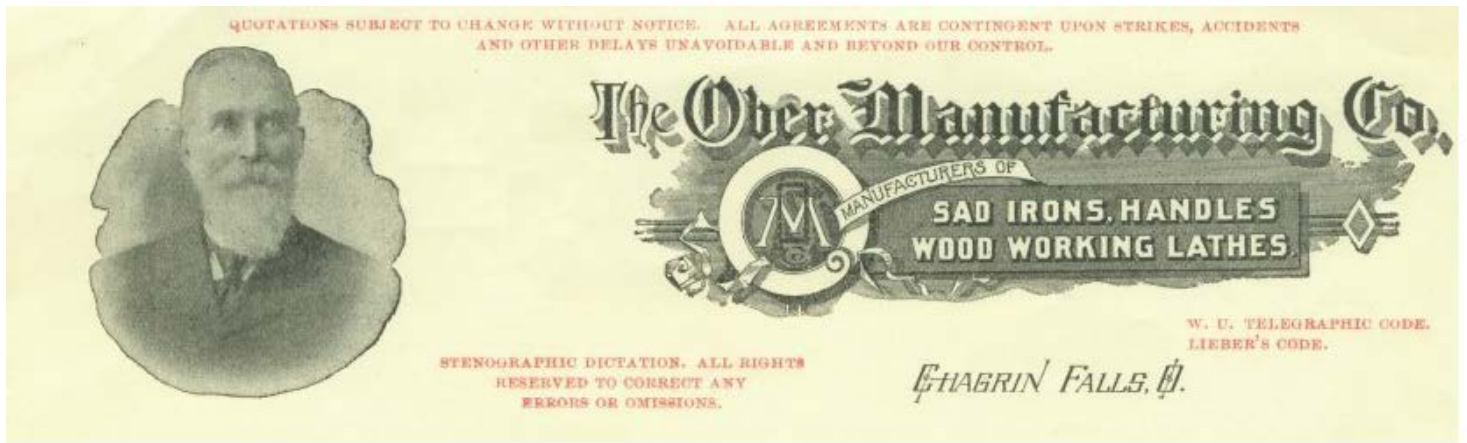


George H. Ober

Born: May, 1838

Died: December, 1903





Ober Manufacturing Letterhead

The Ober family made a very large impact on the growth of Chagrin Falls in its early years. They formed 2 long running business ventures in Chagrin Falls. This summary concentrates on the life of George Ober. An excellent history of the Ober Manufacturing Company, written by Don Barriball is available for purchase at:

<http://www.chagrinfallshistoricalsociety.org/ober-manufacturing-company>

The Ober family moved to Newbury from Washington, New Hampshire in 1834. The family consisted of husband Hermon, wife Hannah and two year old John (George's older brother). The family settled in South Newbury on the west side of Ravenna Road (State Road 44) between Music Street and Bell Road. It was here that George Ober was born in May of 1838. The family eventually included sons Charles, Reuben and sister Melissa.

George grew up in South Newbury and married Martha Mathews in 1860. They had 2 children: son Archibald and daughter Lena. The family lived in South Newbury until 1873, when George and his brother John moved to Chagrin Falls. They were members of the Congregational Church.



George, Martha, Archie and Lena Ober

George and his older brother John were partners in starting a business in South Newbury in 1862. Originally, they were lumber dealers and manufacturers of handles and wood shingles. George invented a lathe that was able to manufacture irregular shapes from templates. George received U.S. Patent No.48,428 for this invention in 1865, the first of many patents for machines he designed. George's patents are listed at the end of article. The lathe innovations that George designed allowed mass production utilizing template patterns. These improvements drastically improved the speed and efficiency of producing products and ensured a much more consistent end product result.

In 1873, the Ober brothers decided to move their business to Chagrin Falls. They decided on 2 ¼ acres parcel of land at the southwest corner of Bell Street and Cleveland Street. Purchasing the land from William 'Boss' Hutchings for \$700, the brothers took ownership in July of 1873. The first building built was a planning mill, which was built over the stream that goes through the middle of the property. Next to be built was a sawmill that contained a 5' circular saw blade, on the east end of the planning mill. A boiler house was added next that contained a 30 horsepower engine and a 40' iron smokestack. Within in 2 years, a barn, blacksmith shop and steam dry kiln were added. In 1874, George built the house at 87 East Washington Street.



