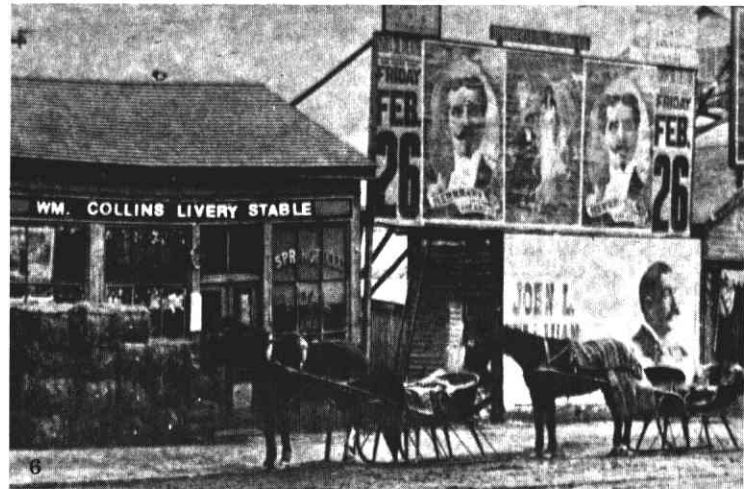


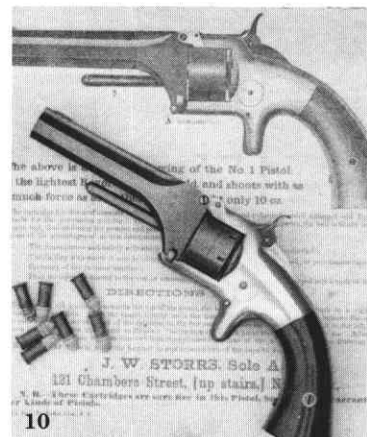


A Picture Story

by
Roy
G.
Jinks



This venture was a financial failure and they were forced to sell their company to Oliver Winchester (5). After the sale of the original Smith & Wesson firm in 1855, Horace Smith returned to Springfield and operated a livery stable (6) on Market Street for his brother-in-law William Collins.



Horace Smith (8) contributed \$1,646.68 as his part of the business while D.B. Wesson invested \$2,003.63, giving him a major interest in the new firm. The partners rented a small shop (9) at 5 Market Street in downtown Springfield and began production of the new revolver. This small .22 caliber revolver (10) was well received.

By mid-1859, the firm had completely outgrown its small shop at 5 Market Street and began construction of a new factory on Stockbridge Street. This building (11) was completed in January, 1860, and Smith & Wesson moved to their larger location.



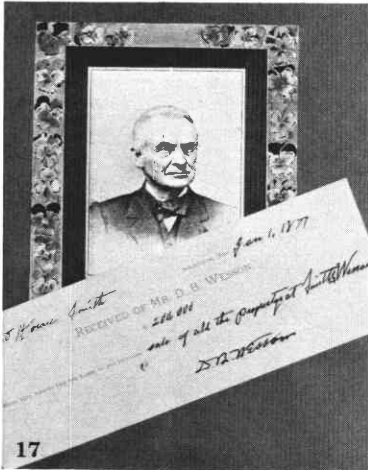


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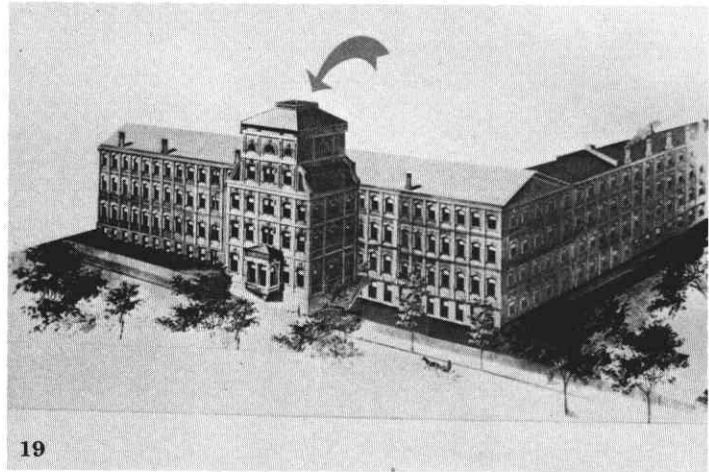
In 1870, with the introduction of their new military revolver called the Model 3 (13), the factory once again had to expand. Another



17



18



19

D.B. Wesson brought his eldest son, Walter, into the office to handle the increased work load. In 1873, when Horace Smith (17) reached 65, he decided to retire. His share of Smith & Wesson was sold to his 48-year-old partner (18) for \$200,000, to be paid to him over the next two years.

D.B. Wesson now became sole owner of the firm and soon began construction of a new tower building (19) to house the offices. This building was completed in 1876.

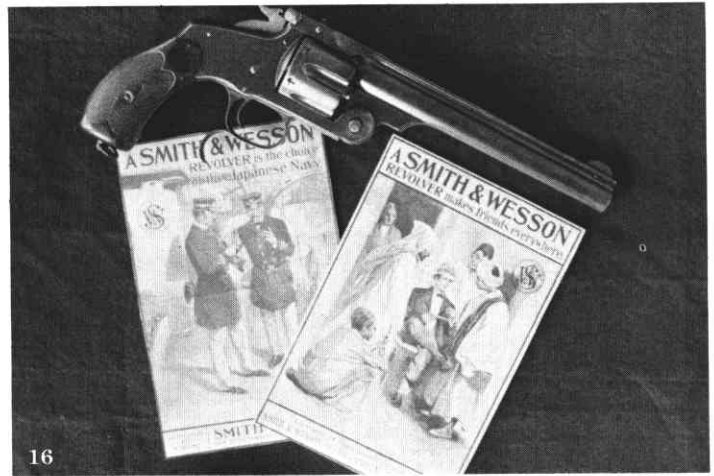
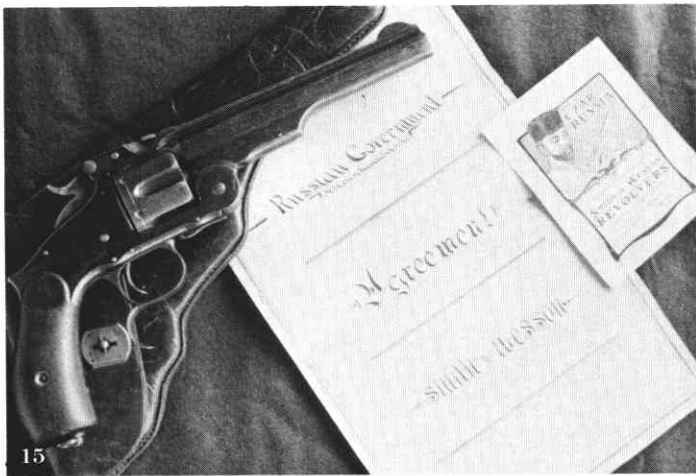


