

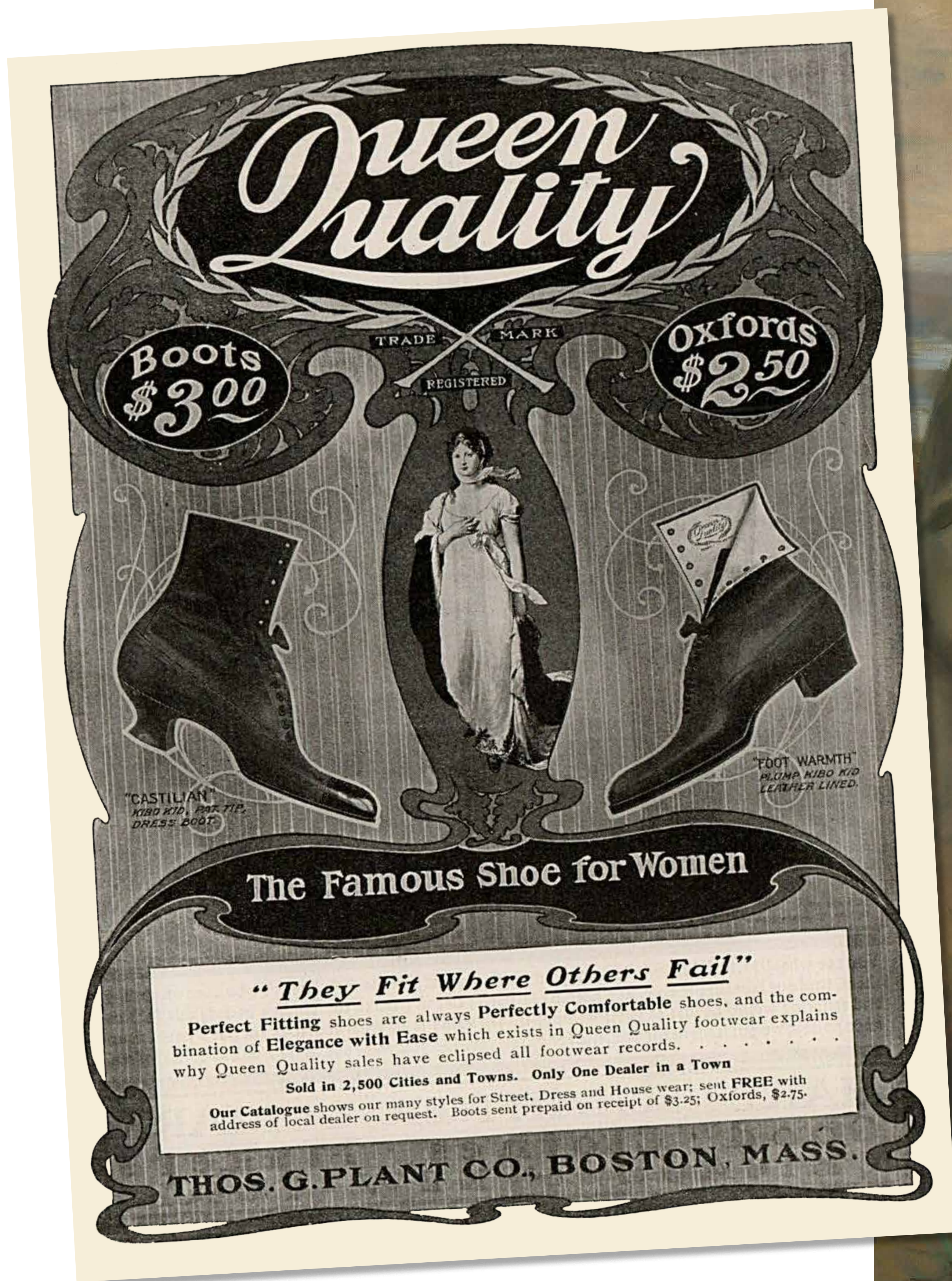
THE SHOES THAT BUILT THE CASTLE

Conceived as a retirement estate, Lucknow (today's Castle in the Clouds) was once the home of millionaire shoe manufacturer, Thomas G. Plant.

This exhibit examines Plant's manufacturing career, from his meteoric rise and the innovative production strategies that made his fortune to the shoe machinery war that eventually ended his career.



Thomas G. Plant portrait painted by Alphonse Jongers around 1914. Courtesy of Plant Home, Bath, ME.



Queen Quality Shoe advertisement,
circa 1901.

THE GENTLE CRAFT: ARTISAN SHOEMAKING

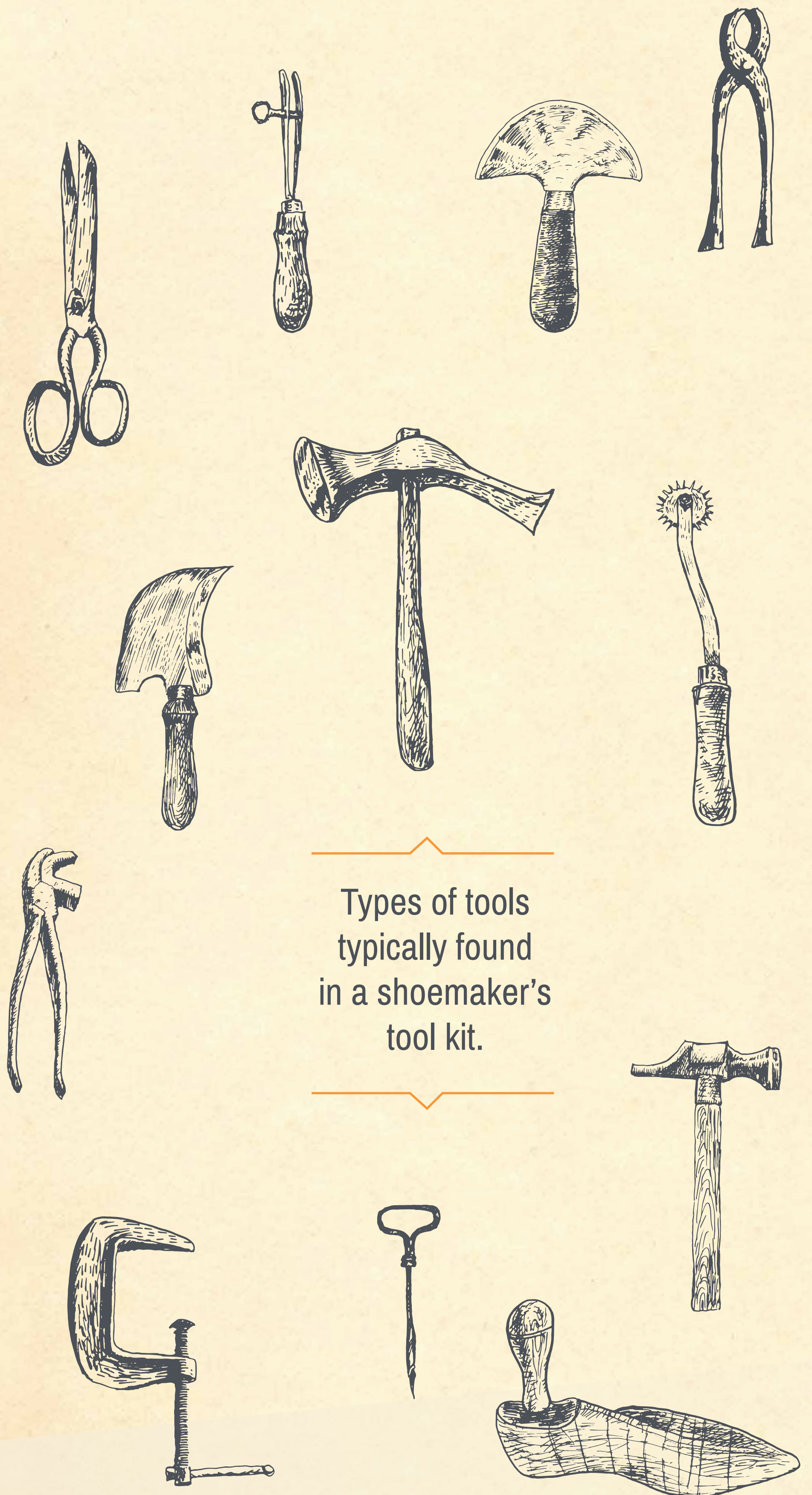


An artisan shoemaker in his shop, circa 1890. Collections of Old Berwick Historical Society.

Before industrialization, the process of shoemaking had endured relatively unchanged for thousands of years. Shoemaking was a skilled craft in which master artisans trained their apprentices to carry on the trade.

The first known shoemakers to set foot in the American colonies arrived in the 1630s. These colonial cobblers made shoes to custom order using hand tools remarkably similar to those used two thousand years earlier by Egyptian shoemakers.

As the population grew and dispersed, larger quantities of shoes were needed and the shoemaking industry changed to accommodate the demand. Central shops formed from which shoemaking work was “put out” (see inset). This was perhaps the first step toward industrializing the industry.



Types of tools typically found in a shoemaker's tool kit.

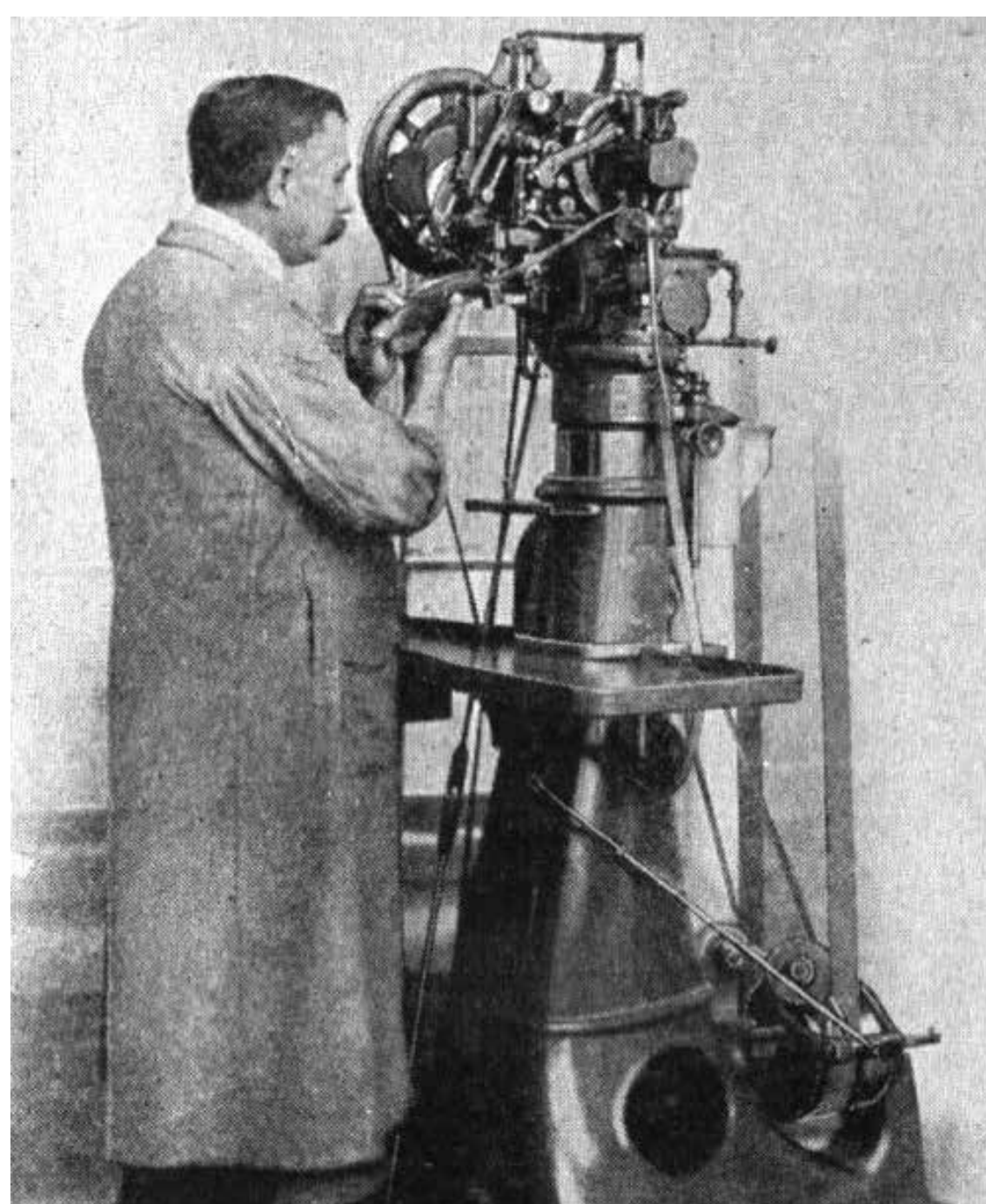
THE “PUTTING-OUT” SYSTEM

As early as the 1780s, whole families were involved in shoe production in the United States. A craftsman would collect raw materials from a central shop and hand-cut individual pieces of the shoe. Women and children would bind the leather uppers. The craftsman would then last the uppers (shape the leather over a wooden mold) and attach the sole. The finished product was returned to the central shop. Shop bosses inspected each pair and packed them for shipment. This system continued until the 1870s when mechanization made shoemaking “homework” expensive and obsolete.

SHOE MANUFACTURING IN THE INDUSTRIAL ERA



Until the mid-1800s, shoemaking was done by skilled artisans, but the industry was almost entirely mechanized by the end of the century.



An early lasting machine.

Beginning in the 1850s, mechanics developed a series of machines that would replace shoe binders and trimmers. Because of the skill needed to last a shoe (shape the leather upper over a wooden mold), these trained workers kept their positions longer than many others in the shoemaking industry. When the Lasters' Protective Union organized in 1880, they successfully campaigned for higher wages, and lasting became a desirable position.