87 East Washington Street Home built in 1874.

The brothers were very successful in manufacturing and selling a broad array of products. They produced a complete line of handles for items such as axes, hoes, forks, hammers, hatchets, brooms and many more. Spokes,

mallets, neck yokes, whiffletrees, and many other wood products were produced. They also produced window sashes, blinds, furniture and other specialty items. The Exponent of March 20, 1878 reported that during a two day period, the Obers shipped 4,300 handles of various types.

In 1881, John and George decided to dissolve their partnership. John was interested in manufacturing wood products and George wanted to concentrate on manufacturing the lathes that he was designing. John went his own way and opened his retail furniture and undertaking establishment. George continued on with the Ober Manufacturing Company and continued to offer the product mentioned above. George continued to design new and improved lathes to shape and mass produce irregular shapes from templates.

In October of 1885, George and Martha's son Archibald (Archie) married Addie Kennedy. Archie had by then become George's assistant. Archie and Addie had 3 sons (Gale, Dean and George) and 1 daughter (Hilda).

In February of 1887, Ober Manufacturing, along with all of Chagrin Falls, experienced one of the biggest floods in Chagrin's history. Many of the bridges and roads were severely damaged, including railroad trestles. Much of the factory was under water, but like many businesses in Chagrin over the years, the company cleaned up, repaired and got back into business as soon as they could. In August of 1887, George and Martha's daughter, Lena, married Mathew Woodburn of Chagrin Falls. The wedding took place in George's home at 87 East Washington Street, now the new home of the Chagrin Falls Historical Society.

In 1890, George received U.S. Patent No. 433,023 for a wood turning lathe. George took on the responsibility of company sale representative to travel the eastern half of the United States to sell his designs. He would sell the machines and would be there at the customer site to direct the installation of the machines and make sure they were ready for production use. George continued in this role until his son Archie, took over in 1899. By 1894, Ober lathes were being sold all over the United States, Mexico, England, Scotland and Belgium.

In 1897, Ober Manufacturing began making sad-irons in its foundry. George Ober received U.S. Patent No. 688,432 for a removable wooden handle on his sad-irons. Up till that time, most sad-irons had an iron handle that would get hot and hard to handle. George's wooden handle design allowed for a cooler handle and easy swapping of the handle from one iron to another, allowing for one iron to always be hot.

In March of 1902, George and Martha Ober were visiting their daughter, Lena in Detroit. George became ill and was admitted to a hospital in Detroit. In May, George was brought home and visited his factory occasionally.

George Ober was in declining health his last few years, but this did not stop him from continuing to be creative. He submitted his last patent application just prior to his death. George finally succumbed to his chronic heart disease and died on December 10, 1903. He is buried an Evergreen Hill Cemetery in Chagrin Falls. His last patent was approved in 1904, after his death.

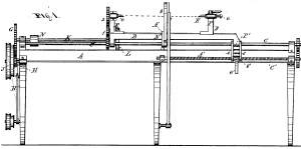
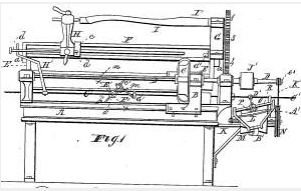
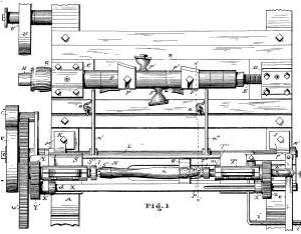
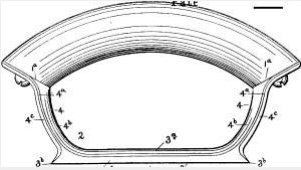
George was widely known as an incredibly creative designer, hard worker and honest and caring boss. Over his career more than hundreds of employees worked at his companies and he took a personal interest in their welfare. All the employees of his company, at the time of his death, attended his funeral. They gave a model of a lathe, covered in flowers as a tribute. George was known to be a quiet and modest person who was also civic minded. He stood for strong principals for himself and his neighbors, including temperance.