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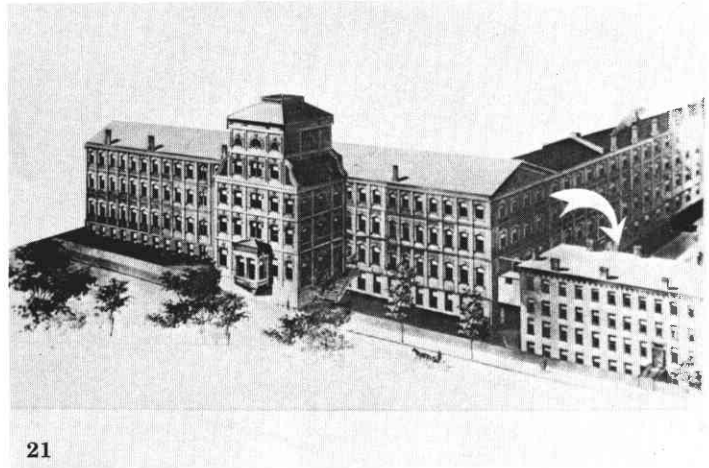


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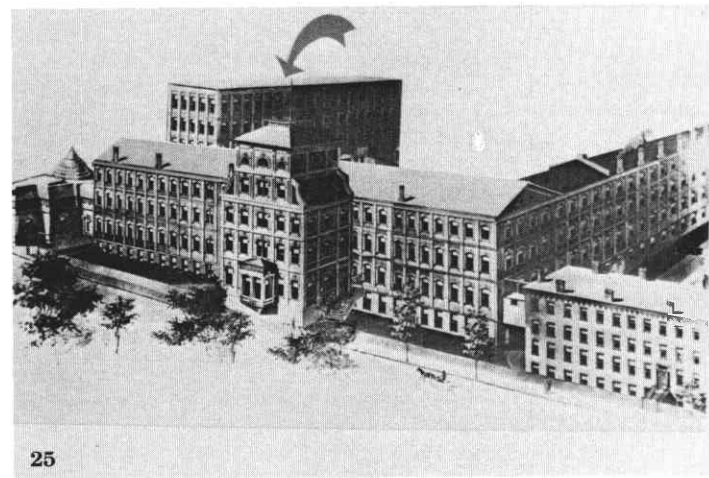
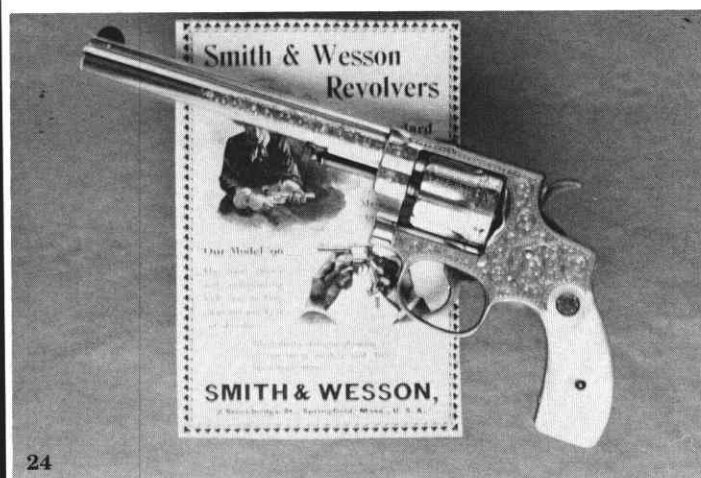
Under the strong hand of D.B. Wesson, the firm continued to grow and by mid-1880 a new office building (22) was added which housed D.B. Wesson's company office (23).



complete wing (14) was added to handle the new frame size and the orders which were received from Russia (15), Turkey and Japan (16).



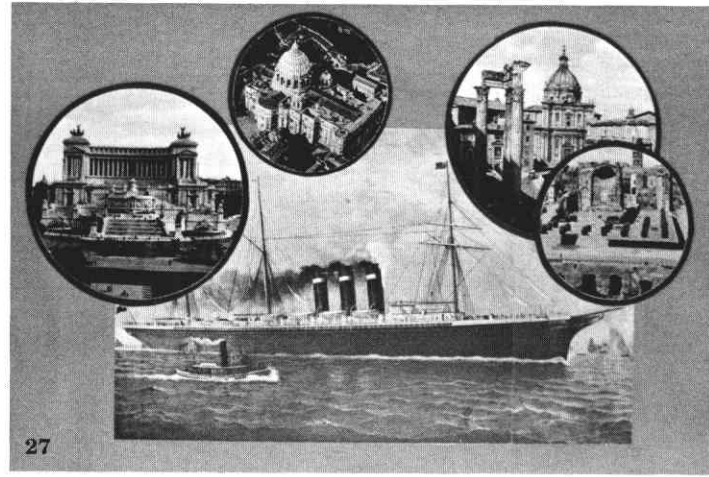
By January, 1880, the company had achieved international fame as an arms manufacturer. They were written up by the prestigious magazine, *The Scientific American* (20). The firm had expanded to 500 employees, producing 400 revolvers per day. This increased production called for further expansion and D.B. Wesson purchased an adjoining building known as the Burbank Building (21).



The production of a new style side-swing revolver in 1895 (24) resulted in further construction. This new structure (25), which was called the I Frame Building, was the last one built under the supervision of D.B. Wesson.

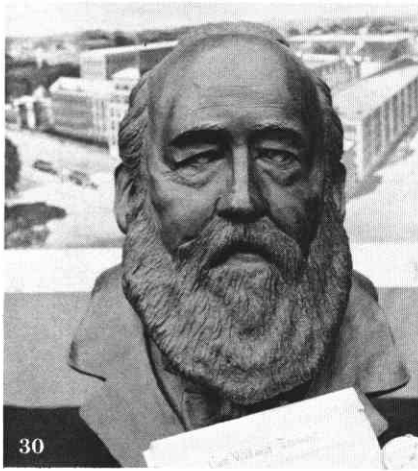


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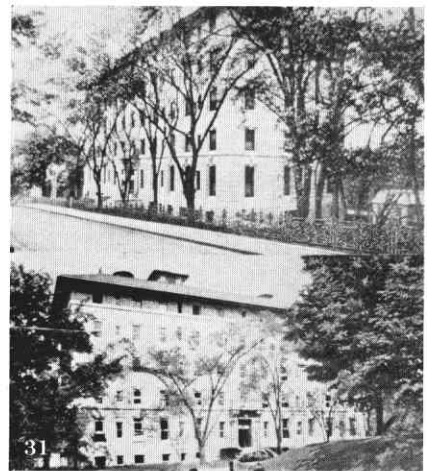


27

In 1885 D.B. Wesson made his two sons, Walter and Joseph (26), partners in the business. This allowed him more time to spend with his wife Cynthia and enjoy the vast fortune which he had made at Smith & Wesson. He began to travel extensively in Europe. (27).

