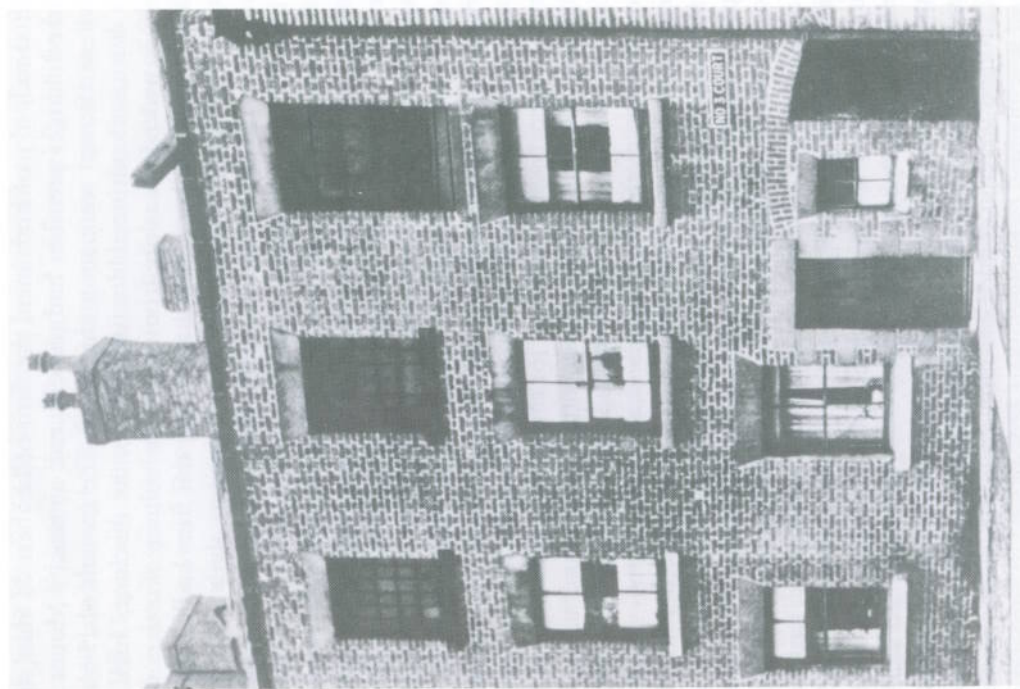


II Foundations Set – Hibbert & Platt

Henry Platt set-up his business in a house at Ferney Bank, which lay on Huddersfield Road, in the north-east quarter of Oldham. It was a three storeyed building, the family living on the ground and first floors with the workshop contained on the top floor. To the family, such an arrangement would be familiar and acceptable since the yeoman dwellings, in Saddleworth, had long been occupied in such a way, save in the case of these the top floor had housed the hand looms on which the traditional woollen cloth was woven. He employed five or six men to assist him in the making of his carding machines which were finding a favourable acceptance with the cotton spinners of Oldham. After a year's progress, one week-end, he found he had not enough money to pay his workmen – in to-day's jargonistic parlance he was beset with a cash-flow problem – and he hastened to seek a loan from a Mr Noton, a man in matters financial, to tide him over his dilemma. Unfortunately, Mr Noton was unable to help but he assured Henry Platt all was not lost as he (Mr Noton) was expecting, at any minute, a person who, he felt sure, would be able to help. The person duly arrived, he was Elijah Hibbert, hailing from Ashton-under-Lyne, but now living and successfully connected with several engineering undertakings in Oldham. Elijah Hibbert and Henry Platt quickly realised a mutual appreciation, not only was the loan furnished, but from their meeting there came into being, within that year of 1822, the firm of Hibbert & Platt. The firm was to be the most rewarding connection Elijah Hibbert was ever to make.

Hibbert & Platt had been founded in time to benefit from the second surge in the growth of cotton manufacture. In fact, it has been recorded that in the years 1824-25, Oldham was, of all the cotton towns of Lancashire, the one in which the industry grew the fastest. Bigger new mills and enlarged existing mills were now driven by steam engines and the spinning machinery to be installed needed to be of a still more sophisticated standard for which the prime elements of the construction required to be from cast and wrought iron. The inefficiencies of and the hostility to the power loom had been overcome and, after 1824, this machine rapidly supplanted the hand loom. The



The house at Ferney Bank, Oldham, where Henry Platt first set-up his home and business after moving from Uppermill.

power loom opened up for the machinery maker a vast new market, reinforced by the fact that the Mule could become the supreme spinning machine since it was able to produce warp and weft yarns of sufficient strength, in cotton, for the power loom. (Previously, warp yarns had had to be of linen). In response to these developments, under the wider commercial experience of Elijah Hibbert and the inborn ingenuity of Henry Platt, together with the engineering skills and