In 1885, the first successful shoe lasting machine was developed. Improvements over the following years created a machine that could last a shoe in less than a minute. Like the binders and cutters, most lasters suddenly faced replacement by machines and cheaper, unskilled laborers.

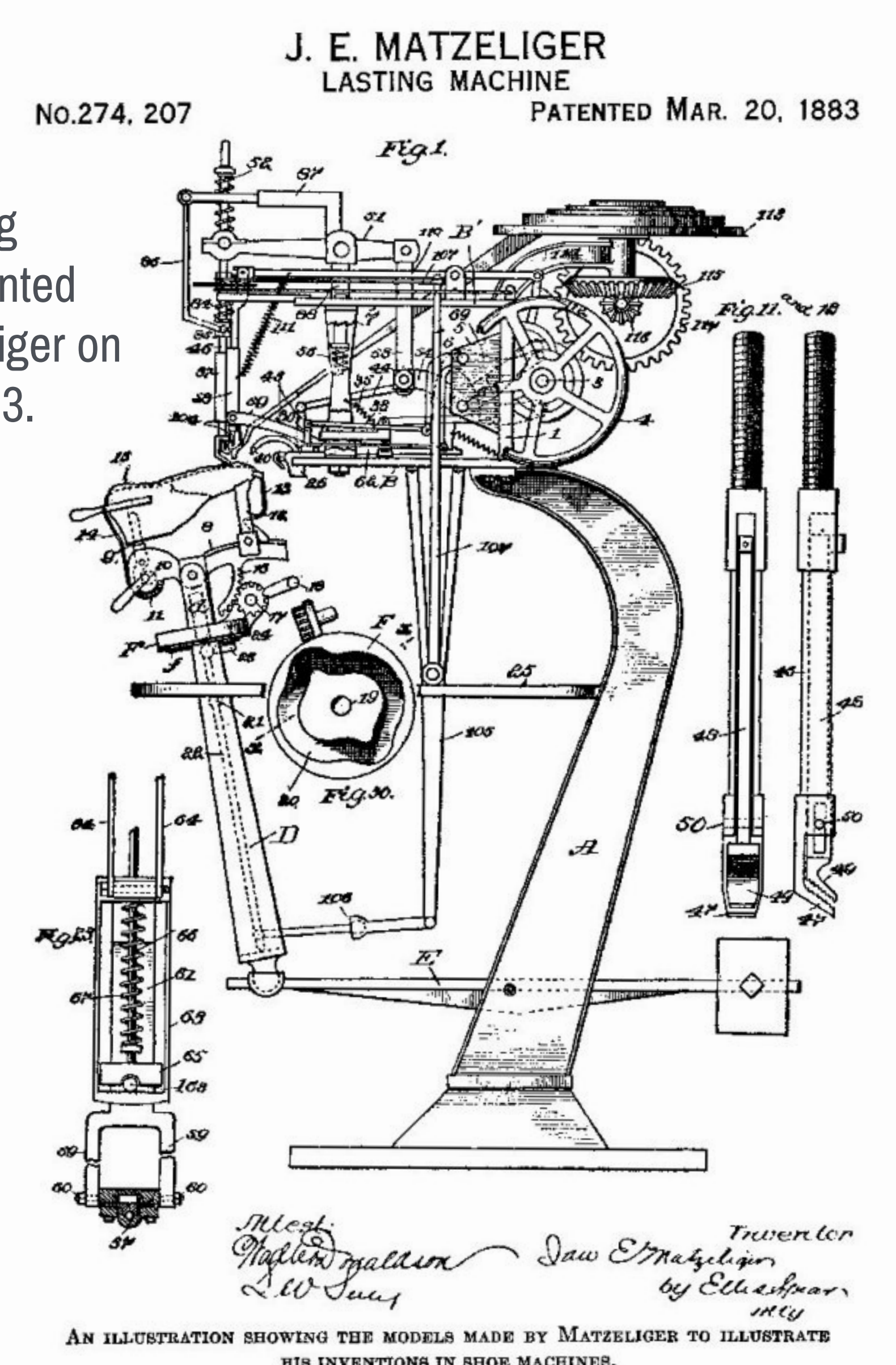
The companies that produced shoe manufacturing machines leased them to shoemaking factories for a 2 to 4 cent royalty fee on each pair of shoes. The low fee and leasing system allowed shoemakers to upgrade their equipment whenever new machines became available. Because of this, full mechanization occurred very quickly in shoe manufacturing and mass-production became the norm.

By the turn of the 20th century, Americans had access to quality shoes at a reasonable price from shoe shops and mail order companies all over the country.



Cutting room workers in a South Berwick shoe factory, circa 1900. Collections of Old Berwick Historical Society.

The first lasting machine, patented by J.E. Matzeliger on March 20, 1883.





Stereograph view of a shoemakers' shop in Portland, Maine, circa 1875.
Courtesy of Maine Historical Society.



SETTING THE STAGE:

THOMAS PLANT'S EARLY CAREER

At an early age, Tom Plant joined the workforce to help provide for his family. His first experience with shoemaking was shoe-binding "homework" from a local artisan while still living in Bath, Maine.

In 1874, Plant took a shoe-lasting apprenticeship at a factory in Richmond, Maine. When the factory burned a few years later, Plant moved to Lynn, Massachusetts. He took a job at the Keene Brothers Company and joined the Lynn Lasters Union in 1880.

Unfortunately, the detailed work and factory conditions soon took their toll on Plant's health. He developed issues with his eyesight and left Lynn and the shoemaking industry. Plant spent the next three years traveling. He reportedly visited family in California and spent time selling shoes door-to-door in Cape Cod.

JACK OF MANY TRADES

After finishing school at age 14, Plant tried a variety of jobs. Some – like rope making and laboring in a boiler shop – were closely tied to Bath's shipbuilding industry. Plant also worked as an ice cutter on the Kennebec River before moving into the shoemaking business.

Ice cutters on the Kennebec River, circa 1895.
Courtesy of Maine Historical Society.

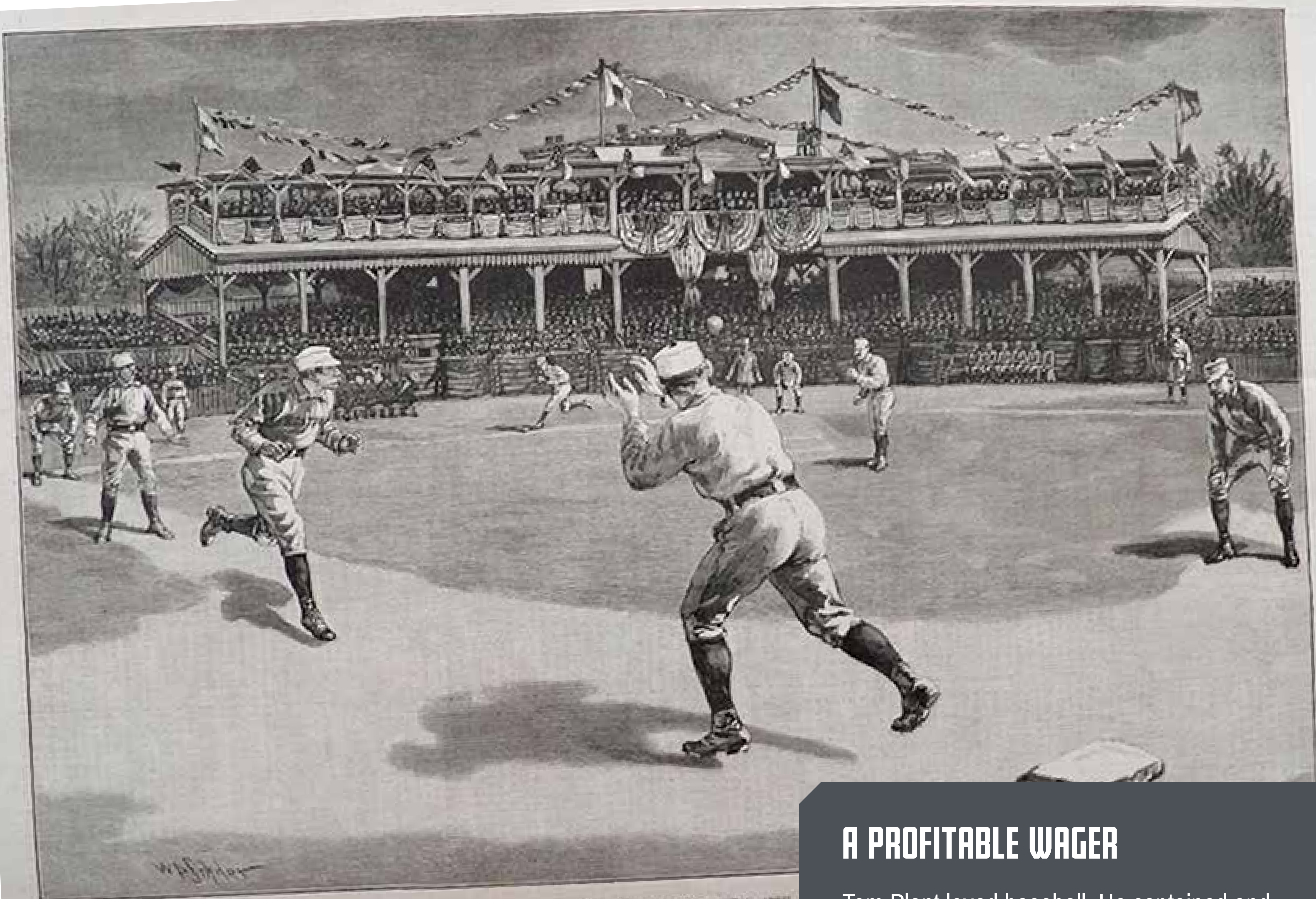
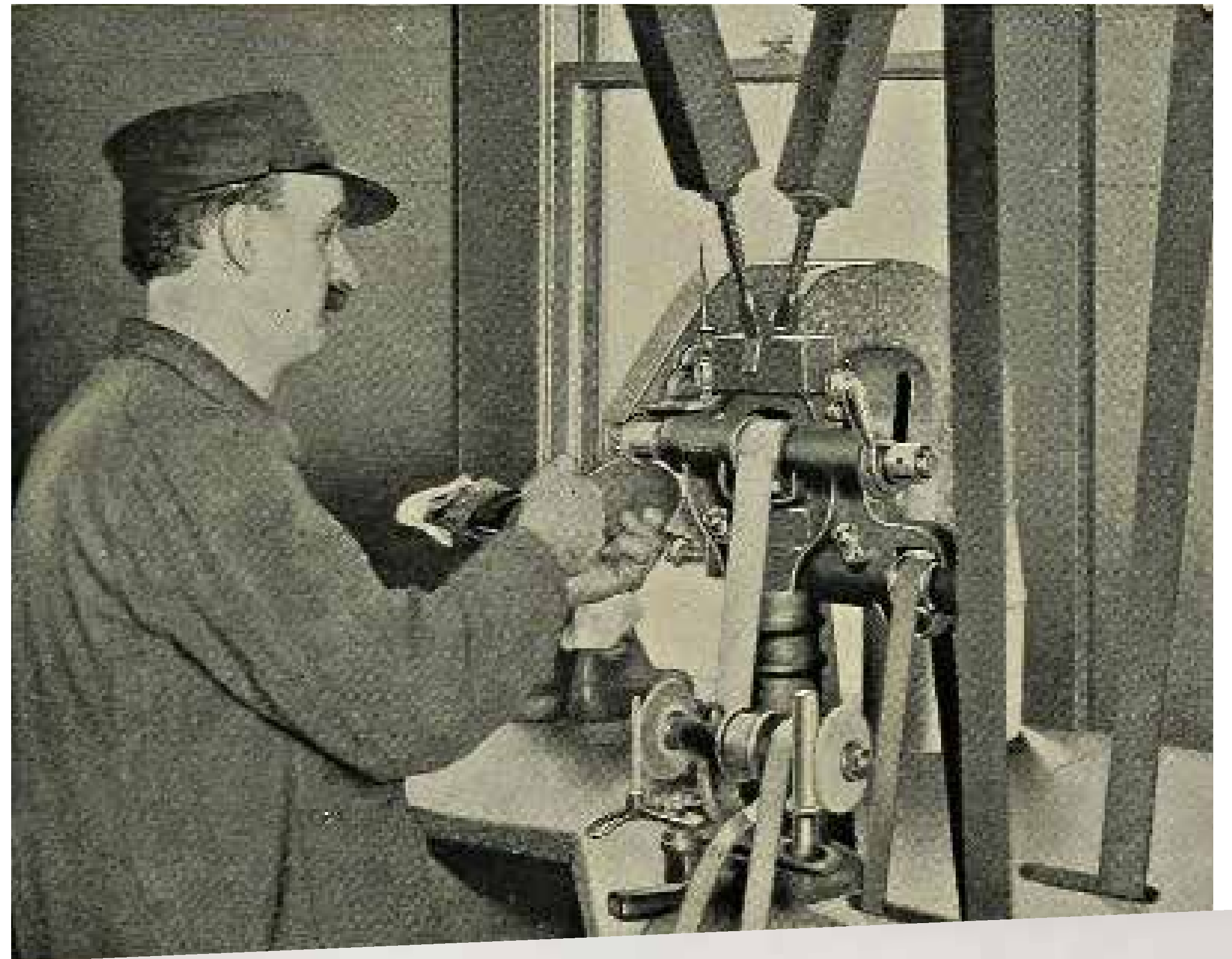


CLIMBING THE LADDER

Tom Plant returned to Lynn, Massachusetts in 1883 to work as an edge-trimmer, but his days as a laborer were numbered. By this time, even skilled lasters were struggling to find competitive work. Declining wages convinced Plant that the only move to make was into management.