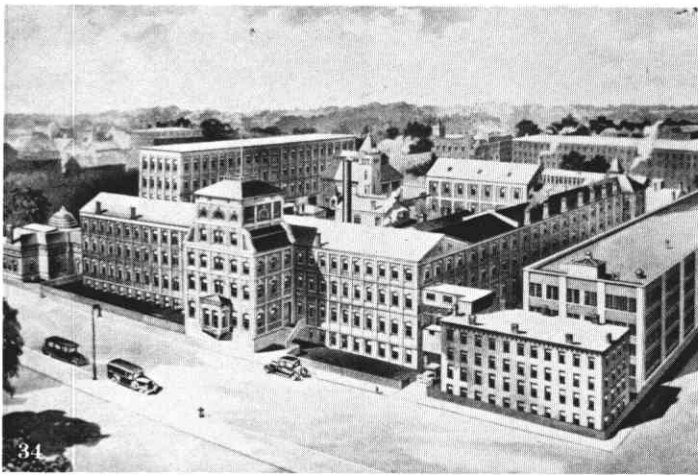


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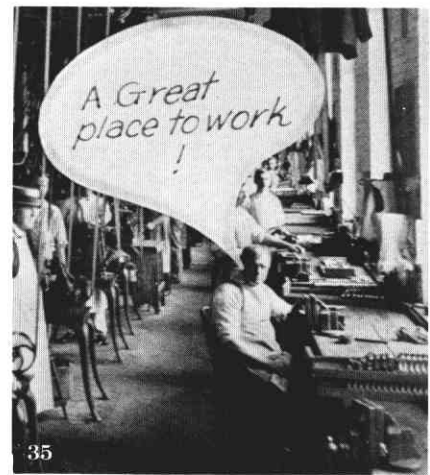


31

When D.B. Wesson passed away in 1906, the size of his estate overwhelmed the Springfield area (30): it was the largest estate ever probated in Hampden County. As calculated from his will, his estate divided \$15,000,000 amongst his heirs. His contributions to the Springfield area were many. He provided jobs as one of the area's largest employers, he established two hospitals (31), and erected two drinking fountains (32).



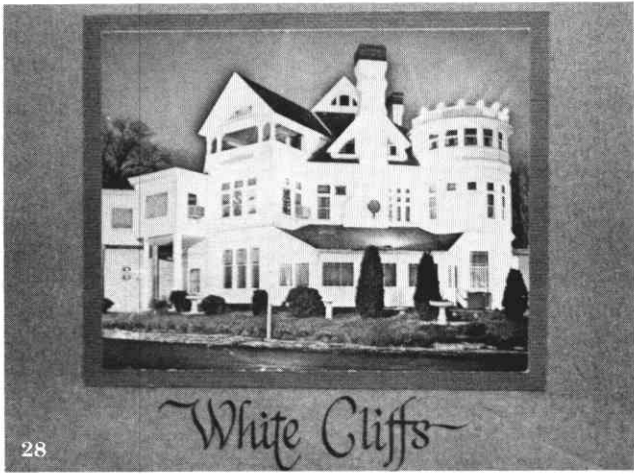
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35

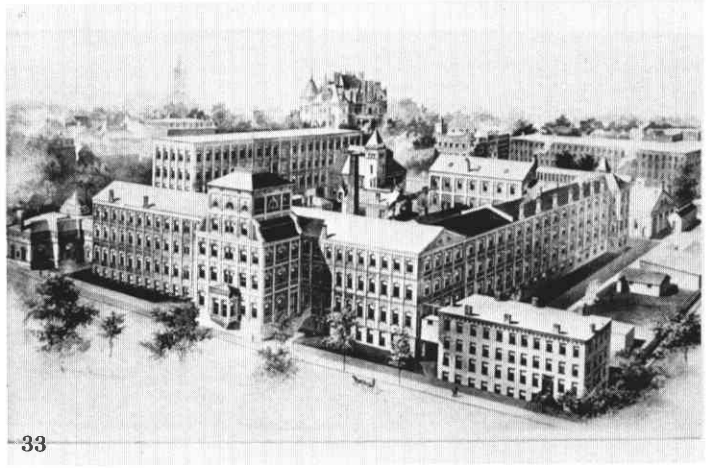
In 1917, the last of the buildings at the Stockbridge Street plant was constructed, a cement building (34) running parallel to Willow Street. Today this building is the only one of the original complex still standing and can be seen in the far right hand side of the picture.

The gun business was very lucrative for the Wesson family and the city of Springfield. It provided large profits, numerous jobs, and a great deal of prestige. The thing that made it work was not only D.B. Wesson's inventive genius, but the people who worked for the company and their feelings for the firm.

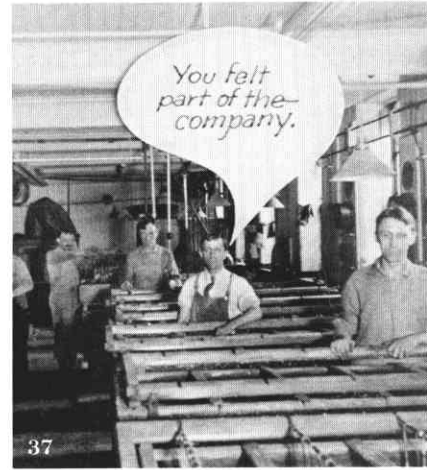


Mr. & Mrs. Wesson developed plans to build a new summer house in her home town of Northboro, Massachusetts (28). This was completed in 1886 and was called White Cliffs.

More spectacular were his plans for a mansion (29) which was built at 50 Maple Street in downtown Springfield overlooking his manufacturing operation. This elegant house was started in 1890 and completed in 1899 at a cost just under \$300,000.

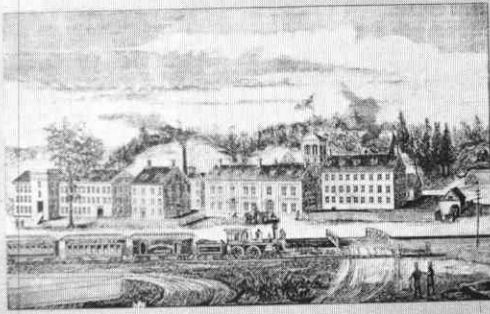


Now, the company (33) passed to his two sons for management, under a trustee arrangement, which caused internal stress between the brothers.



I have interviewed several workmen employed during the early 1900's, and their quotes were, "A great place to work," (35) "You were interested in your work," (36) "Everyone was a regular guy," "You felt that you were part of a large family," (37) "You felt part of the company, therefore you worked hard for the company."

These were people whose fathers had worked for Smith & Wesson and where being an employee was part of a family tradition, as jobs were handed down from father to son.



The Ames Sword Company

40

Best LARGE DISCOUNTS FOR CASH. BEST BETTER TERMS THAN EVER! BUY BEFORE JULY 1st, 1875, and Secure these Terms.

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ONLY THE INTEREST PAYMENT DOWN. PAYMENTS ON PRINCIPAL BEGIN THE FOURTH YEAR.

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PREMIUMS FOR IMPROVEMENTS.

