

# When Henry Platt Came To Town

## HE FOUNDED A GREAT FIRM

### Original Building to Be Demolished

**T**HE four walls which once held the cotton trade's biggest engineering secret are to be demolished. They are the cottages at what was known as Ferneybank, Huddersfield Road, Oldham, where 120 years ago Henry Platt, a village blacksmith from Dobcross, rolled up his sleeves and started the works which are now known throughout the world as Messrs. Platt Brothers and Co. Ltd.

The cottages, which were inhabited until about twelve months ago, have been listed for clearance but their romantic story will always be associated with the history of Oldham and of textile engineering.

#### Enterprising and Resourceful

Henry Platt was one of the three sons of the Dobcross village blacksmith who used to shoe the horses and mend the ploughs of the farmers in the West Riding. An enterprising and resourceful character, he also looked after the local woollen manufacturers and made carding engines. He found that industrial engineering paid him best, and when the business increased he obtained more commodious premises on the site now occupied by the Waggon Inn, Upper-mill. It was from Upper-mill that Henry came to Oldham.

He took the top floor of the cottages at Ferneybank and with five assistants set up as a textile engineer. His first piece of machinery was a carding machine.

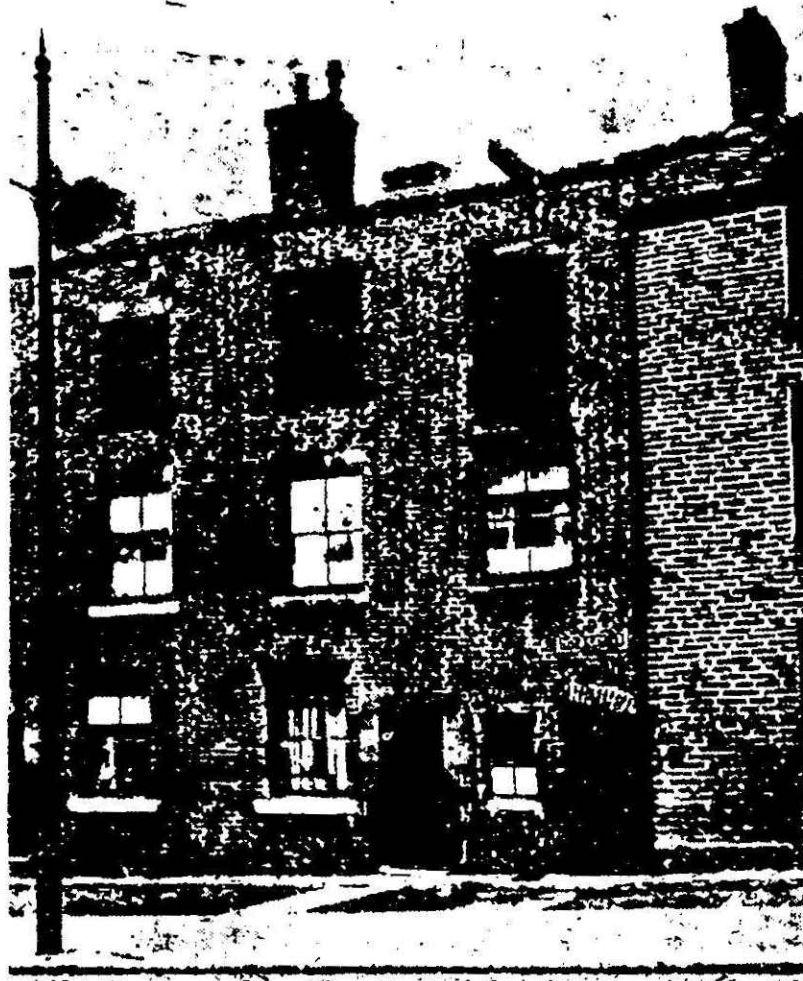
"It looks crude compared with the carding machines we turn out to-day," an official of Messrs. Platt Brothers told the "Oldham Chronicle," "but Henry Platt's machine had the same principle we still use."

#### A Place of Honour

One of the earliest carding machines built on the lines laid down by Henry Platt occupies a place of honour in the showrooms at Hartford Works, where it stands beside one of the modern machines, looking like Stephenson's "Rocket" at the side of the "Flying Scotsman," but it is a treasured souvenir and has been exhibited all over the world.

It made Henry Platt's name in those early days. The business expanded and he went into partnership with an Oldham engineer named Elijah Hibbert. The partnership prospered and they had to move from Ferneybank in 1822 to more commodious premises which are now known as Hartford East Works.

Henry Platt died in 1842 when he was only 49, but his name remained with the firm, changed first to Hibbert, Platt and Sons, then Platt Brothers, and finally Platt Brothers



Chronicle photographs.  
The property in Huddersfield Road at the lower corner of Barry Street.