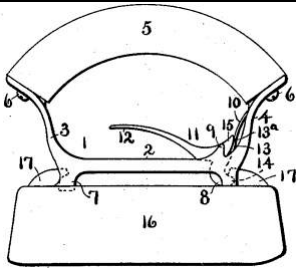


Patents attributed to George Ober

| Patent No. | Description | Year |
|------------|-------------------------------------|------|
| 48428 | Wheel Spoke, Whiffletree lathe | 1865 |
| 66875 | Tenoning machine | 1867 |
| 66988 | Improvement in wood-planing machine | 1867 |
| 244925 | Lathe for turning irregular forms | 1881 |
| 312288 | Lathe for turning irregular forms | 1885 |
| 433023 | Handle lathe | 1890 |
| D23525 | Design for a sad-iron handle | 1894 |
| 539820 | Sad-iron handle | 1895 |
| 583505 | Automated handle lathe | 1897 |
| 759187 | Sander or smoothing-machine | 1904 |

Patents for George H. Ober

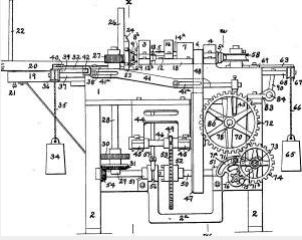
| Picture | Number | Date | Patentee | Title |
|--|-------------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
|  | 244,925 | Jul. 26, 1881 | G.H. Ober | Lathe for turning irregular forms |
|  | 312,288 | Feb. 17, 1885 | G.H. Ober | Lathe for turning irregular forms |
|  | 433,023 | Jul. 29, 1890 | G.H. Ober | Handle lathe |
|  | D23,525 | Jul. 31, 1894 | G.H. Ober | Design for a sad-iron handle |



[539,820](#)

May 28, 1895 G.H. Ober

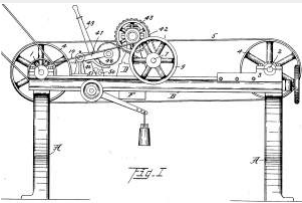
Sad-iron handle



[583,505](#)

Jun. 01, 1897 G.H. Ober

Automated handle lathe



[759,187](#)

May 03, 1904 G.H. Ober

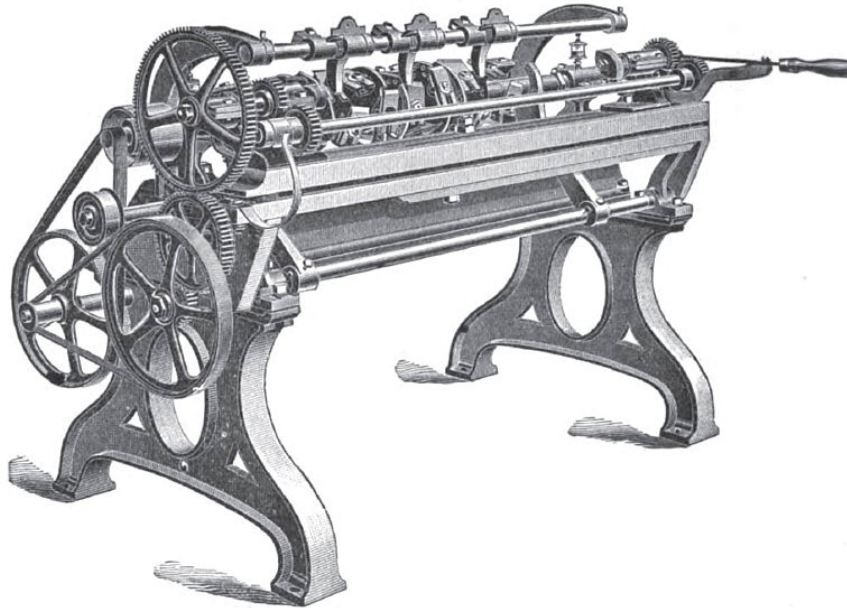
Sander or smoothing-machine

Additional information can be obtained via:

<http://vintagemachinery.org/mfgindex/detail.aspx?id=608&tab=7>

<http://www.datamp.org/patents/search/xrefPerson.php?id=4841>

Ober Bros. Manufacturing Company



LATHE FOR IRREGULAR FORMS.

