

WORCESTER HISTORICAL
MUSEUM

30 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts

ARCHIVES

Crompton & Knowles
Loom Works Collection

1999.161

Processed by William F. Carroll, C.A.
December 1999

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Collection Information

Abstract : Crompton & Knowles Loom Works was established in 1900 by the merger of two loom-manufacturing companies. The company designed and built looms for the textile industry until the 1980s.

Finding Aid : Finding Aid in print form is available in the Repository.

Preferred Citation : Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Provenance : Gift of Ralph A. Huey, (former Crompton & Knowles personnel), Charlotte, N.C., November 1999 -

MARC Access : Collection is cataloged in MARC under the following subject headings (lsh, aat, tgm, gmgcp)

Crompton & Knowles Loom Works (Worcester, Mass.)
Crompton Loom Works (Worcester, Mass.)
Knowles Loom Works (Worcester, Mass.)
Crompton, William, 1806-1891.
Knowles, Lucius J., 1819-1884.
Worcester Horticultural Society (Worcester, Mass.)
Worcester Historical Museum (Worcester, Mass.)
Flower shows – Massachusetts – Worcester – Photographs.
Looms – Patents.
Looms – Massachusetts – Worcester.
Textile machinery industry – Massachusetts – Worcester.
Worcester (Mass.) – Manufactures – Looms.

Historical Information

A power loom was patented by William Crompton of Taunton, Massachusetts in 1837. Prior to the development of the power loom operating with water power, weaving was done by hand-powered looms, frequently as a cottage industry. George Crompton, son of William, formed a partnership with Merrill Forbush and began manufacturing looms in Worcester in 1851. The merger was dissolved in 1859, and Crompton Loom Works operated independently. Crompton looms were specifically designed to weave cotton fabrics.

L.J. Knowles began the manufacture of sateen in Warren in 1855, and developed and patented new textile machinery for the weaving process. Knowles, in partnership with his brother, began the manufacture of looms in Warren in 1862. Knowles Loom Works specialized in looms for weaving wool.

The two companies were competitors throughout much of the last half of the nineteenth century, and were frequently involved in litigation over patent infringement, as both companies pursued the development of improved machinery.

The two companies consolidated in 1897, and were chartered in Rhode Island under the name Crompton & Knowles Loom Works. In 1900 the company was reincorporated in Massachusetts under the same name. The company had manufacturing facilities in Worcester, Providence, Rhode Island, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Charlotte, North Carolina. The company closed in 1981.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of an undated photograph of the Worcester Horticultural Society flower show in the main hall of the society's building (now Worcester Historical Museum), newsletter and notes about Crompton & Knowles Army and Navy "E" Award, presented December 1942, an outline of company history, copy of patent no. 491, issued to William Crompton for "Fancy Power Loom", November 25, 1837.

The collection is open, and additional items will be added.

Series Description

Series 1: Photographs. Includes photograph of Worcester Horticultural Society annual flower show (n.d.) in the main hall of the Society's building, now Worcester Historical Museum.

Series 2: Patents. Includes copy of Patent #497, issued to William Crompton for fancy Power Loom, in November, 1837.

Series 3: History. Includes typescript "History of weaving machinery as applied to Crompton & Knowles Loom Works", 1733-1935.

Series 4: Publicity. Includes company brochure "C & K Photo News, No. 14", 1943, highlighting Army-Navy "E" Award given in December 1942. Also includes supporting documentation.

Crompton & Knowles Loom Works Collection
1999.161
Series 1, Photographs

| <u>Box #</u> | <u>Folder #</u> | <u>Accession #</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | 1 | 1999.161.1.1 | Flower show in main hall of Worcester Horticultural Society, n.d. : 8 x 10 in., copy / E.B. Luce, Worcester. (The building is now the Worcester Historical Museum.) |
| | | .1a | Letter: Ralph A. Huey, Charlotte, N.C., to William Wallace, Worcester Historical Museum, November 22, 1999, re flower show photograph. |

Crompton & Knowles Loom Works Collection
1999.161
Series 2, Patents

| <u>Box #</u> | <u>Folder #</u> | <u>Accession #</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 1999.161.2.1 | Patent No. 491, issued to William Crompton, Taunton, Massachusetts, November 25, 1837, for Fancy Power Loom. 5 p. Photocopy. |

Crompton & Knowles Loom Works Collection
1999.161
Series 3, History

| <u>Box #</u> | <u>Folder #</u> | <u>Accession #</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | 3 | 1999.161.3.1 | “History of weaving machinery as applied to Crompton & Knowles Loom Works”, 1733-1935. n.d. 6 p. |

Crompton & Knowles Loom Works Collection
1999.161
Series 4, Publicity

| <u>Box #</u> | <u>Folder #</u> | <u>Accession #</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | 4 | 1999.161.4.1 | C & K Photo News, No. 14 [1943], Crompton & Knowles Loom Works, featuring Army-Navy "E" Award given to the company , December 17, 1942. |
| | | .1a | Typescript re "E" Award, outlining Crompton & Knowles war efforts during World War II. |
| | | .1b | Letter: Ralph A. Huey, Charlotte, N.C., to William Wallace, Worcester Historical Museum, November 15, 1999, re "E" Award. |