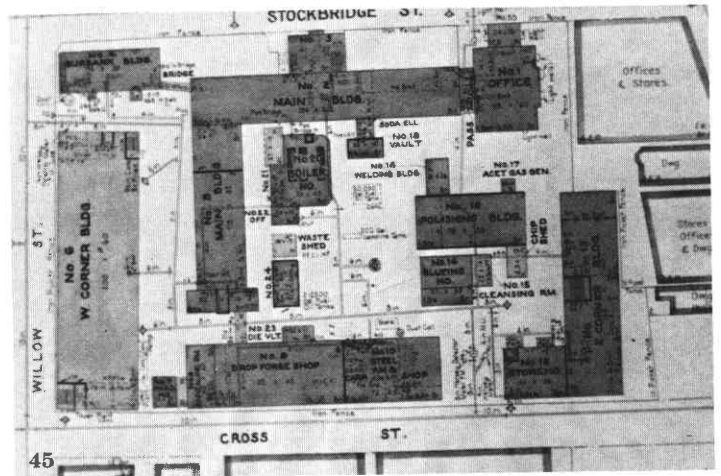
41

Colt Firearms (39), Massachusetts Arms Co. and Sword Co. (40).

Even more important was the large source of unskilled labor lured away from nonproductive farms to work in city factories. Their hope was to fulfill a dream to regain their capital for reinvestment in western farm land (41).



44



45

The Smith & Wesson plant was located on Stockton Street (44), one block east of Main Street and only two blocks from the Springfield Armory, right in the center of downtown Springfield. Its complex was a two hundred foot square quadrangle (45) and was comprised of ten buildings. During the 1880's they employed 500 workers.

NOTICE.

HELP WANTED!!

SMITH & WESSON NEEDS MACHINISTS

APPLY AT OFFICE

ISLAND HOMESTEER

ESTABLISHED 1886

SPRINGFIELD, MASS., SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 1886. \$2.00 A YEAR

LIVE STOCK AND DAIRY.

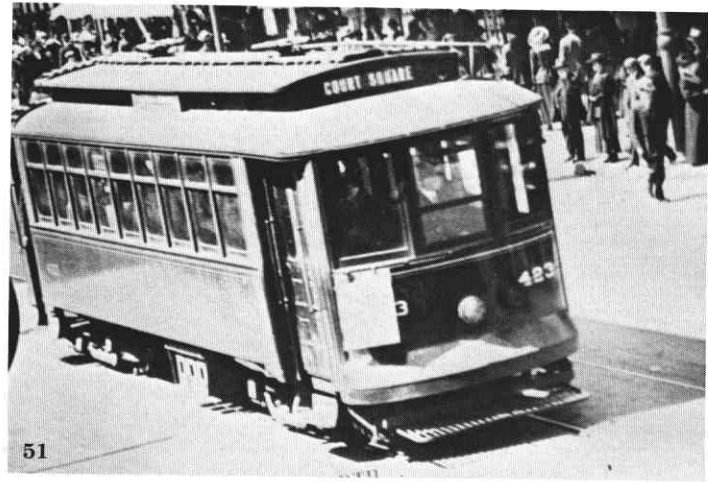
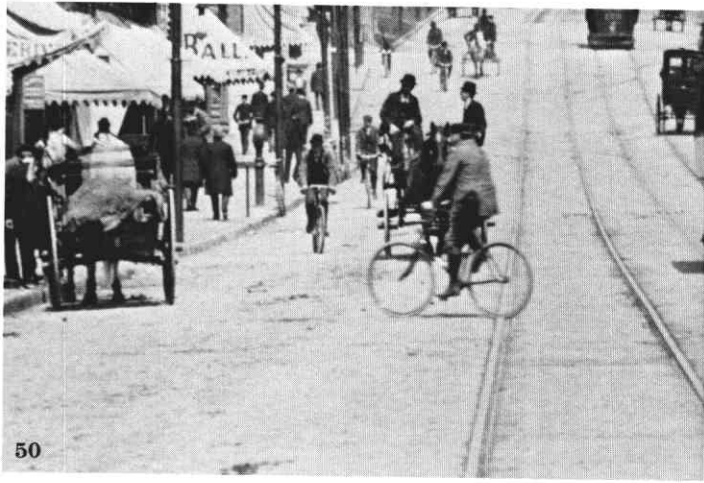
THE HOME OF ENGLAGE

Four men in Billerica feed swine, in this town that was built in New England, farmers were very slow to adopt these systems. I was told by different parties that I could not make good butter from my milk. These men say that I can make up my mind to build a silo, and try the system. We will in half of some and success, in half first inside and in fact done. The first year I had more enough to fill it about half full. I had intended it with about six inches of hay and damp put to black and weighed with water, about 100 lbs to the ton. This year I put on the last year's stock and about 100 lbs. I like the better plan of weighing much better on the same. Know not the rest. I think that the great secret of good milk is the New 1, 1885. I expect the whole world will be making butter from the same old milk, and selling to the best

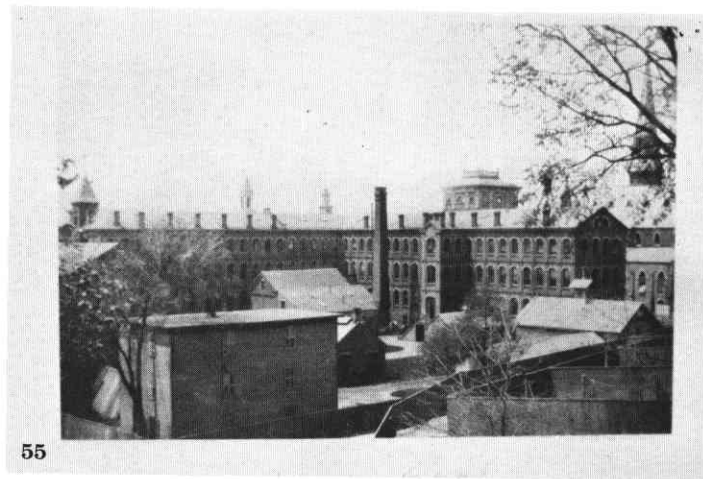
49

The job of foreman was a powerful and profitable job (48). It was a job handed down from father to son or to a foreman's favorite employee or possibly a relative. This system of contract employment, as archaic as it sounds, (49) was continued at Smith & Wesson until the 1930s.

With this small review of the operation of Smith & Wesson, let's now go back in time to the 1880s and take a quick look at the production of a revolver in the Smith & Wesson plant.

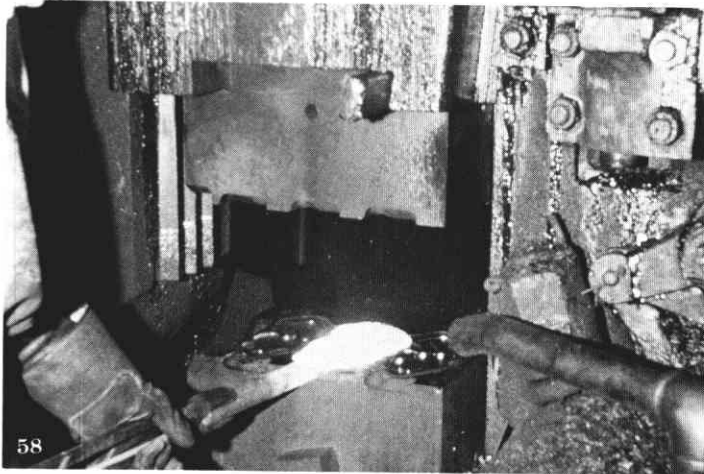


The working hours for the company were from 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., six days a week, with the average employee (50) receiving approximately \$.16 per hour. The employees would rise early so they would have time to walk to work, ride their bike or take the trolley (51).