THE OBER LATHE CO., CHAGRIN FALLS, OHIO.

1895 Article-Ober Manufacturing Co., Lathe for Irregular Forms

Ober Bros. Manufacturing Company, and its various iterations, was one of the major industries in Chagrin for over 80 years producing sad irons, trivets, tools, a variety of wooden handles, lathes and many other household items.

Machinery:

Boring Machine
Chucking Machines
Chucks – Pointing
Chucks – Rounding
Chucks – Tenoning
Doweling Machines
Lathes – Wood Turning

Lathes - Automatic
Lathes – Copying
Lathes – Handle Turning
Lathes – Novelty Turning
Lathes – Spoke Turning
Lathes – Variety Turning

Saws - Bolting
Saws – Self Feed Rip
Saws – Swing Cut Off
Sanders – Round or irregular
Shapers

Example of Products Manufactured:

Axe Handles
Auto Hack Handles
Boat Hook Handles
Fork Handles
Hatchet Handles
Knife Handles
Pick Handles
Sledge Handles
Artificial Limbs
Canes
Dowels
Golf Shafts
Hobbie Horses
Shoe Lasts
Porch Spindles
Spokes
Tent Stakes
Whip Stocks
Trivets
Croquet Sets

Adze Handles
Broom Handles
Chisel Handles
File Handles
Hoe Handles
Lawn Mower Handles
Peavy Handles
Squilgee Handles
Ball Bats
Chair Legs – all styles
Decoy Ducks
Golf Heads
Kiddie Kar axles
Lawn Mower Rollers
Pike Poles
Spools
Tree Nails
Yokes
Toy Banks
Furniture