In 1886, the Lynn Union Co-operative Shoe Company needed capital. Plant was one of ten men to invest, acting as silent partners. In only a year, Plant made enough from the business's profits to leave the co-operative and form a new partnership.

Early edge-trimming machine in use.



A DOUBLE PLAY—FIRST LEAGUE GAME, NEW YORK AGAINST BOSTON, APRIL

HARPER'S WEEKLY

VOLUME XXX, NO. 111

A PROFITABLE WAGER

Tom Plant loved baseball. He captained and played catcher for an amateur team in Lynn. According to one story, Tom bet on his team to win a game and won \$100. He used that money to buy his shares of the Lynn Union Co-operative Shoe Company.



Baseball games, as seen in this W.P. Snyder engraving from Harper's Weekly (May 8, 1886), were a favorite pastime for spectators and players alike in the late nineteenth century.

WILLIAMS, PLANT AND COMPANY

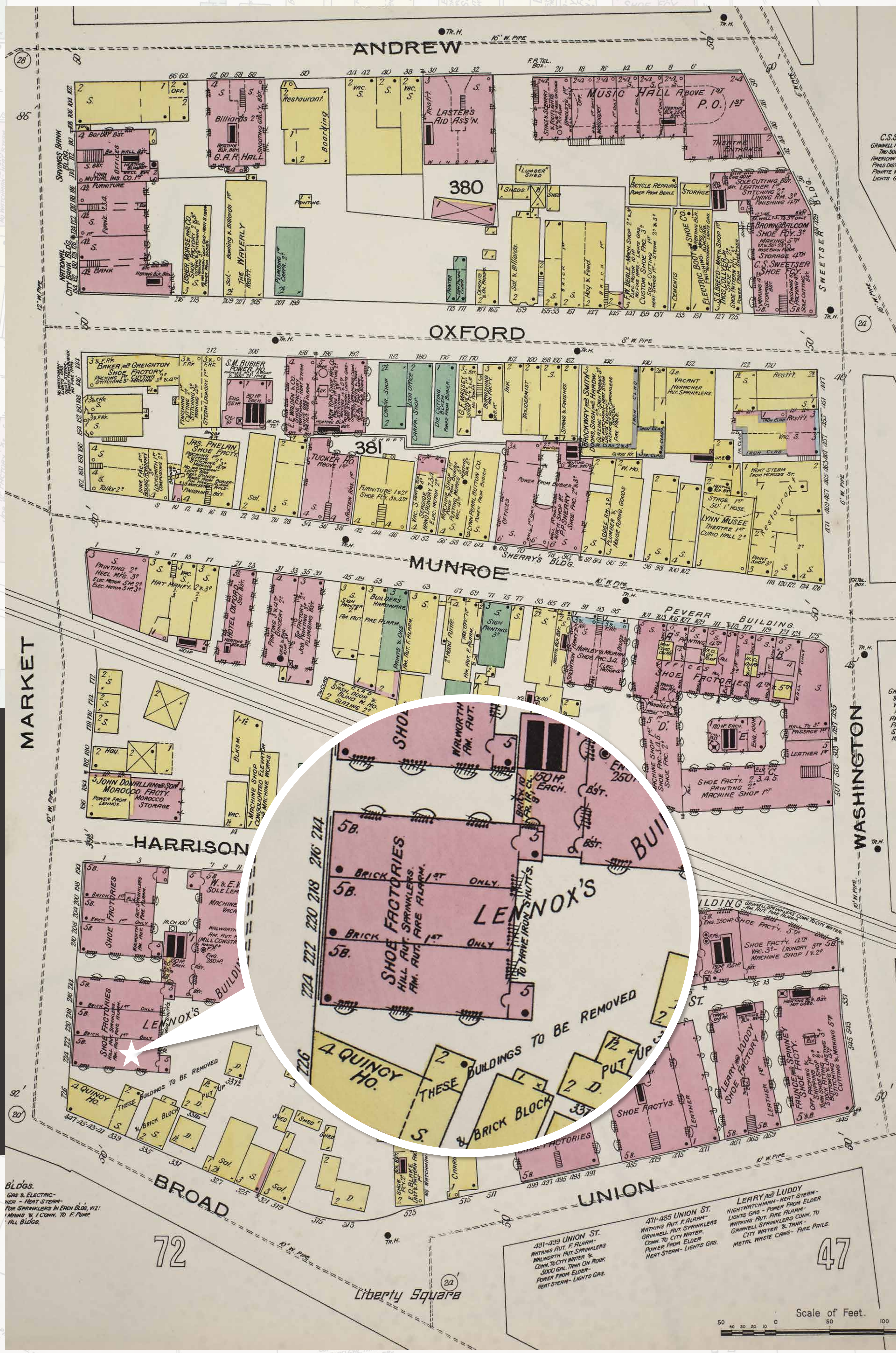
In his second shoe-making venture, Tom Plant organized Williams, Plant & Company in 1887. This partnership of five men each contributed \$1,000 and set up shop in Lynn, Massachusetts. But like the co-operative, Plant's time with Williams, Plant & Company was short-lived.

The company struggled with internal friction as Plant vied for more control of the operation. In 1891, Plant offered to buy out his partners for \$22,000 but met with resistance. The partners instead offered to buy his share for the same price. Plant accepted the offer.

With that \$22,000, Plant had the capital he needed to rent a new building at Liberty Square and open his own firm: The Thomas G. Plant Company.

1893 SANBORN INSURANCE MAP OF LYNN, MA

Location of the Williams, Plant & Company building at 222 Market Street highlighted. Map courtesy of Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.





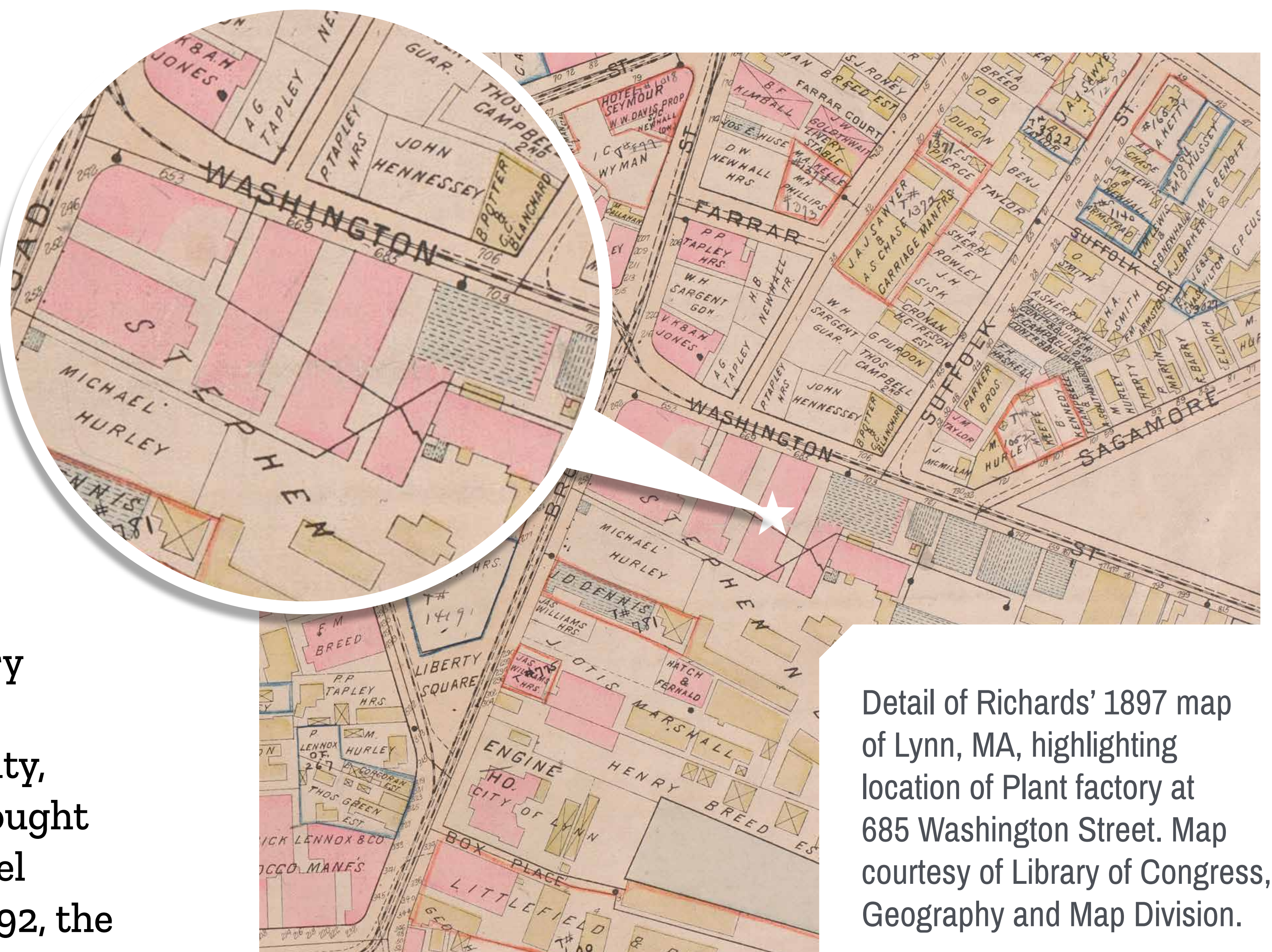
Example of a busy cutting room at the factory of Endicott, Johnson & Co., one of Plant's contemporaries.

CUTTING ROOM HEAVY WORK SHOE FACTORY, ENDICOTT JOHNSON & CO., LESTERSHIRE, N. Y.

THE THOMAS G. PLANT COMPANY

Innovation and increasing mechanization ensured the Thomas G. Plant Company grew steadily during its early years in Lynn.

While operating from the Liberty Square facility, Plant first introduced concepts to increase productivity and profit. Unlike other shoe factories, raw materials were moved to the topmost floor of Plant's factory where cutting took place in a well-lit and ventilated space. Taking advantage of gravity, each step in the manufacturing process brought the finished product closer to the street level where it was packed and shipped out. By 1892, the Thomas G. Plant Company produced up to 3,000 pairs of shoes a day.



Detail of Richards' 1897 map of Lynn, MA, highlighting location of Plant factory at 685 Washington Street. Map courtesy of Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

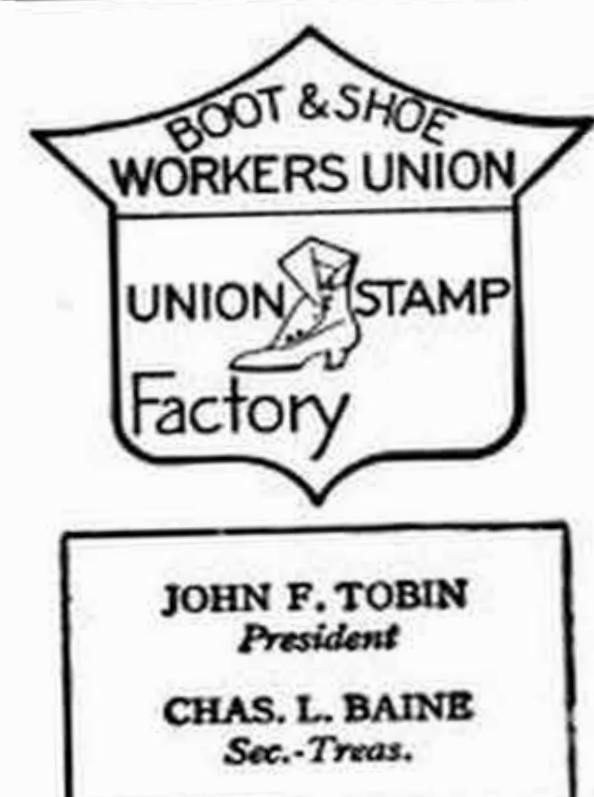
Expanded production required a larger facility and Plant moved his factory to Washington Street. From this location, he again bucked tradition by distributing his product directly to retailers. By cutting out product houses and dealers, Plant increased his own profits.



FIND IT AT LUCKNOW !

Plant applied the same concepts of efficient labor at Lucknow. Look for examples of time and labor-saving technologies in the Kitchen and Servants' Hall.

LABOR STRIKES AND UNION CONFLICT



Named Shoes are frequently made in Non-Union Factories

Do Not Buy ANY SHOE

no matter what its name, unless it bears a plain and readable impression of this Union Stamp.

All Shoes Without the Union Stamp Are Always Non-Union

Do not accept any excuse for the absence of the Union Stamp.