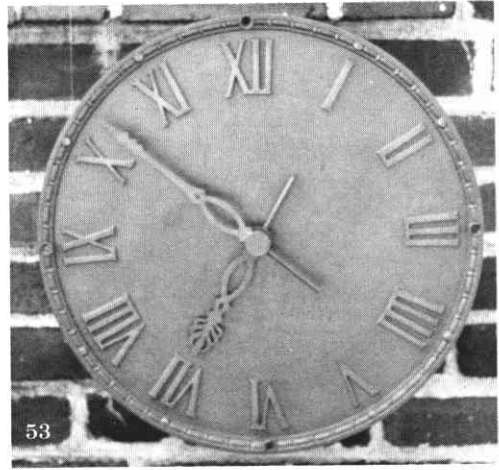
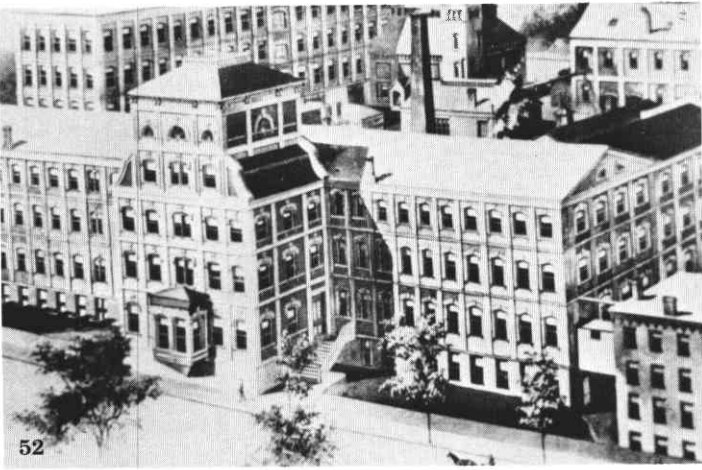


Each individual, usually dressed in a suit coat and bowler hat, would rush to his department, taking time only to fix his coat and hat to a long-handled hanger (54) so they could be properly placed on a hook in the ceiling, or hung on a convenient steam pipe.

To follow the production of the parts on our plant tour, it is necessary for us to cross the courtyard to the forge shop (55) located in the far side of the main plant so that the large drop hammers forge would not disturb the office staff with their continual pounding.



Once the parts have been forged (58), cleaned and annealed they would be transferred to the milling room (59), where all of the parts would be divided: frames were completed in one section, barrels another and the small parts diverted to the small parts department where they were completed.

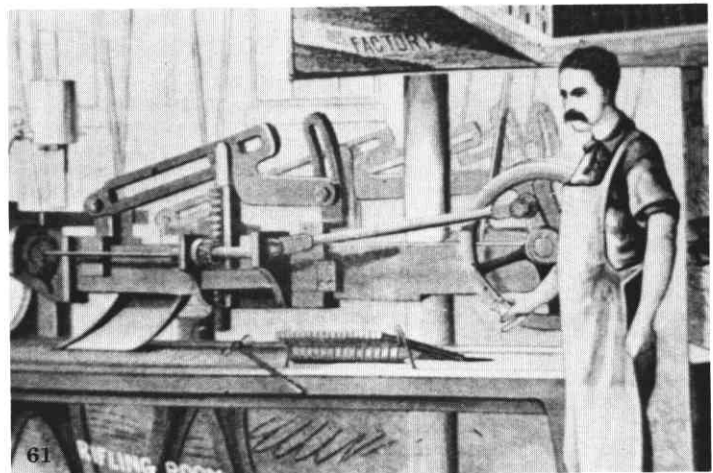
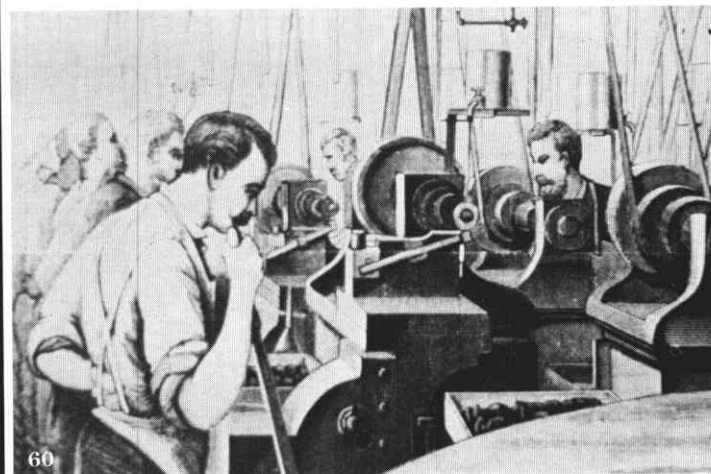


The entrance to Smith & Wesson was on Stockbridge Street, up a short flight of stairs located next to the Tower Building (52). Once inside the gate, the employee would go by the office (53), passing under the watchful eye of one of the members of the Wesson family, who seemed to take turns watching the employees come to work.



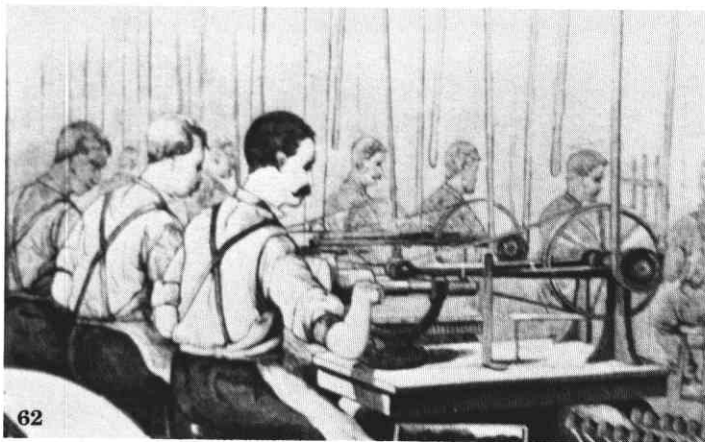
As you cross the courtyard this early in the morning, it is necessary that you keep a sharp eye out for D.B. Wesson who drove his carriage (56) almost at top speed through the gate, across the courtyard, to the stables.

In the forge shop the heavy hammers (57) are busy changing red hot steel into the various shapes of frames, barrels, hammers, triggers, trigger guards, etc.

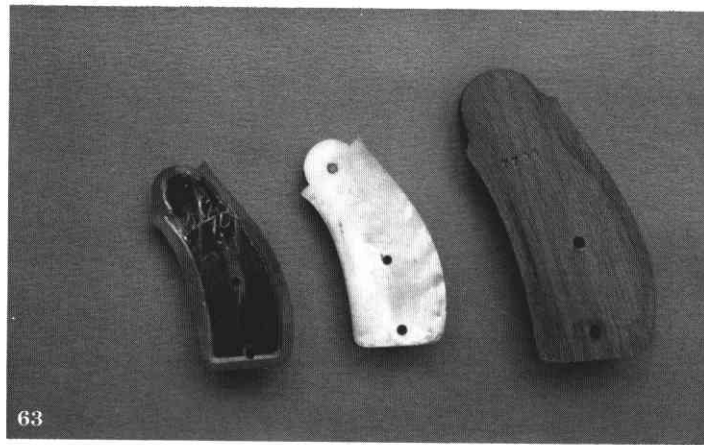


The finishing of these parts (60) was a series of different machining operations, some with regular mills, others with hand operated profilers.