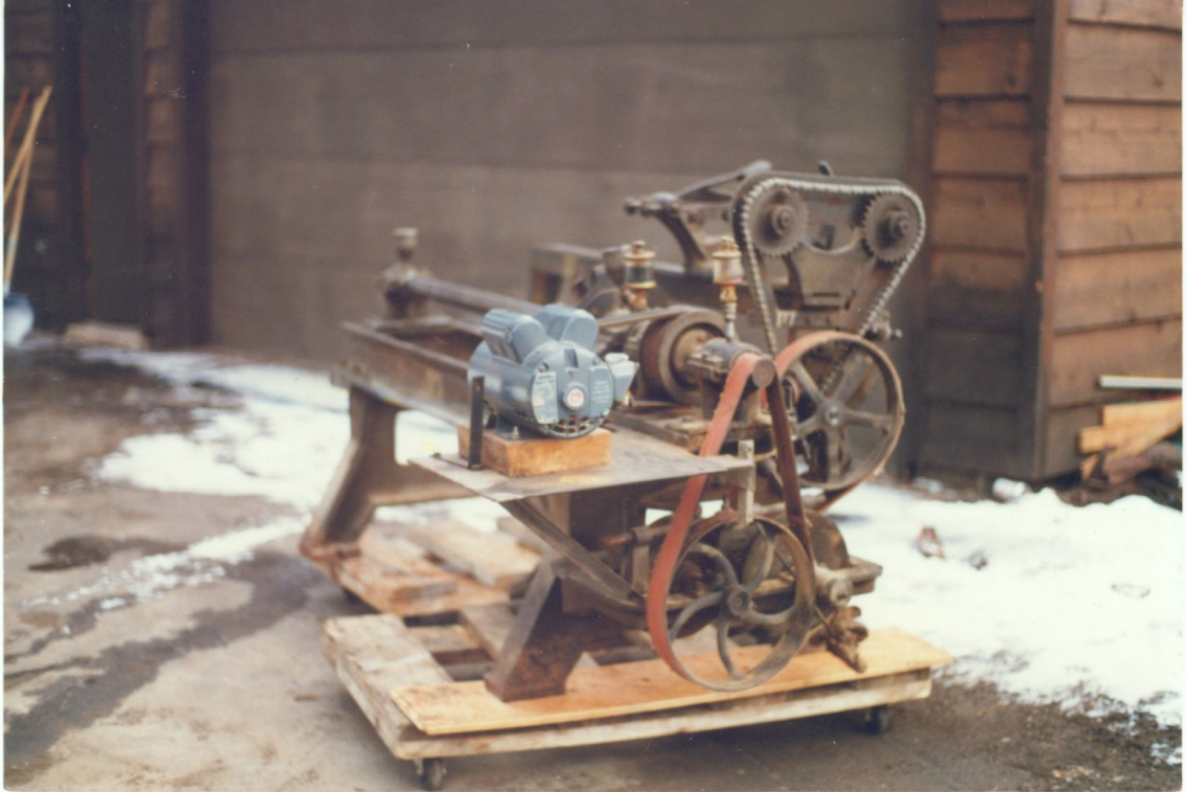
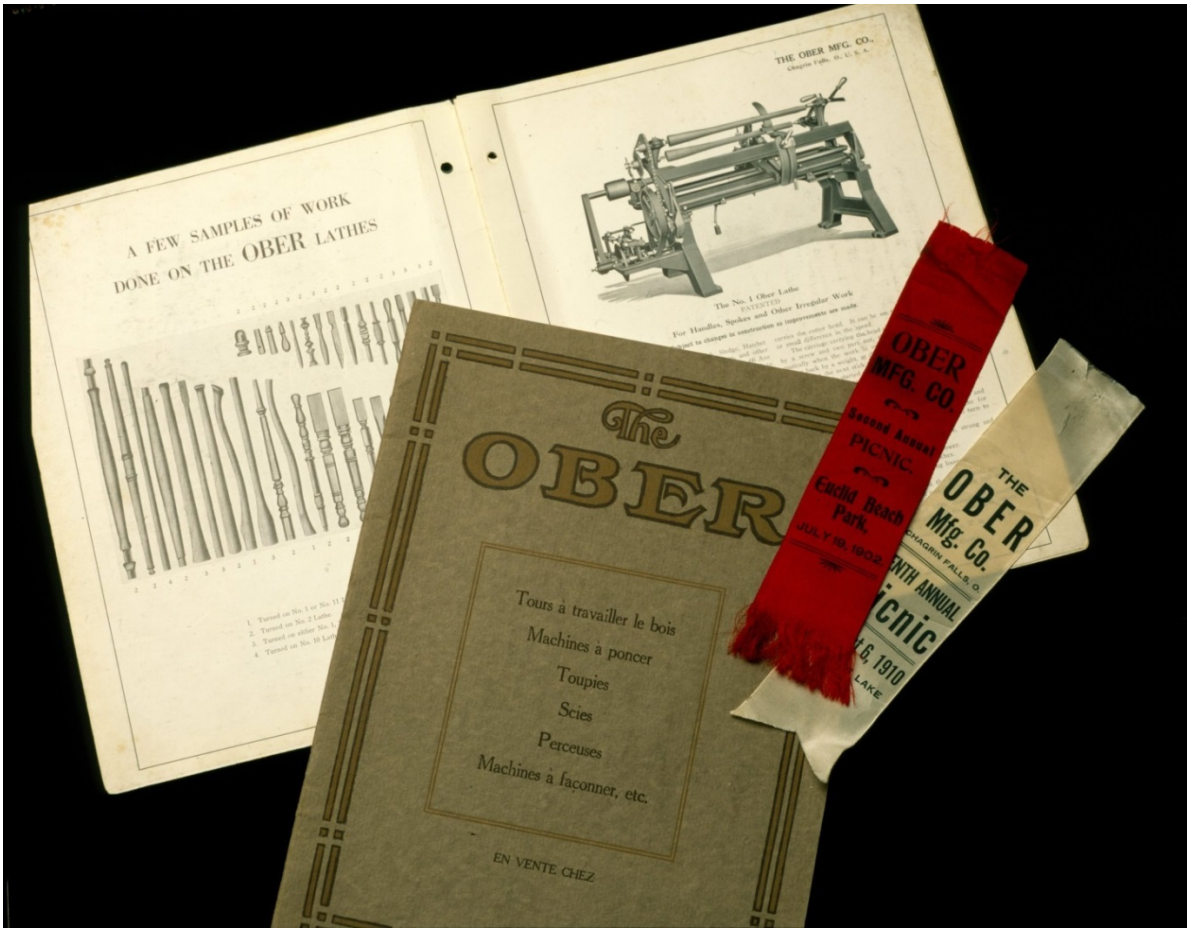
Auger Handles
Brush Handles
Foot Pump Handles
Hammer Handles
Ice Hook Handles
Mop Handles
Rake Handles
Screw Driver Handles
Bobbins
Chair Bows
Flag Staffs
Gun Stocks
Kiddie Kar Steering post
Mallets
Saddle Bars
Table Legs
Whiffletrees
Sad Irons
Meat Tenderizers
Moldings