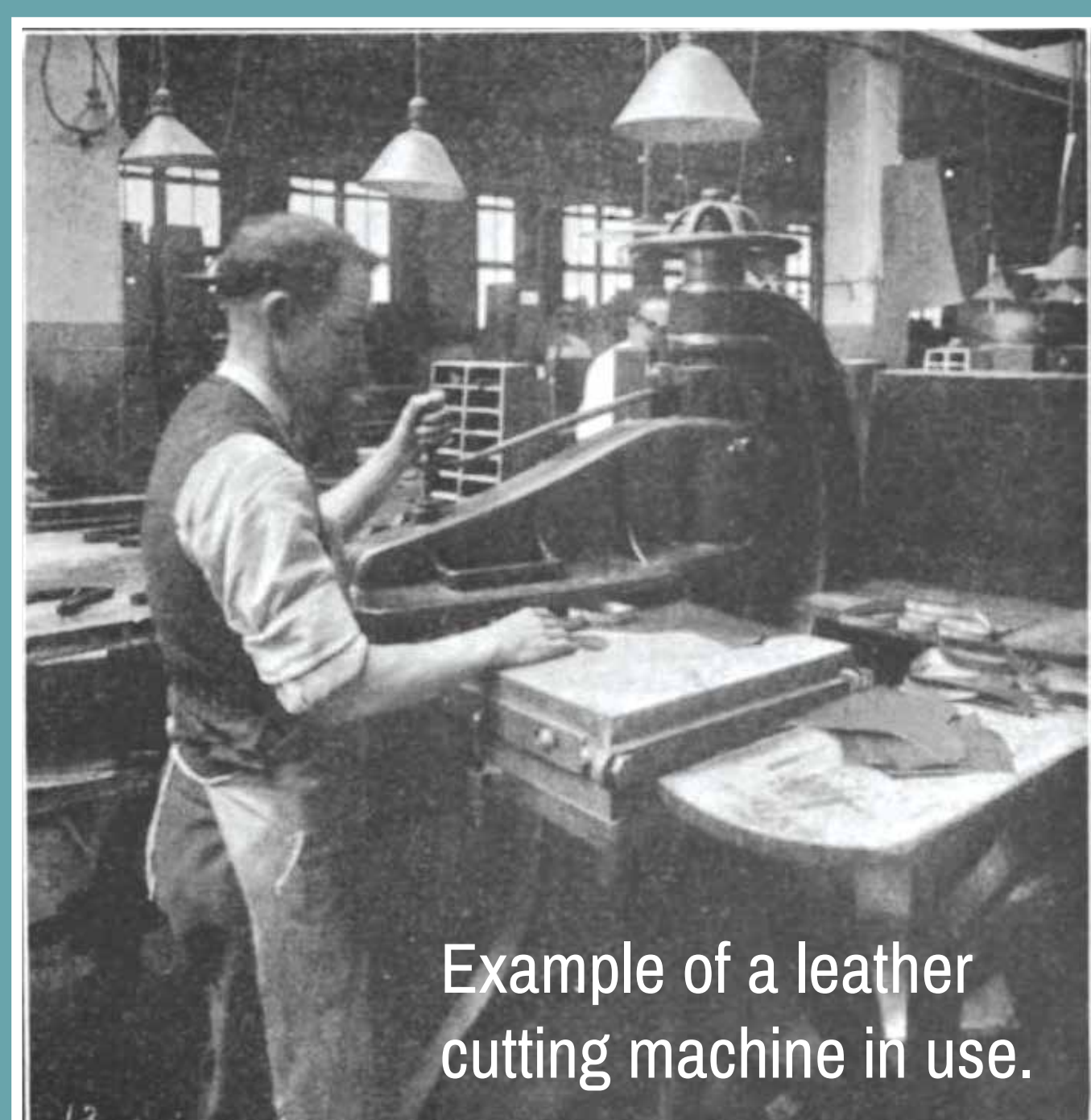
BOOT AND SHOE WORKERS' UNION, 246 Summer Street, Boston, Mass.

Boot & Shoe Workers Union advertisement, published prior to 1919

Despite its success, the Thomas G. Plant Company faced challenges from workplace injuries and union strikes.

Concerned that new machinery and innovative policies would damage their ability to bargain collectively, labor unions like the Boot & Shoe Workers Union (BSWU) took aim at the Plant Co. In 1896, the Plant Co. locked out 60 lasters, possibly in retaliation for the same workers striking the year before. This led to a five-month boycott in which over 250 other Plant Co. employees stopped working to show their support. Aiding the boycotting employees depleted the union's funds, but they received donations from sister organizations to continue. They continued to urge consumers not to purchase shoes without the BSWU stamp.

WORKPLACE INJURY AND THE MODEL FACTORY



Example of a leather cutting machine in use.

In five years, four factory workers were injured significantly enough to bring legal action against Plant's factory. In one case, a leather cutter sued after losing parts of both of his hands to the cutting machine. The case went to the Massachusetts Supreme Court and the Thomas G. Plant Company was ordered

to pay \$1,750 in damages. Expensive settlements like this may have inspired Plant to improve safety measures in his new factory.

**The Trade Unionist Does
Look for the Union Stamp**

DO NOT judge the demand for Union Made shoes by the number of actual requests. Trade unionists patronize merchants who sell Union Made shoes and they make certain that the shoes they buy bear the Union Stamp.

They know where to find the Union Stamp and that an indistinct impression resembling it is likely to be a counterfeit.

Enjoy the patronage of trade unionists, their families and their friends by showing the Union Stamp.

BOOT & SHOE WORKERS' UNION
246 SUMMER STREET BOSTON, MASS.
Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor

COLLIS LOVELY General President CHARLES L. BAINE General Sec'y-Treas.

WHAT THE STAMP MEANS

Justice To The Worker **Fairness To The Manufacturer**

Arbitration of All Disputes

The Union Stamp on Shoes stands for justice to the worker—justice in the matter of wages, hours of labor, and safe and sanitary shops. To the worker, the Union Stamp means the comforts of home, and the happiness of wife and child.

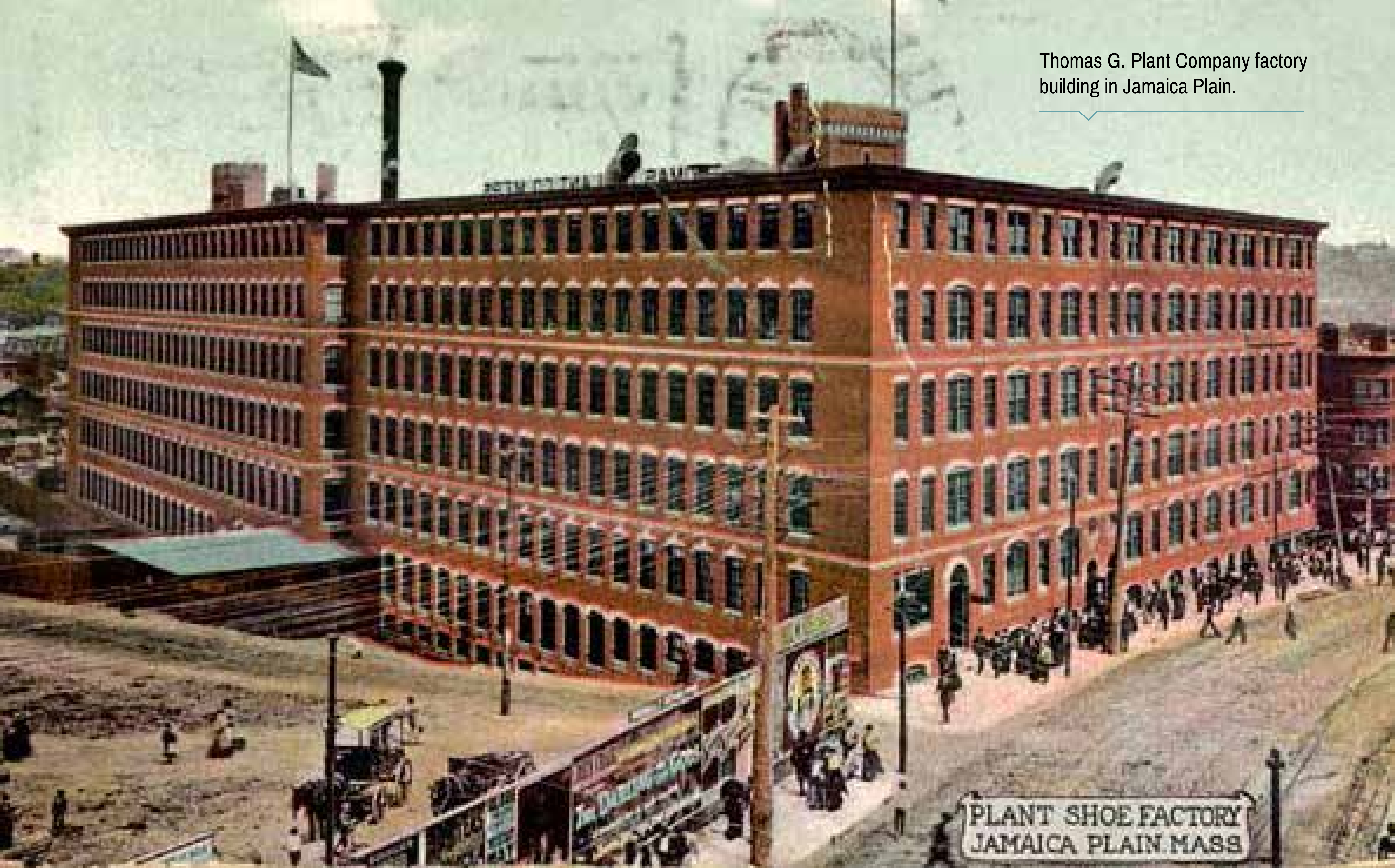
The Union Stamp on Shoes stands, equally, for fairness to the Manufacturer—the equitable and reasonable adjustment of all differences by arbitration. The Union shop is the prosperous shop. Women! in the name of justice and fairness to all, buy only

Union Stamp Shoes—Take No Substitute

BOOT AND SHOE WORKERS UNION
432-434 ALBANY BUILDING, BOSTON.
JOHN F. TOBIN, President CHAS. L. BAINE, Sec.-Treasurer



Boot & Shoe Workers Union advertisement explaining what the union stamp means. The Toronto News, May 26, 1904.



Thomas G. Plant Company factory building in Jamaica Plain.

NEW BEGINNINGS IN JAMAICA PLAIN

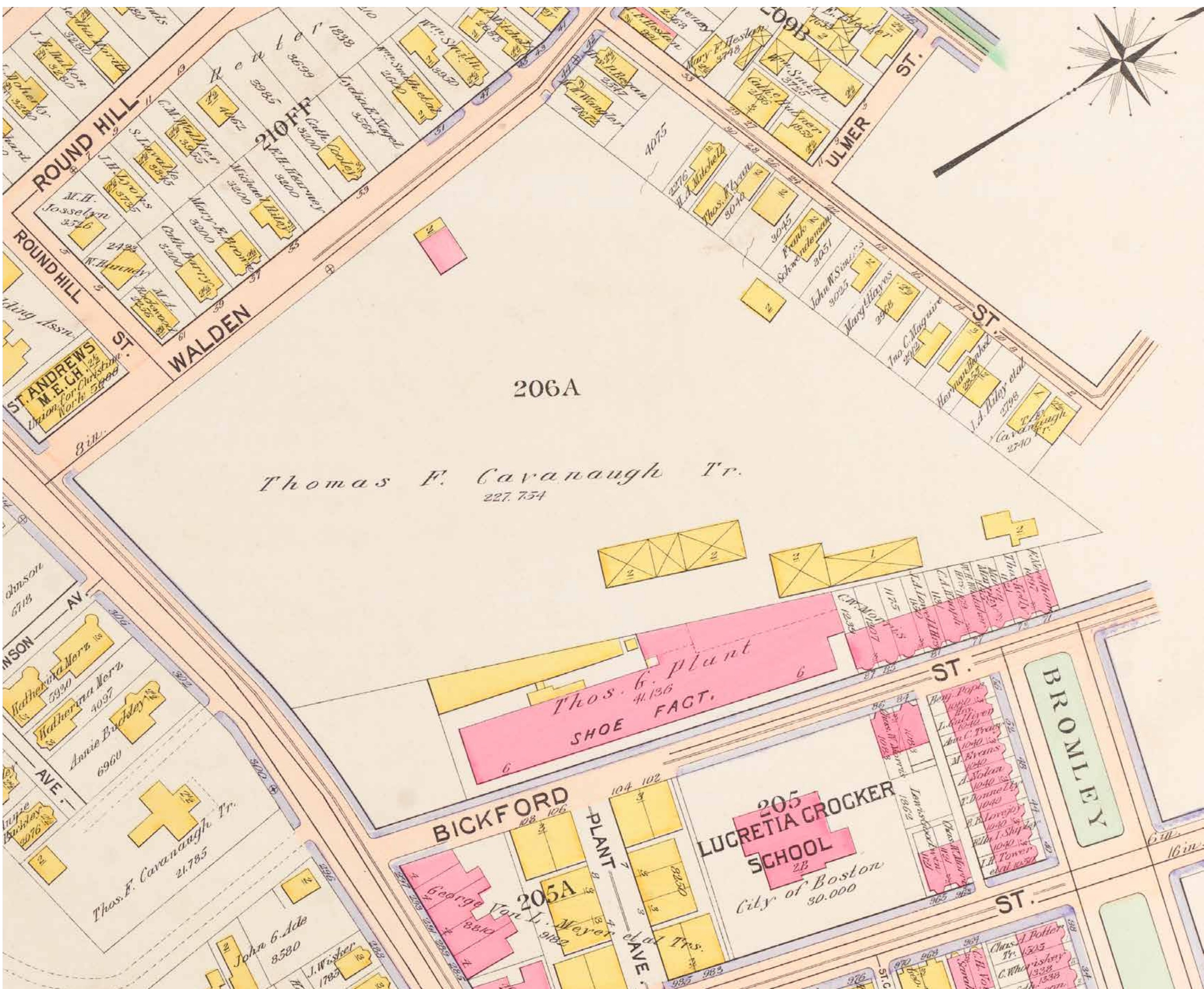
As conflicts with the union continued, Tom Plant set in motion plans to move his entire operation to Boston.

Plant purchased an acre of land with buildings in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, at the corner of Center Street and Bickford Street. Although the union eventually won a settlement, the city of Lynn lost a major manufacturer and thousands of jobs. When Plant opened the Jamaica Plain facility, he pledged his new factory would always be an open (non-Union) shop.

By March of 1897, the new factory employed 1,000 workers and turned out 6,000 pairs of shoes a day.