Once a barrel was completed, it was sent to the rifling room (61) where the rifling was put into the barrel. These rifling machines were of the sine bar type, some of which Smith & Wesson bought from the Sharps Rifle Company.

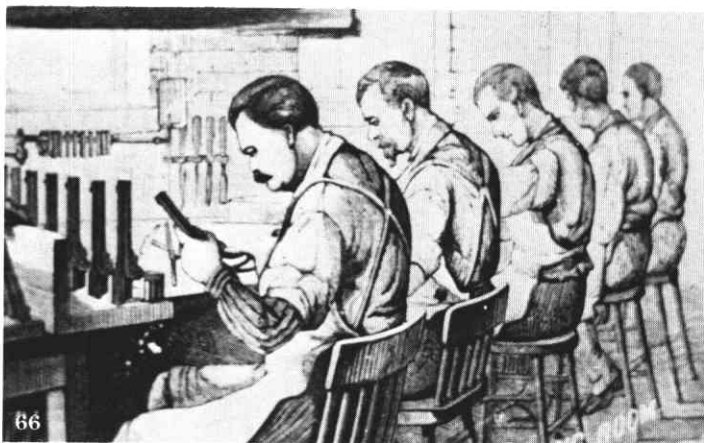


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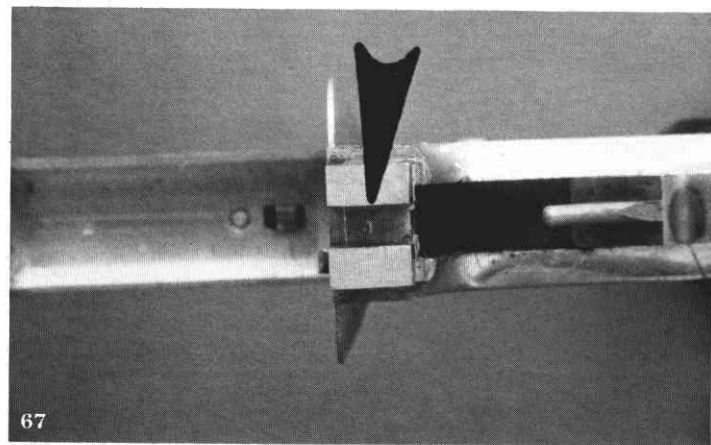


63

When a frame was completed, it was sent to the stocking department (62) where it would be fit with stocks of either hard rubber, wood, pearl or ivory. Once the stocks were fitted, the gun was serial numbered. If wooden stocks (63) were fitted to the gun, the serial number would be stamped in the underside of the left grip. If the stocks were rubber, pearl or ivory, the number would simply be scratched or marked in pencil.

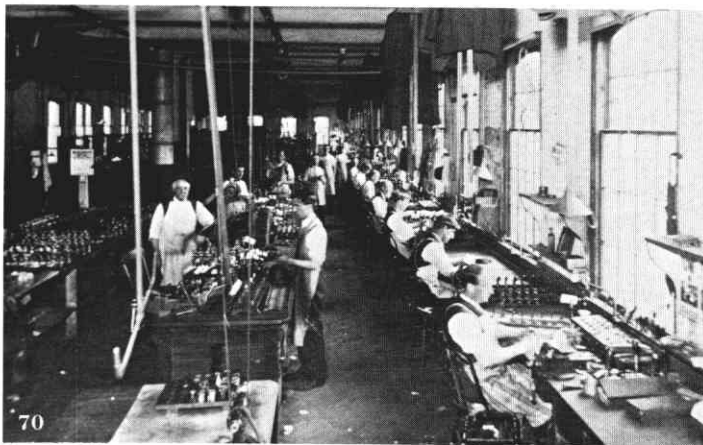


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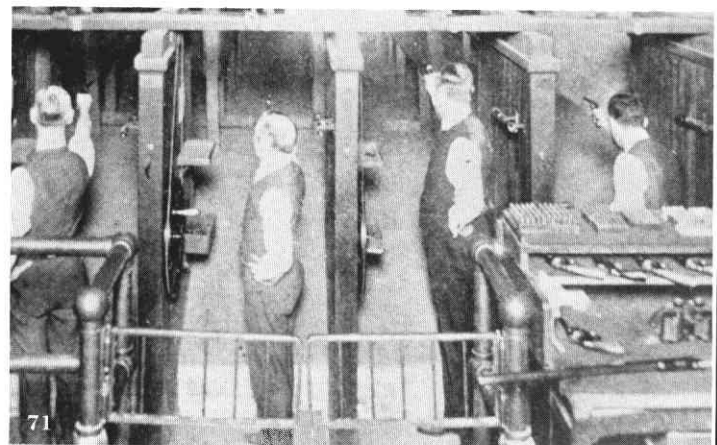


67

These unfinished parts were then forwarded to the soft fitting department (66) located on the top floor of the main plant. Here the skilled fitters assembled these unfinished parts into revolvers, carefully stoning each part so that its fit was perfect and the revolver functioned smoothly. Once the revolver had been assembled and inspected, it was disassembled by the fitter who carefully stamped the serial number on the rear of the cylinder, barrel, and barrel latch. His last task was to stamp his mark (67) between the frame posts to show who had completed the revolver, as he was responsible for any repairs to the gun, on his own time. It was costly for these assemblers to do shabby work, as they could easily lose a day's pay.



70

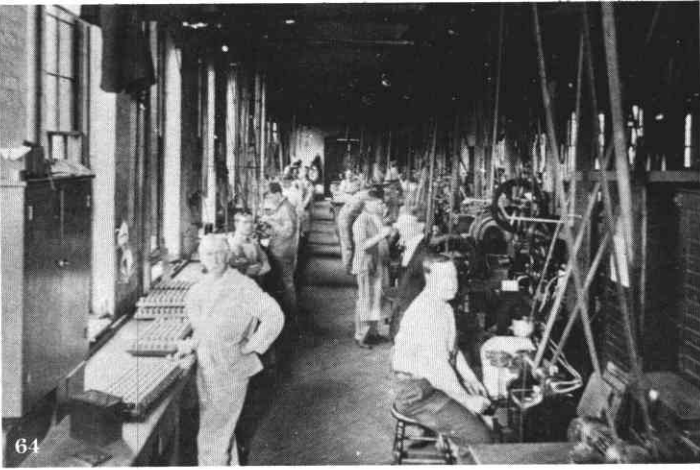


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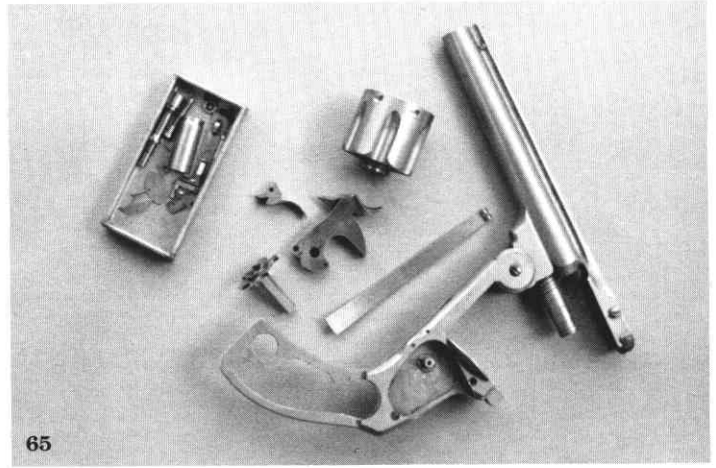
After the guns were polished, they were moved down the pull-chain elevator to the basement of the main building where they would be blued or plated.