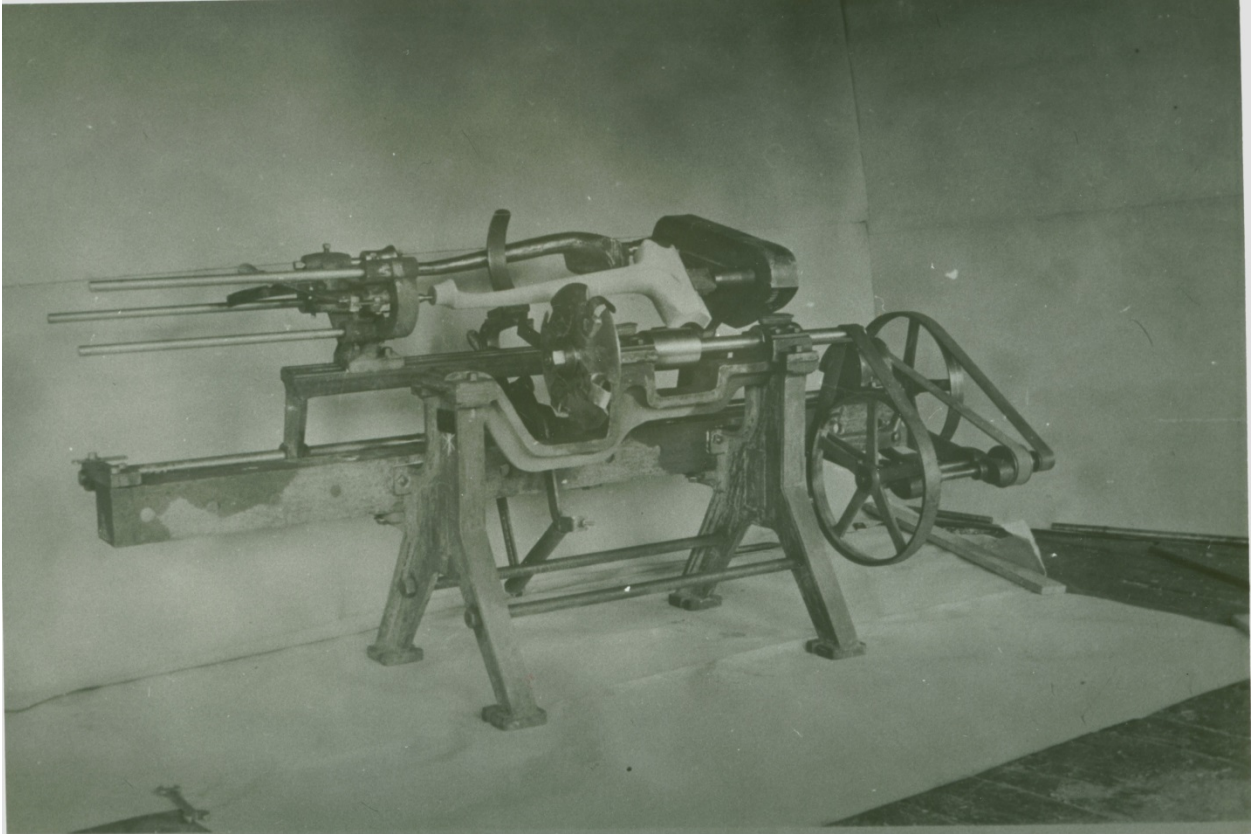
Examples of Ober lathe at work:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsfRJ97mZC4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVhkmgEZr4g>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-56_4Rtki0









Other Ober products



Ober Manufacturing Buildings



Building still exists today – view looking southeast from Bell Street



Same Building – view looking north towards Bell Street



Manufacturing Buildings – view looking southwest from Bell Street