Bickford Street location of the Thomas G. Plant Company factory on 1899 map of Jamaica Plain.

Map reproduction courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map and Education Center at the Boston Public Library.



A FACTORY OF THE FUTURE

Thomas G. Plant Company factory building in Jamaica Plain. Museum collection.



FIND IT AT LUCKNOW !

Look for this photograph of Plant's factory in Tom's Office!

Thomas Plant outfitted his new factory with the latest technologies and sought creative ways to increase productivity and sales.

Like in his factories in Lynn, production started on the topmost level of the building and moved down to shipping at street level. An on-site sales department sold directly to large retailers and produced catalogs with local retailer information for consumers.

As business boomed, Plant built four separate six-story annexes onto his factory between 1902 and 1904. The sprawling complex included 11 elevators, 85 telephones for quick communication, and Lamson carrier lifts that could deposit packages on any level of the building. Carriers on roller-skates delivered

packages quickly and efficiently. The complex was kept at a steady temperature and humidity for employee comfort. Large windows throughout the factory provided good lighting to work by and ensured a quality product.

By 1910, the Plant Co. factory in Jamaica Plain was the largest factory in the United States and the largest shoe factory in the world. The factory spanned nine acres and employed 5,500 people. Each year, the Plant Co. produced 6 million pairs of shoes and earned \$8 million in revenue.

FIRE SAFETY IN THE MODEL FACTORY

Plant was intimately aware of the dangers of fire to his business. Perhaps in response to major factory disasters at that time or memories from his youth of the Richmond factory burning, Plant demanded fire prevention in his Jamaica Plain factory. The complex featured automatic sprinklers and fire pumps that drew from water tanks and nearby reservoirs. Even the stairwells were fireproof for employee safety. The building was well-equipped in case of an emergency.

Bickford Street location of the Thomas G. Plant Company factory on 1906 map of Jamaica Plain. Map reproduction courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map and Education Center at the Boston Public Library.



NAME RECOGNITION: BUILDING A BRAND



Dorothy Dodd Shoe Company advertisement.
Everybody's Magazine, 1905.



In addition to using new technologies for saving time and labor, Tom Plant understood the profitability of brand recognition.

In 1898, the Thomas G. Plant Company began advertising "Queen Quality" shoes using the likeness of Queen Louise of Prussia. Plant introduced a second brand name in 1902. The company's "Dorothy Dodd" brand boasted 32 styles of women's shoes for all occasions.

The Plant Co. mascots – Queen Louise and the fictional Dorothy Dodd – conveyed a sense of elegance and style. They promoted quality, yet fashionable, footwear at reasonable prices. Newspaper and magazine advertising targeted both professional women and the general public.

Thanks in part to these promotional schemes, Plant's shoes for women became widely recognized and highly sought after.



Queen Quality Shoe Company advertisement featuring the likeness of Queen Louise of Prussia, circa 1900.



MAKING THE SALE



“Euclid ”

Vassar Shape

Style 528

Kibo Kid, patent tip, welted sole of good walking weight, extension edge, medium heel, toe as 527.

“Combines the best ideas of comfort with the latest ideas of fashionable footwear.”



“Gentlewoman ”

Elite Shape

Style 520

Kibo Patent Kid, tip, dull mat top, welted sole of good walking weight, medium low heel.

“Quiet elegance of style manifest in every feature of this boot.”

“Broadway ”

Tuxedo Shape

Style 575

All Kibo Enamel Calf, welted sole of extra heavy walking weight, with full extension edge, low heel. This style \$3.00.

“A stylish, heavy soled, mannish Oxford.”



“My Lady ”

Spanish Opera

Style 583

Light fine Kibo Kid sandal, with flexible turn sole, leather Louis XV, heel.

“Imparts to the foot an appearance of dainty beauty.”



Styles of Queen Quality shoes included in the Thomas G. Plant Company catalog, circa 1900.

Always open to innovation, Tom Plant continued to promote his shoe brands by establishing an on-site sales department. Surprisingly, however, the Thomas G. Plant Company did not accept mail-order sales; they deemed the practice “unsatisfactory” to both producer and consumer.

Instead, their sales department sought retailers across the nation to peddle Queen Quality and Dorothy Dodd shoes. Catalogs produced by the Thomas G. Plant Company directed consumers to their nearest retailer. According to advertisements, only one retailer per town could carry the brands.

HOW MUCH FOR THAT PAIR OF SHOES?

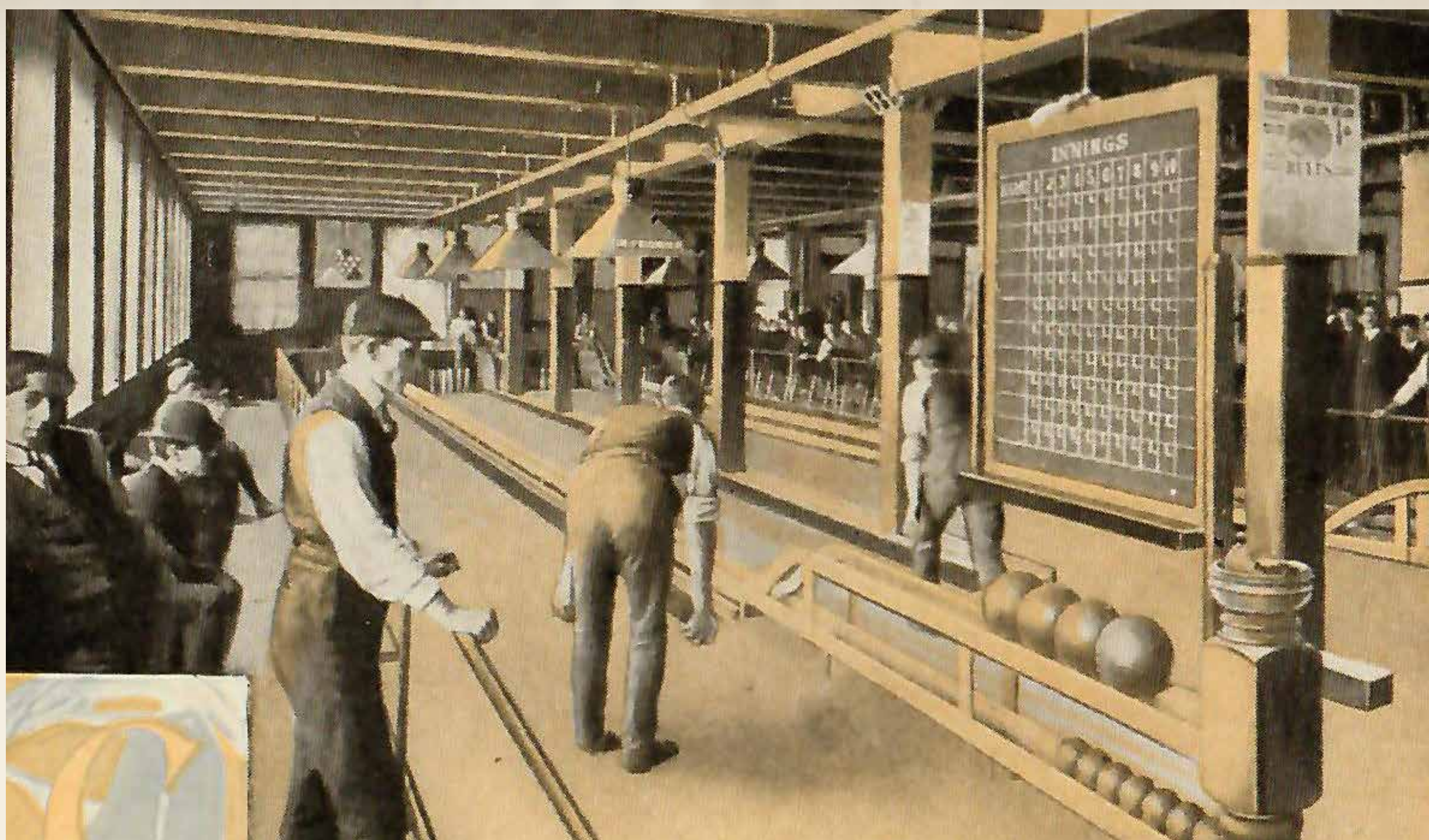
The Thomas G. Plant Co. marketed high-quality shoes at mid-range prices. Both Queen Quality and Dorothy Dodd shoes sold for between \$2.50 and \$3.50 per pair in the early twentieth century. In 2019, this amounted to roughly \$77 to \$108 per pair.



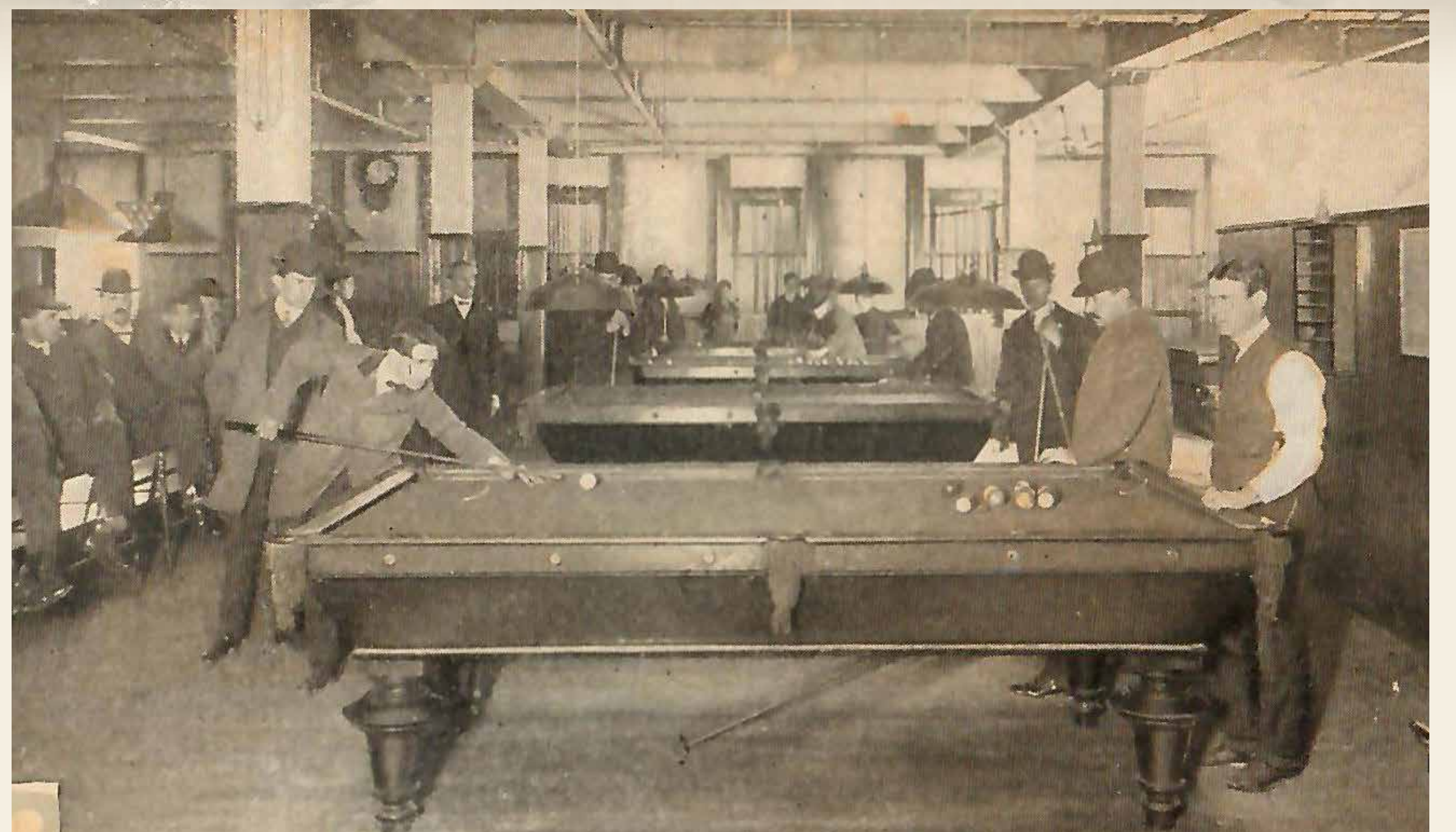
FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL:

WELFARE CAPITALISM

Dance lessons in the Thomas G. Plant Company ladies' recreation hall, circa 1910. Museum collection.



Onsite bowling allies enjoyed by Thomas G. Plant Company employees, circa 1910. Museum collection.



Billiard hall at the Thomas G. Plant Company factory in Jamaica Plain, circa 1910. Museum collection.

One of Plant's keys to success was the attention he paid to his employees' wellbeing, with the ultimate goal of building loyalty and increasing productivity.

Recreational facilities, on-site healthcare, and a beautiful outdoor "rest park" all encouraged a happier and healthier workforce. Plant also instituted an 8-hour workday with 10-hour pay for his factory employees in 1901.

Having come from a modest, working-class background himself, the ideals of so-called "welfare capitalism" may have given Plant some personal satisfaction, but certainly were good for business as well.