Now that the exterior finish was completed, the parts were transported back up the elevator to the second floor of the main building to the hard fitting department (70). Here the guns were reassembled and minor stoning completed to guarantee the best of function.

This method of double fitting a revolver first in the soft, then in the hard or finished state, was used by Smith & Wesson until 1958 when it became too costly to assemble a handgun twice before it was shipped.



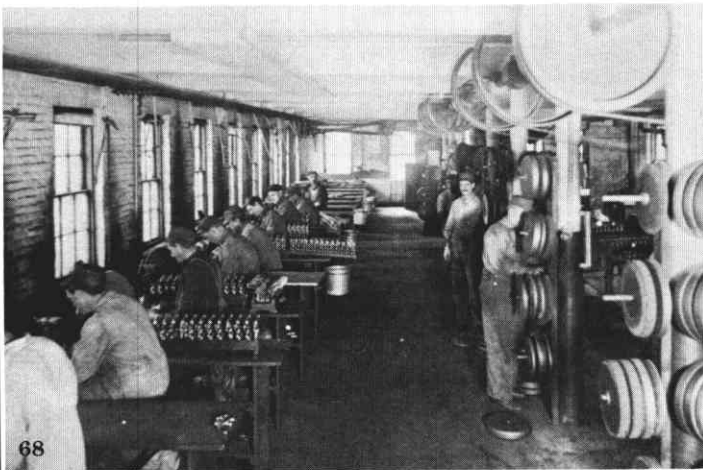
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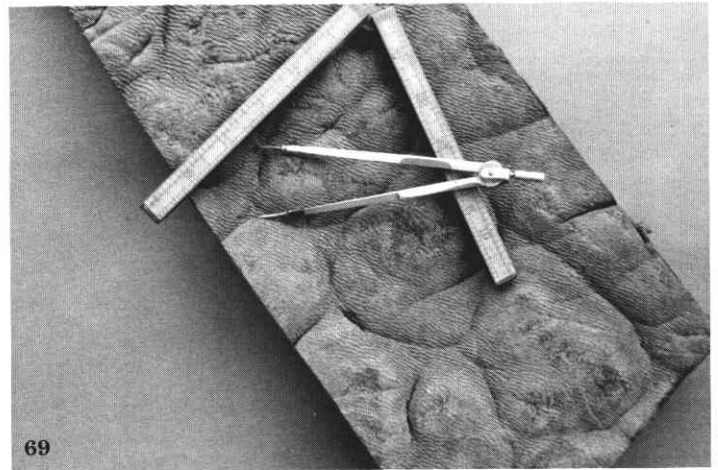
65

The cylinders (64) were produced in a separate department run by Mr. J.U. Johnson. They were manufactured from bar stock and took 123 operations of various machining before completion.

At this point in the manufacturing all of the parts were through being machined but still lacked the final polish and finish (65).

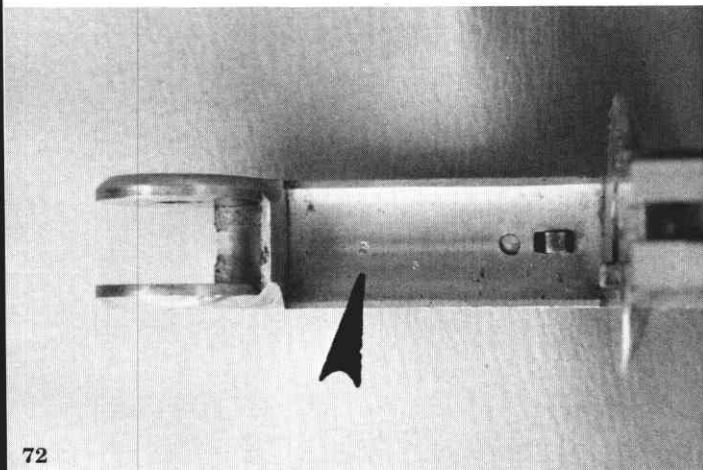


68



69

The now fitted, but unfinished parts, were taken to the polishing room where they were polished (68). Smith & Wesson manufactured all of their own polishing wheels, made of the best walrus hides impregnated with various roughness of grits (69).

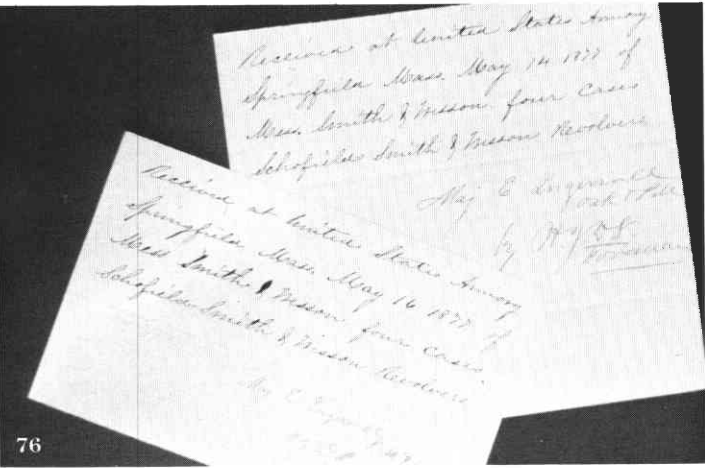


72



73

From the hard fitting room, the revolvers were moved to the range (71) in the basement of the frame building where each gun was proof tested and at this time stamped with a "P" on the top of the bottom strap over the trigger guard (72). It was here that Smith & Wesson's female factory workers, dressed in their fiffalls (73), cleaned the revolvers and carefully matched the numbered grips back to the proper revolvers.



