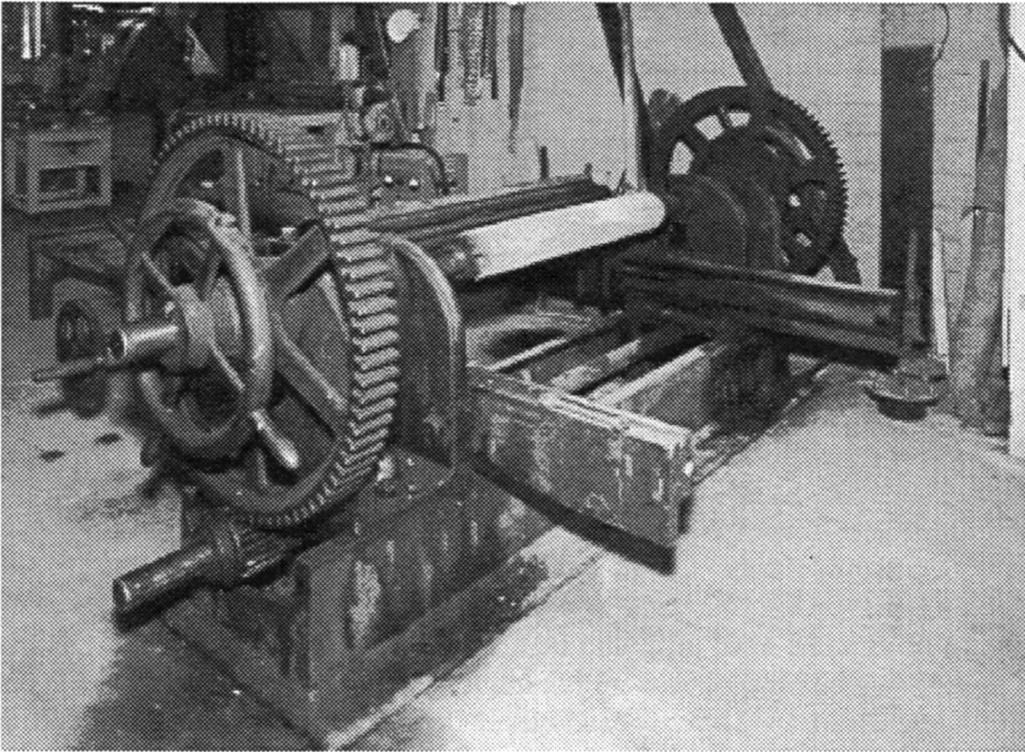
Noble and Cooley, founded in 1854 as a manufacturer of toy drums, has continued to produce toys, professional drum sets and drum related furniture for 150 years. They produced marching drums for the Union Army during the Civil War. The "Old Drum Factory" as it is known in its home town of Granville Massachusetts was one of the highlights of SIA's 1998 fall tour of the Connecticut Valley. The historic enterprise is finding it increasingly difficult to manufacture drums at a competitive price. Intense foreign competition, changing marketing systems and competition from electronic

and a wider variety of toys for children have decimated the toy drum market.

The drums are made with a fascinating group of historic vernacular machinery; much of it invented and built by the owners around 1900. The "new" mill building, dating c. 1870, is a well maintained example of "country factory" of the period and preserves some overhead pulley and leather belt drive systems and artifacts of the original water power system.



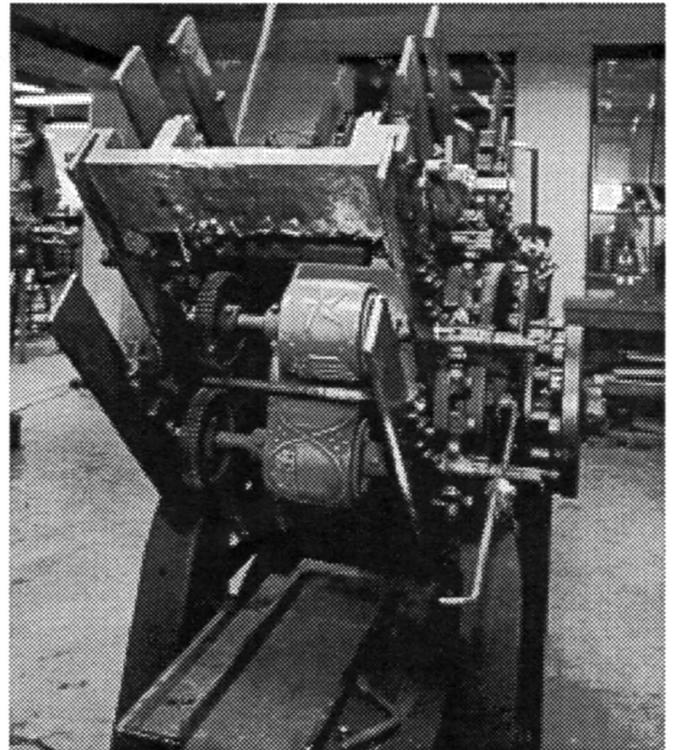
View of the Noble and Cooley "Old Drum Factory" in Granville, Massachusetts. The original mill, built in 1854 burned down and was replaced with this building c. 1870.



Veneer lathe at Noble & Cooley. It was used to shave maple veneer to be formed into boxes, drum furniture and professional drums.

The firm is now engaged in selling off the existing inventory and is considering alternative uses for the manufacturing space in their plant. A committee of volunteers is developing a plan to examine possibilities for preservation or reuse. One idea under consideration visualizes establishing a museum dedicated to "Yankee Ingenuity" with a mission of preserving the manufacturing technology of small, late-19th century establishments. The old mill would also be a good location for setting up a period toy museum. The committee welcomes suggestions from SIA members and the general public. Contact Bob Stewart at <robert.stewart13@att.net>.

Robert Stewart



Lithographic printing machine at Noble & Cooley. The machine was made in the factory c. 1900. It was capable of printing up to eight colors sequentially on flat metal sheets which were then formed into toy drum bodies.