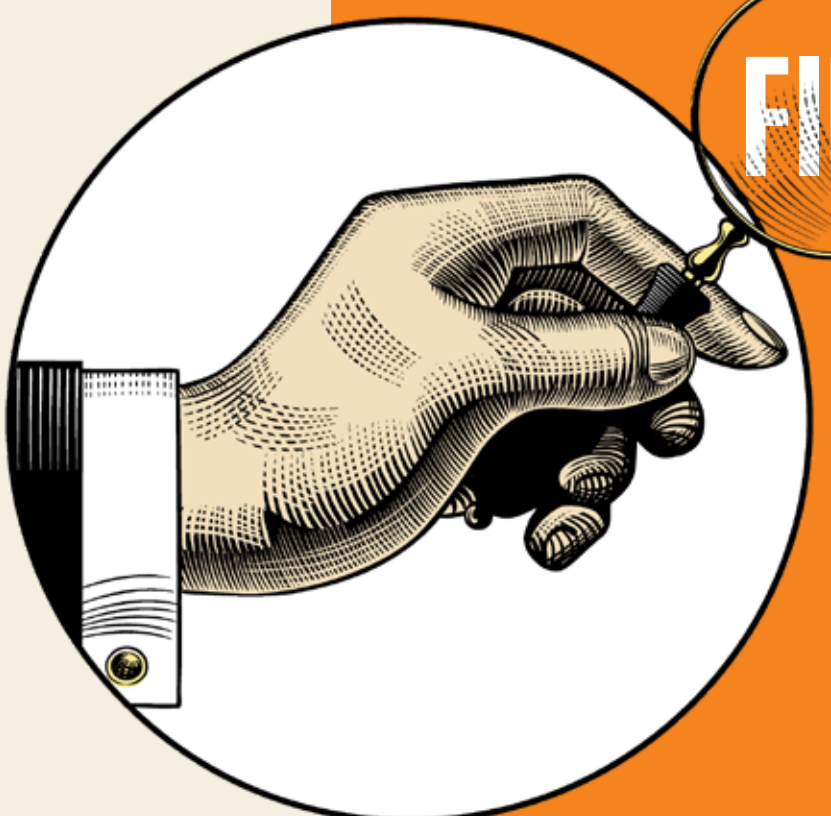
PLANT COMPANY PERKS

Like the Google of its day, the Thomas G. Plant Company provided a variety of unique benefits to its employees. The factory complex included bowling alleys, a library, gymnasium, dance hall, showers and baths, a smoking room, and a restaurant. Except for meals, all were free for employees to enjoy.

The complex also featured a 13-acre rest park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted – the architect of New York's Central Park – which included garden paths and a baseball field. On-site health care providers kept the workforce healthy, and on-site childcare made it possible for many women to work in the factory and earn their own wages.

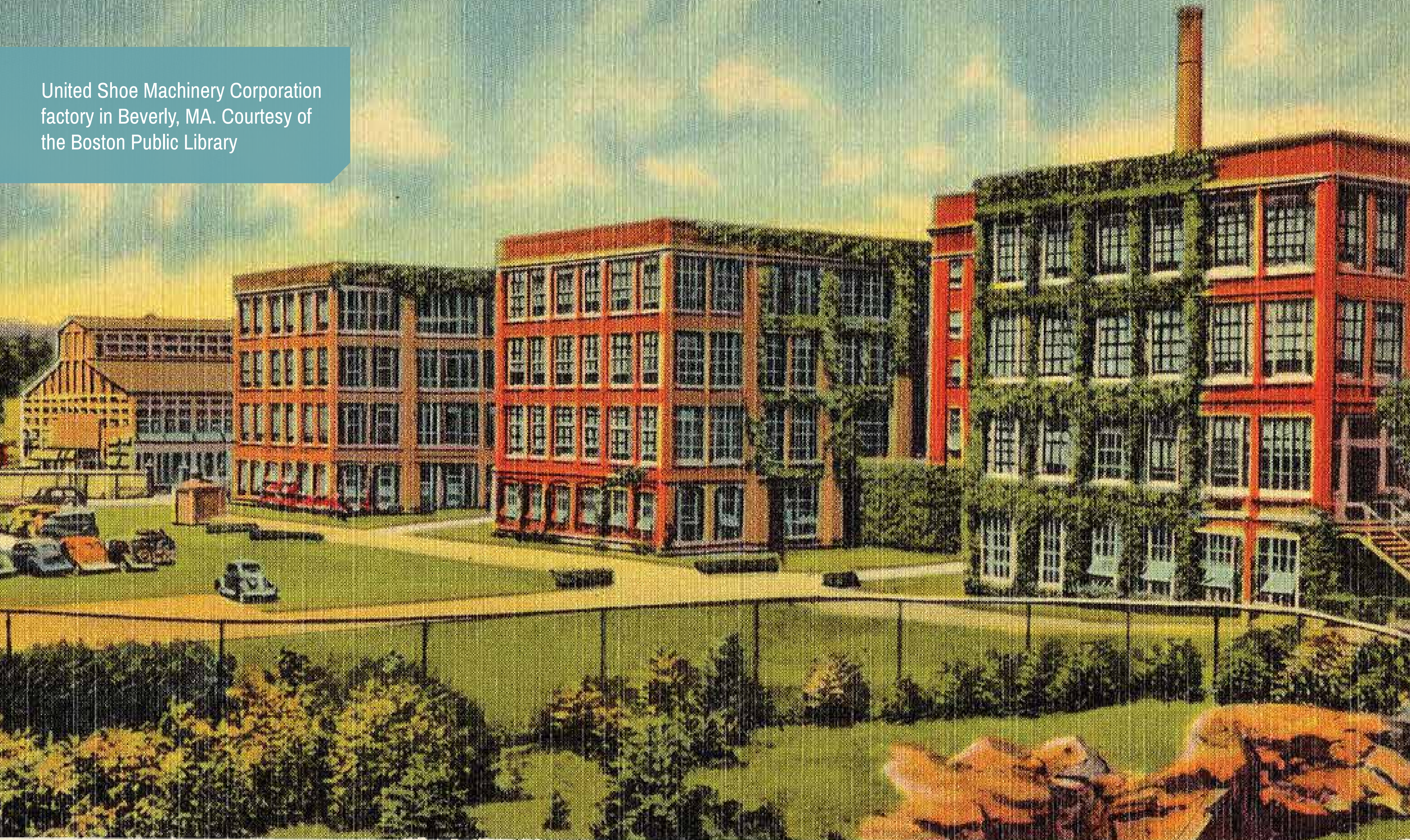
FIND IT AT LUCKNOW !

Like his factory workers, Plant's staff at Lucknow enjoyed benefits unusual for most domestic servants at the time. Visit the Castle to see their living and working spaces and learn more about the servants' experience.



United Shoe Machinery Co., Beverly, Mass.

United Shoe Machinery Corporation
factory in Beverly, MA. Courtesy of
the Boston Public Library



ROOTS OF CONFLICT

Tom Plant rented manufacturing equipment for his factories from the United Shoe Machinery Corporation (USMC). Leasing manufacturing equipment was common practice, especially for small companies starting with little capital.

USMC formed in 1899. It soon controlled 80% of the nation's shoe manufacturing machinery and was protected by a 60% tariff on imported equipment. The Beverly, Massachusetts based company had a monopoly on the trade.

USMC maintained their monopoly by building a "tying clause" into their contracts with shoe manufacturers. The clause stated USMC could remove all of their equipment from any factory found to be using even a single non-USMC machine for production. Rather than risk losing the bulk of their equipment, a company would outfit their factory with only USMC machines.

Additionally, USMC used the royalty leasing system. This meant shoe companies, including Plant's, paid them a fee for every pair of shoes produced. Understanding he could increase his profits by not paying royalties to USMC, Plant set out to create his own line of shoe manufacturing equipment.

FIRST MANEUVERS IN THE SHOE MACHINERY WAR

Tom Plant was not an inventor but used his money and management skills to bring together people with the right experience to realize his vision.

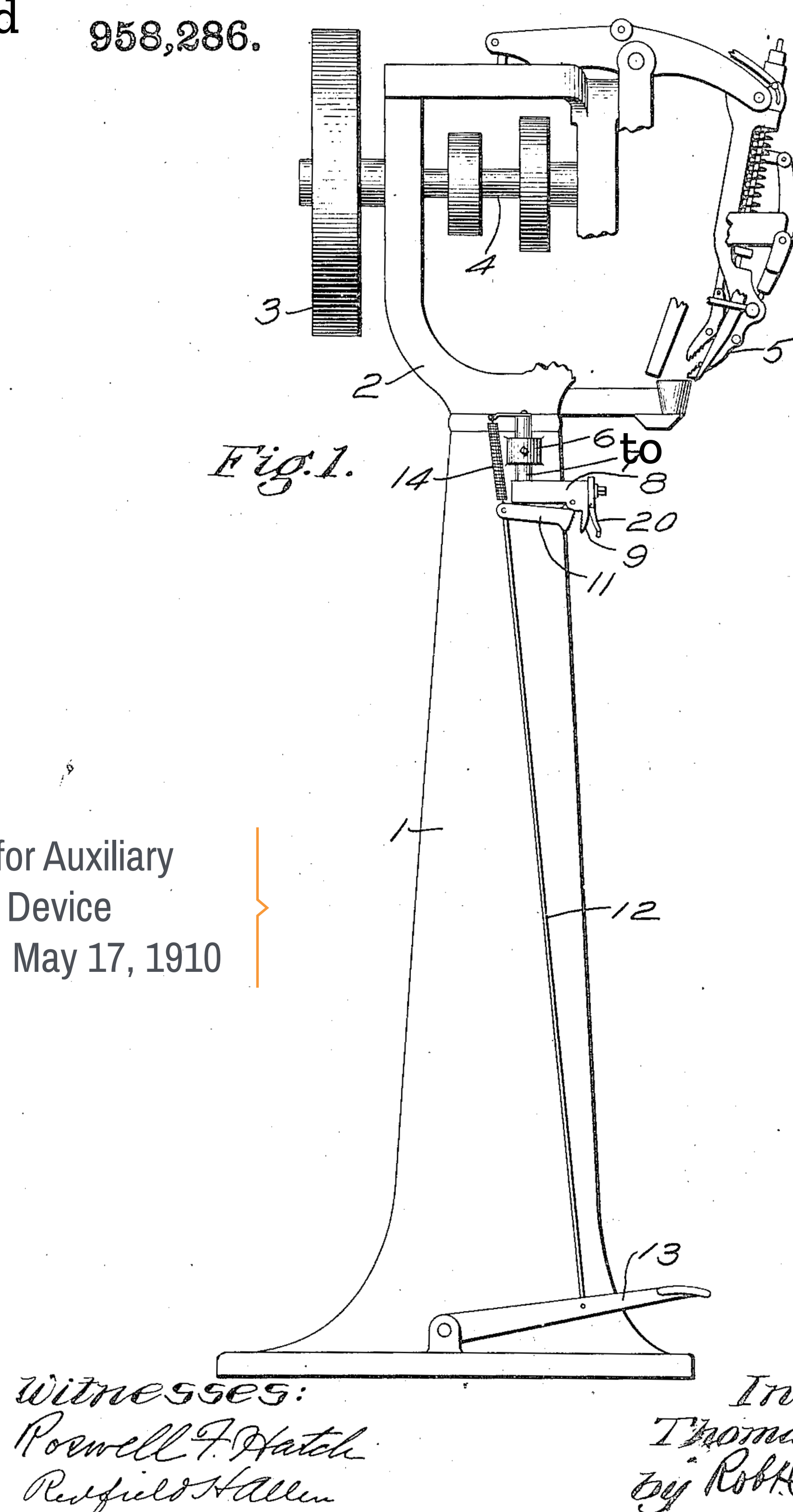
Plant's team found expired patents to improve upon and hired engineers to design new machines from scratch. In 1904, Plant contracted several New England machine shops to begin manufacturing the new shoe production equipment.

By 1908, Plant had several of the new machines installed in his factory. The Thomas G. Plant Company hired 1,500 new employees and increased production. Based on this success, Plant moved forward with plans to create an entire line of shoe machinery. His goal was to market the line other shoe companies.

Patent for Auxiliary
Lasting Device
granted May 17, 1910

T. G. PLANT.
AUXILIARY LASTING DEVICE.
APPLICATION FILED SEPT. 20, 1909.

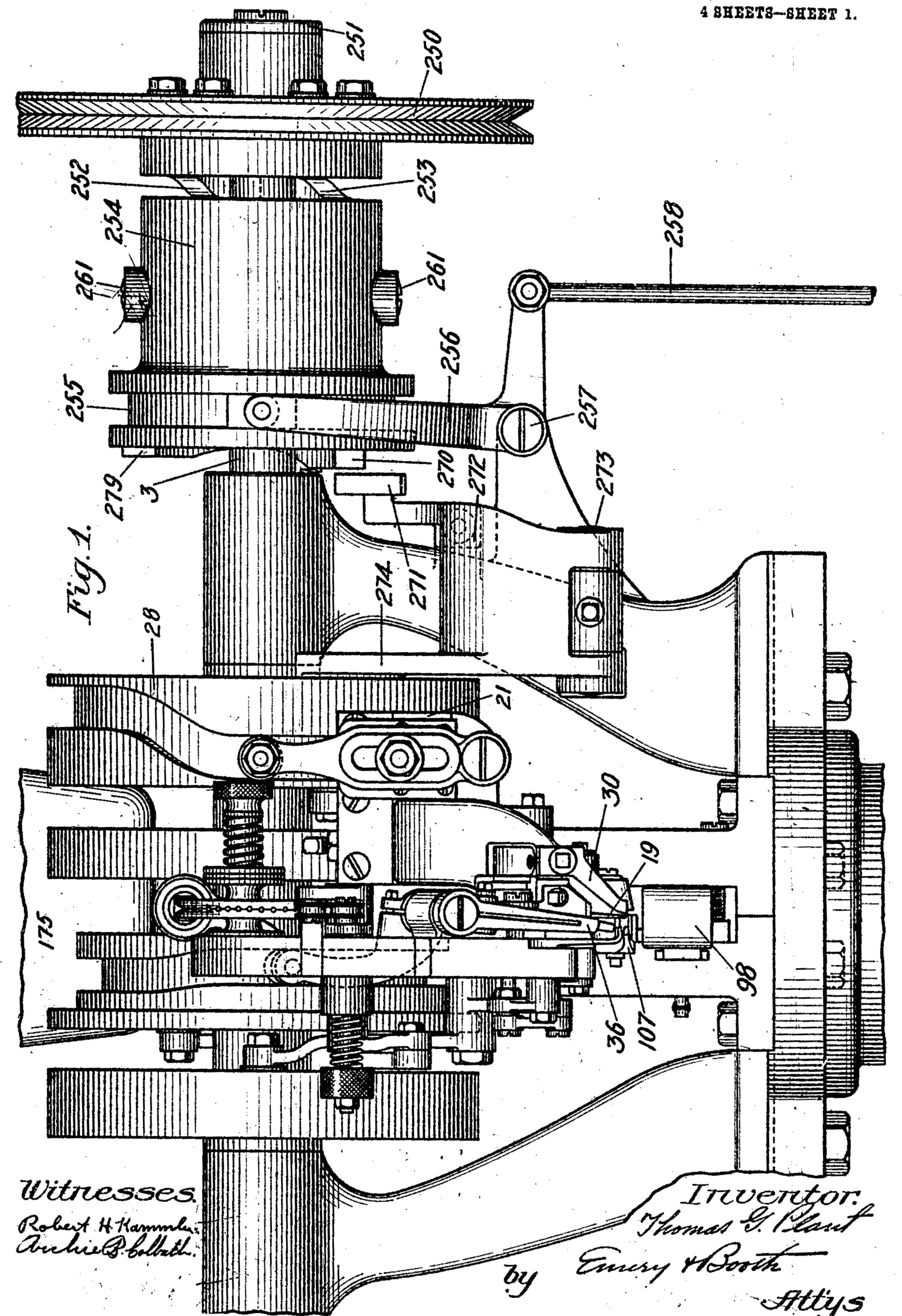
Patented May 17, 1910.
2 SHEETS—SHEET 1.