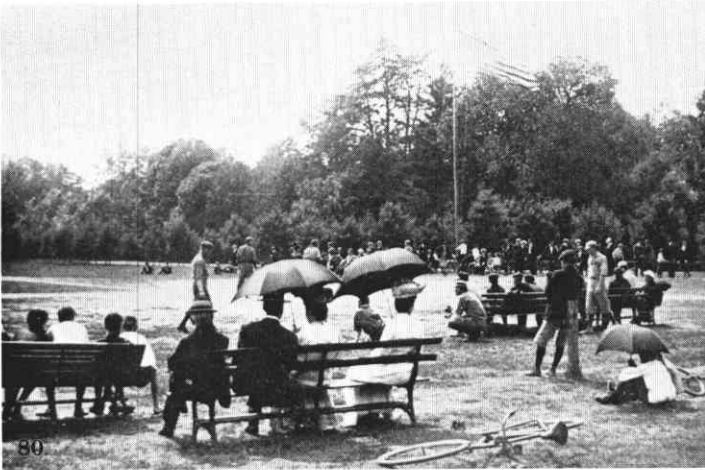
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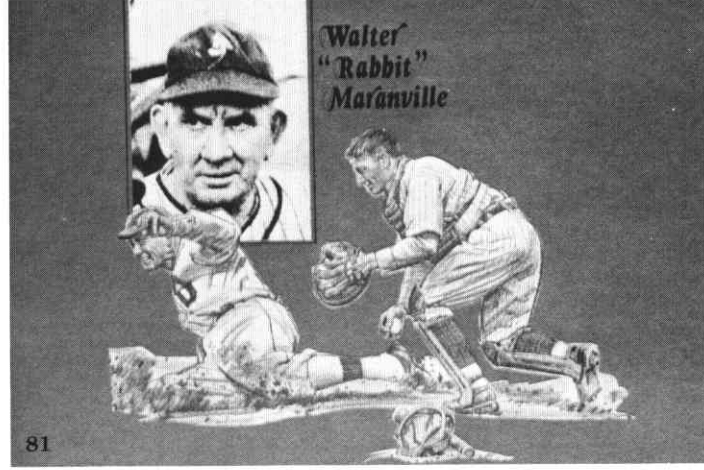
77

if the firm was producing any models for the various governments (76).

Upon completion of the final inspection, the handguns were moved to the shipping department (77). Here each gun was wrapped in heavy white tissue paper, placed in a box with a cleaning rod and brush (78). And so the manufacturing was completed and all that was left was for someone to purchase the handguns.

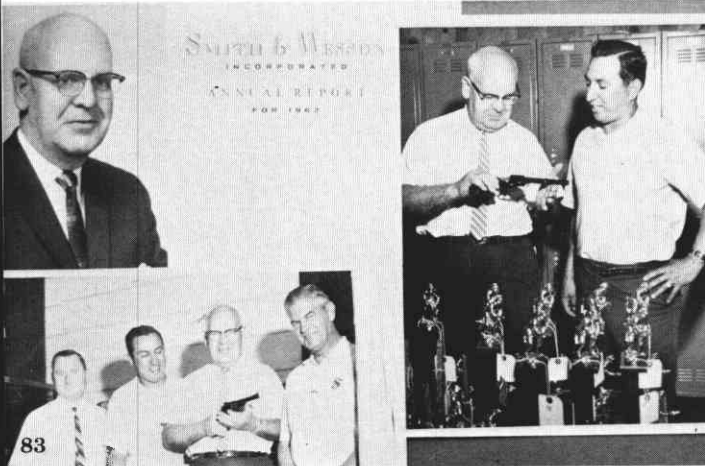


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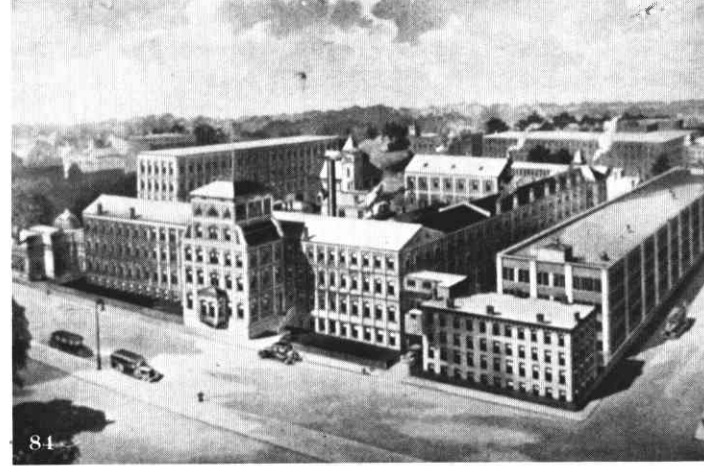


81

During the summer these teams would play each other on Sunday afternoons in Springfield's largest park, Forest Park (80). Can you imagine when Smith & Wesson won its first championship and its team, band, and all the spectators marched the two miles from Forest Park to downtown Springfield in celebration of the win? After the turn of the century, one of the Smith & Wesson players, "Rabbit" Maranville (81), made the big time playing for the Boston Braves.

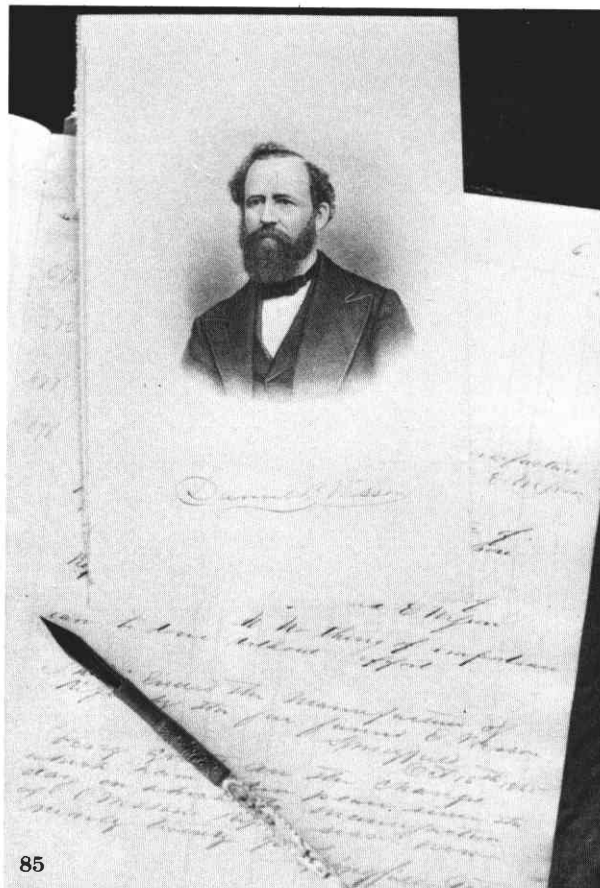


83



84

The old era was coming to an end. After 90 years, the old Stockbridge Street plant (84) had outlived its usefulness. Hellstrom built a new plant and a complete new era began for Smith & Wesson.



Looking back at history, the philosophy which helped Smith & Wesson grow can be summarized in the following words written in D.B. Wesson's Day Book in 1865 (85): "No thing of importance can be done without effort." He lived by these words and much effort was poured into Smith & Wesson. The company continued to develop while living up to this motto.

The effort he talked about came, not only from him, but from those who worked for him. It is the people who work for a company, together with its management, that contribute to a successful organization. The people working for Smith & Wesson have answered the challenges of today and continue to apply an effort so more things of importance can be accomplished. That they also gave their lives for their country is shown by the Honor Roll lists at the entrance to the plant (86). Providing the broadest line of quality firearms for today's sportsmen and law enforcement personnel, Smith & Wesson is still keeping alive 133 years of tradition!