T. G. PLANT.
STARTING AND STOPPING MECHANISM.
APPLICATION FILED OCT. 4, 1906. RENEWED NOV. 23, 1909.

958,290.

Patented May 17, 1910.
4 SHEETS—SHEET 1.



Patent for Starting and Stopping
Mechanism granted May 17, 1910

PLANT'S PATENT FRENZY

Before 1907, Tom Plant had no patents in his name. As his team of engineers and lawyers progressed, Plant purchased 35 patents and had them assigned to the Plant Co. Between 1909 and 1910 alone, Plant patented 46 new inventions in his quest to create a line of shoe machinery.

The Thomas G. Plant Company factory in Jamaica Plain, MA, circa 1910. Museum collection.



SUMMER SKIRMISHES:

THE WAR WAGES ON

By April of 1910, Tom Plant proudly unveiled a complete line of “Wonder Worker” shoe machinery. He removed all USMC equipment from his factory in Jamaica Plain and began using only his own.

With his factory as a showpiece, Plant advertised the equipment to other shoe companies. He officially registered the Wonder Worker Shoe Machinery Company on August 30, 1910.

USMC immediately took action, suing Plant for patent infringement and offering rebates to current customers to entice them to stay loyal to their brand.

Throughout the summer, Plant and USMC exchanged barbs in national newspapers. The bad press and competition quickly took their toll. USMC’s stock prices dropped, and within a few months, they lost \$22 million.

WONDER WORKER OR WASHOUT?

Almost from the beginning, the Wonder Worker equipment caused slowdowns and lost profit at Plant’s factory. Several machine shops were involved in creating the equipment, which meant parts did not always line up properly. Non-compatible parts frequently resulted in broken equipment.

In addition, the machines were lightly built and could not stand up to repetitive use. The constant vibration would literally shake a machine to pieces! The resulting repairs cost the Thomas G. Plant Company valuable time and revenue.

CEASE FIRE: NEGOTIATING A SALE

As their sparring continued, Tom Plant began negotiating the sale of his company to the United Shoe Machinery Corporation in September 1910.

Plant and USMC had entered negotiations twice before, but outrageous demands and hot tempers stalled progress both times. On the third attempt, the deal was finally struck on a \$6 million sale.

USMC took over financial responsibility for the Thomas G. Plant Company and all of its product divisions. They received full rights to all of Plant's existing patents and any future machinery interests Plant conceived within the next 15 years.

In December 1910, Plant bid farewell to his factory staff. He reportedly handed out letters of appreciation and \$125,000 in gold coins. USMC quietly closed the factory for a two-day examination before reopening under the same name.

GIVES EMPLOYEES \$100,000.
T. G. Plant, Shoe Manufacturer, To Retire From Business.
Boston, Mass. (Special).—Thomas G. Plant, the Jamaica plain shoe manufacturer, is about to retire from the firm bearing his name, and, in pursuance of a policy he inaugurated in the nature of a merit system, he gave to his employes a vast sum of shining gold fresh from the mint, exceeding \$100,000. This gift will be followed later in the year by a second distribution of \$50,000 to the employes. Although the news of the distribution came through the employes, it was confirmed at the office of the company.
In letters he sent with the gifts of gold to the several hundred employes Plant said: "I believe length of service, to a great extent, expresses the individuals' loyalty to his employer. I express my sincere appreciation of your loyal services."

Report of Plant's retirement and goodbye to factory employees. Fulton County News, January 5, 1911

CONSEQUENCES FOR USMC

Although USMC took control of Plant's empire, the so-called "Shoe Machinery War" caused national outrage. USMC was eventually prosecuted under Sherman Anti-Trust law. They were forced to give up most of their coercive practices but continued to use the royalty leasing system into the 1950s.

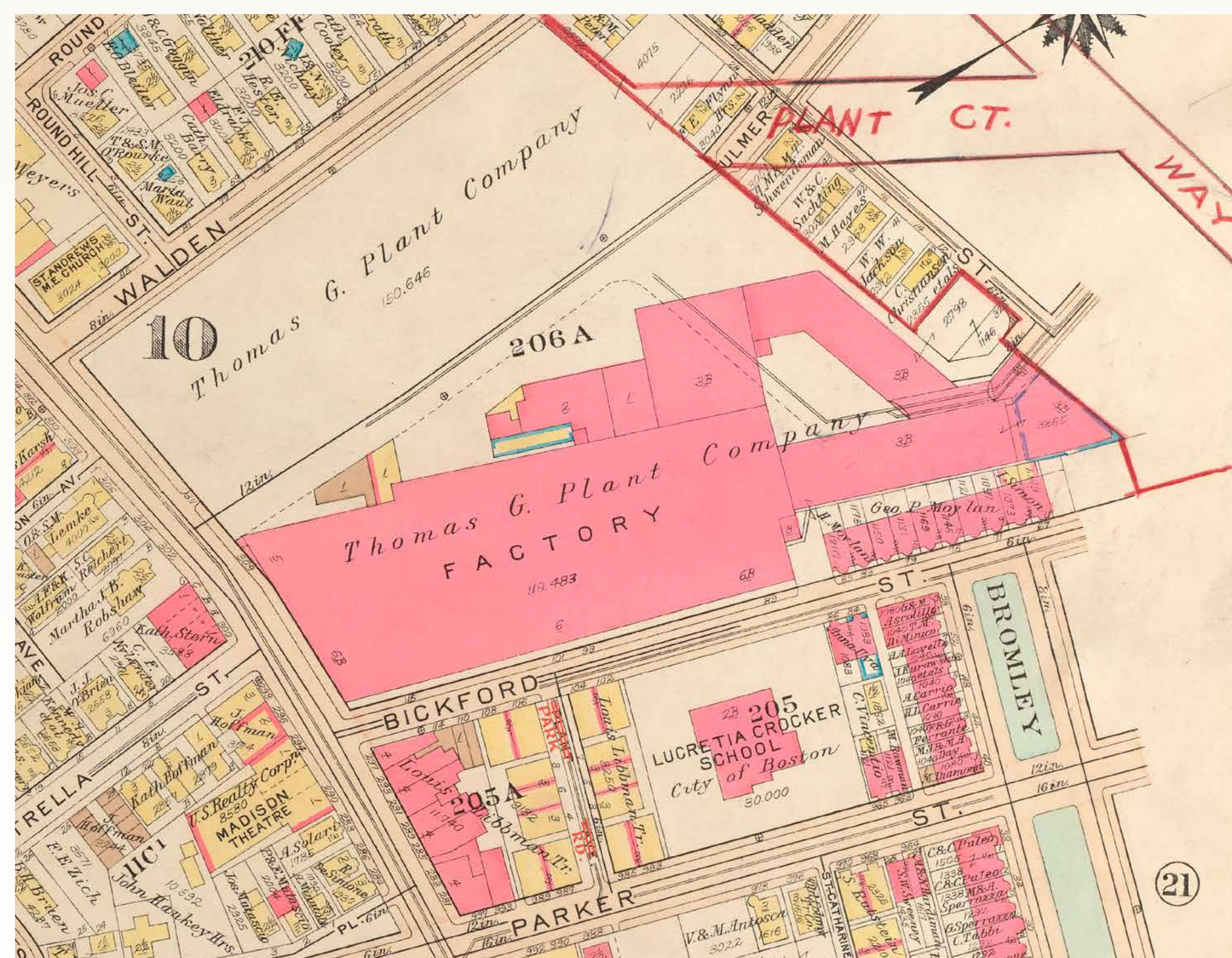
AFTERMATH OF THE SHOE MACHINERY WAR



The United Shoe Machinery Corporation continued to operate Tom Plant's Jamaica Plain facility for many years, even retaining the Queen Quality and Dorothy Dodd brand names. The factory, however, was quickly re-outfitted with USMC machines.

In 1931, USMC sold the Thomas G. Plant Company and its associated brands. Plant's shoe factory was converted into store-front and studio space.

Production of Queen Quality shoes moved to a division of the International Shoe Company in St. Louis, Missouri. Although they no longer used the Prussian Queen in advertisements, Queen Quality shoes continued to be marketed into the late 1950s for their quality and style at reasonable prices.



Top: USMC era Queen Quality Shoe Company ad. *The Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1926

Bottom: International Shoe Company ad for Queen Quality Shoes, circa 1957.

Bickford Street location of the Thomas G. Plant Company factory on 1931 map of Jamaica Plain. Map reproduction courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map and Education Center at the Boston Public Library.

LUCKNOW: PLANT'S RETIREMENT RETREAT



View of Lucknow Estate as photographed by George Perry between 1917-1924. Courtesy of the New Hampshire Historical Society.



Olive Dewey Plant, 1914 or 1919. Private collection.


In 1910, at the age of only 51, Tom Plant was suddenly barred from the business in which he had made his fortune. At the same time, he was facing a very public divorce from his first wife, Caroline Griggs Plant. He sailed for Europe with his niece, Amy, possibly in search of a property to which he could retire. However, his dream retirement estate was much closer to home.

Plant began purchasing land in the Ossipee Mountains in 1911. Transactions were completed by Plant's younger brother, William, and other agents while he was still abroad. He continued to acquire land over the next several years until the estate totaled 6,300 acres.

Between 1913 and 1914, Plant commissioned the construction of a 16-room mansion, stable, garage, two gatehouses, and several recreational features. Plant named the estate Lucknow and moved in with his new bride, Olive Dewey Plant. The couple remained in their beloved Moultonborough home until Plant's death in 1941.

THE END OF AN ERA:

THE PLANT FACTORY FIRE

 Ruins of the Thomas G. Plant Company factory building after 1976 fire. *Boston Globe*, February 3, 1976.

On February 1, 1976, a five-alarm fire ripped through the former Plant factory complex. Fire companies from 23 communities responded to fight the blaze. Within hours, all 13 buildings were engulfed in flame and in various stages of collapse.

The complex housed the studio suites of over 100 artists and writers at the time. Luckily, no occupants were injured in the inferno and only five firemen sustained minor injuries. Several brick dwellings on Bickford Street were damaged as the factory collapsed, but a passing rainstorm helped prevent falling embers from igniting nearby homes.

In the aftermath, news outlets called the blaze "suspicious." They reported that the sprinklers had been shut off and several fires had sprung up simultaneously in remote sections of the complex. Firefighters who returned to the scene a week later recounted that the embers continued to smolder beneath the brick rubble. The once magnificent Plant Shoe Factory had been reduced to ruins.



Boston firefighter walks from scene of Sunday night's Jamaica Plain fire which caused an estimated \$1 million damage and left more than 100 persons homeless. In background is section of Bromley Heath housing project. Story, other photos, Page 3. (Globe photo by Paul Connell)

Sprinklers were off in Jamaica Plain fire

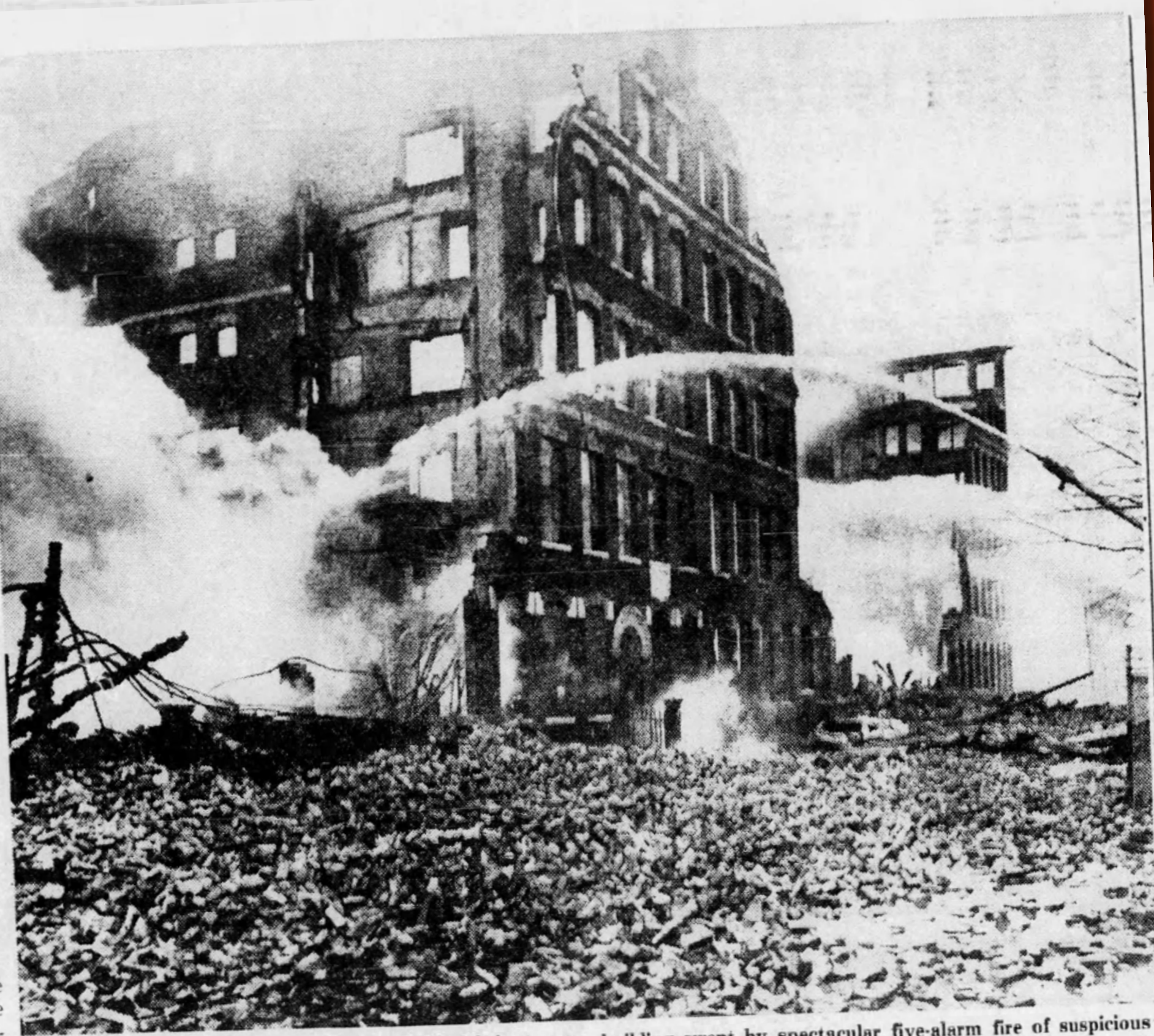
*By Robert J. Anglin
Globe Staff

Fire officials yesterday began an investigation into irregularities surrounding a spectacular \$1 million fire in Jamaica Plain that required more firefighters than any other blaze in the city's history.

Boston Fire Comr. George Paul said the fire was set and that the Boston Fire Department arson squad and the state fire marshal's office would seek answers to two questions:

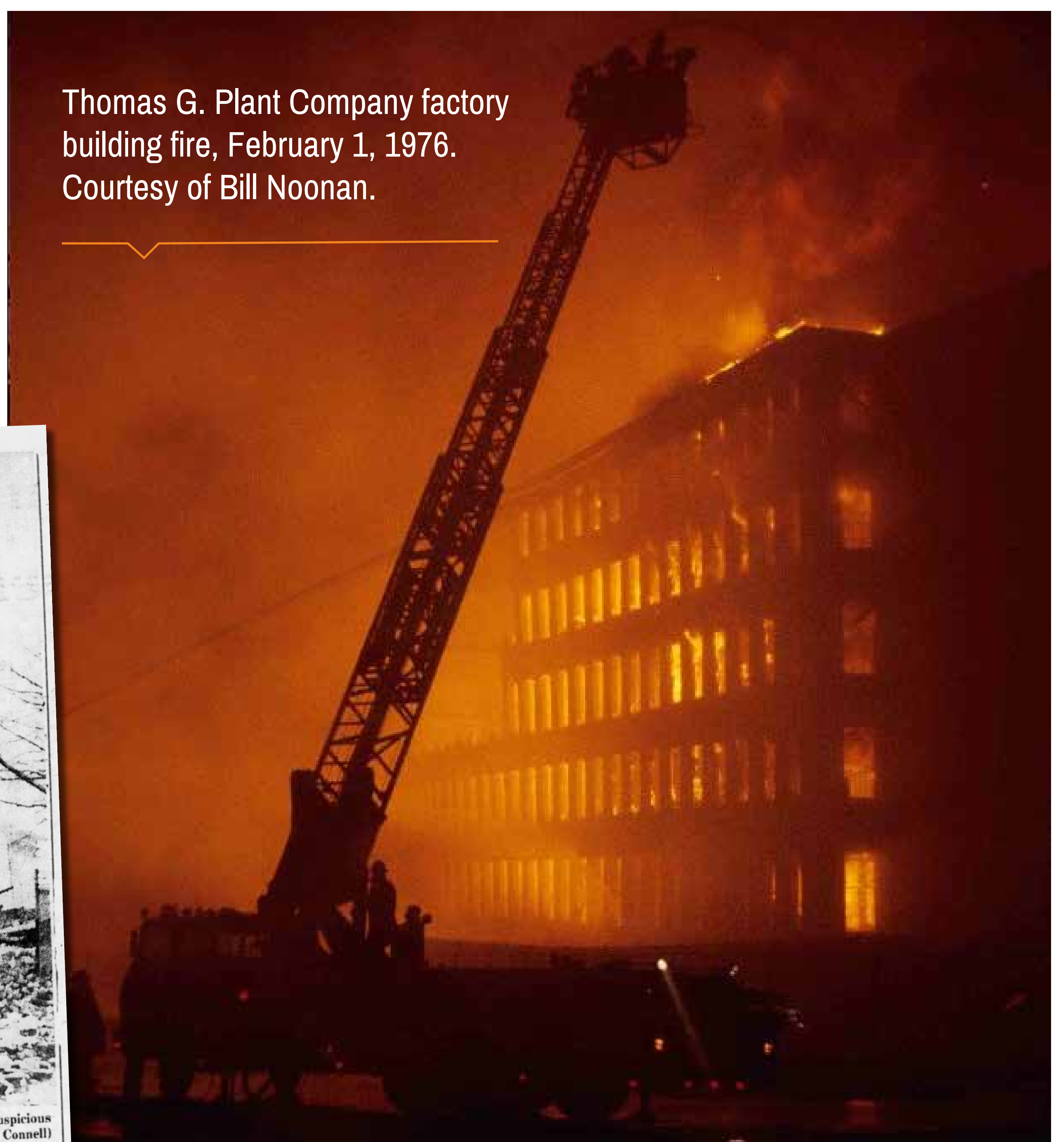
— Who was responsible for shutting down an otherwise operable sprinkler system in the five-story building at Centre and Bickford streets, the former Plant Shoe Co.?

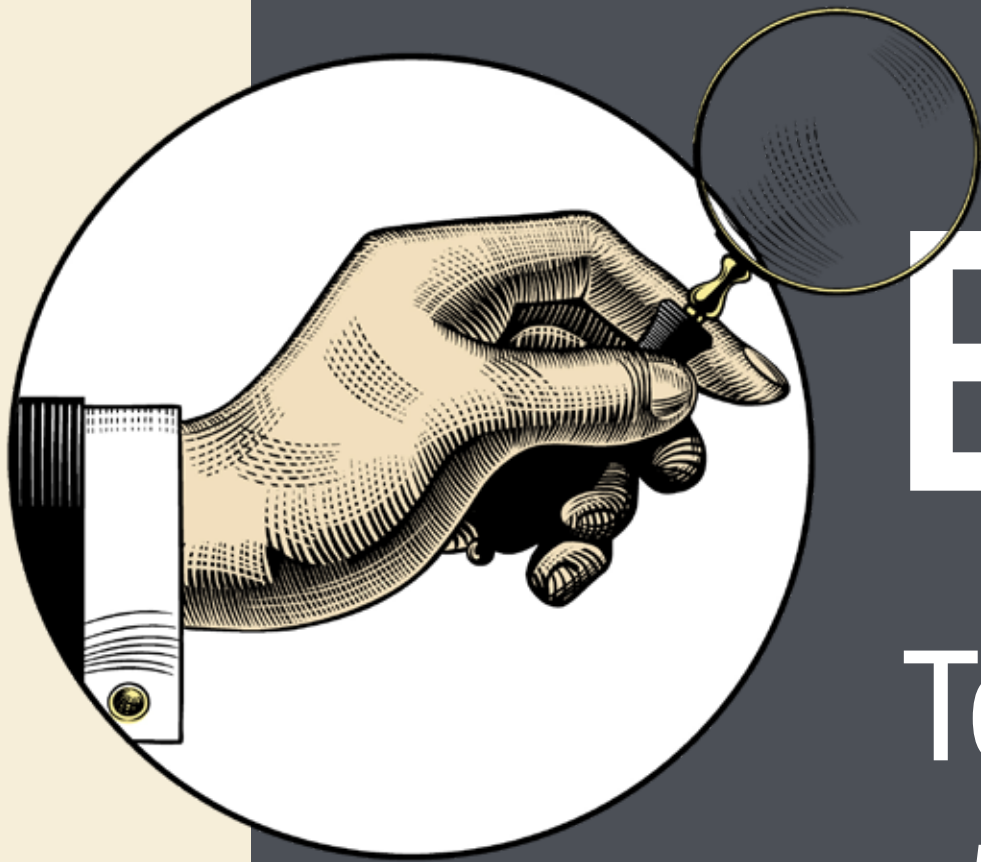
(Manual valves that control the system of sprinklers were in the closed position when firefighters arrived. When the valves were opened, the sprinklers operated, a fire official said.)



Stream of water from aerial tower arches across debris-strewn Bickford street in Jamaica Plain and into rubble of six-story building swept by spectacular five-alarm fire of suspicious origin. Other photo, Page 1. (Globe photo by Paul Connell)

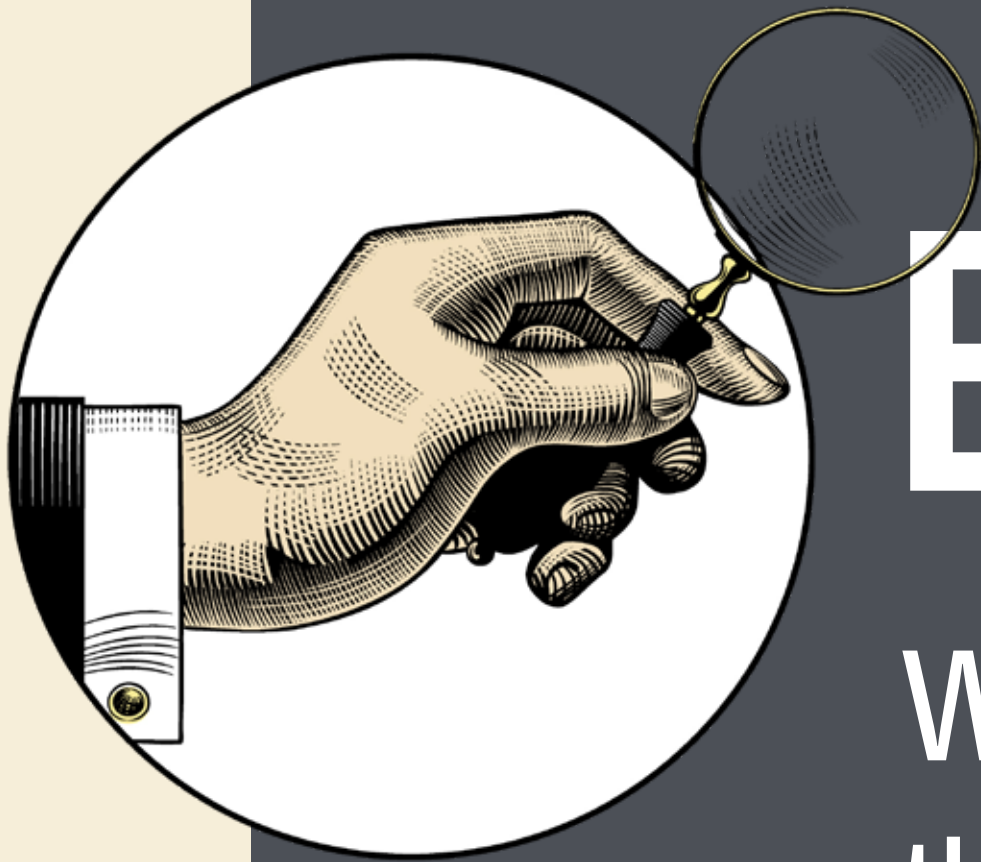
Thomas G. Plant Company factory building fire, February 1, 1976.
Courtesy of Bill Noonan.





EXPLORE MORE

To learn more about the strike and Plant's relationship with his employees, check out these newspaper articles from the time!



EXPLORE MORE

Want to learn more about
the Shoe Machinery War?
Read these newspaper
descriptions from the time!



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Did someone you know visit Lucknow prior to 1959? We would love to hear their stories! Please put them in touch with us.

Have an item you think might be an authentic, vintage Castle artifact? Even old admission tickets, brochures, and postcards give us a thrill! Please consider sending a photograph of your find.

Have a relative or friend who has worked at the Castle? We are interviewing past employees and archiving their stories. Please put them in touch with us.

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Visit the Castle or join us for a guided Basement Tour. Your admission helps support all of the important educational and preservation work we do! Tickets can be purchased at the Gift Shop.

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