

Flour mills in Delhi and Bombay in 1902

by Mildred Cookson, The Mills Archive, UK



Milling journals of the past at The Mills Archive

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At the start of the 20th century there was much interest in the Indian milling trade as flour mills were being erected in various parts of the country. Calcutta, Delhi, and Bombay hosted some of the most important mills in India. At the time some ten flour mills were under European administration and there were several small, independently owned mills as well as competition with rice mills. In 1902 the journal *Milling*, the ancestor of *Milling & Grain*, published two well illustrated articles on two of the successful firms and I have summarised the reports here.

The roller mill of A John & Co, D

This mill had just been erected in July 1902 when the short

article about it was written. Mr John's mill was built under the direction of Mr E Roberts, who had the mill completed and running within 3 ½ months, including building the mill up from the third floor and putting in all the floors. The mill was officially opened by Sir Edwin John on March 31st.

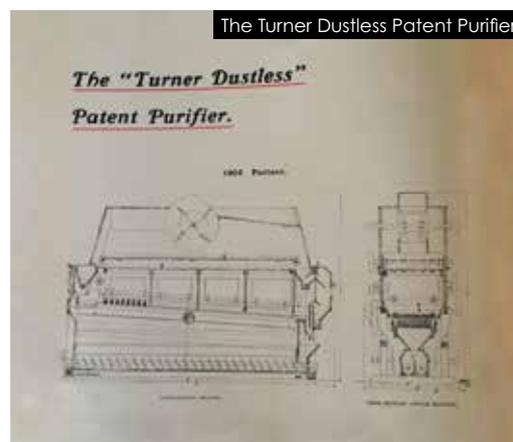
The John family were the exclusive owners of three spinning mills and one roller flour mill, all situated at Agra, and popularly known as the "John Mills of Agra". Sir Edwin and his younger brother Sir George were the grandsons of Antonius Joanides, a Greek merchant, better known by his Anglicised name Anthony John. Sir Edwin built spinning and weaving mills at Delhi, Meerut, Agra and Lucknow. The mills were established in the late 1880s and had been languishing when the brothers became to revive them.

The new mill, equipped entirely by ER Turner Ltd of Ipswich and Mark Lane had a plant installed capable of producing 9 sacks per hour. They were 5 breaks done on 3 four roller mills

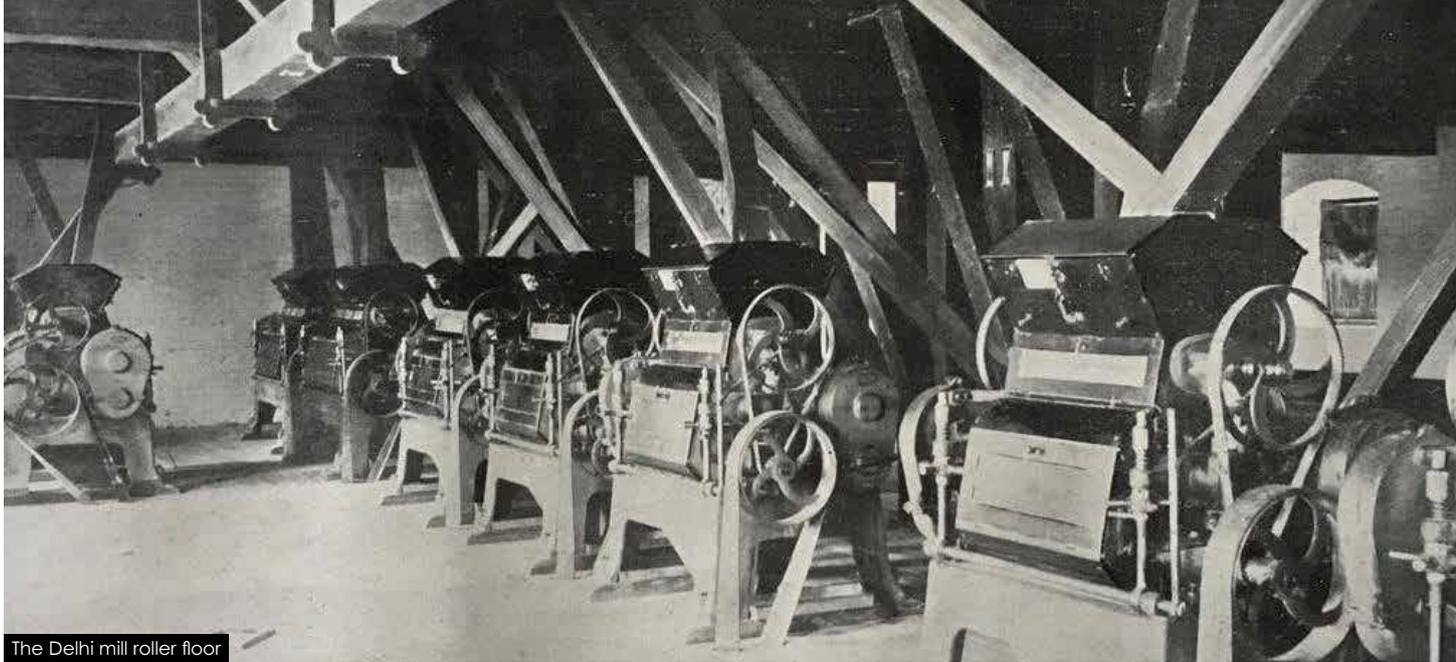
with rolls 40 inches long and 10 inches diameter. The ten reductions were done on four 25 x 9 mills and one 30 x 9. The 5 purifiers were Turner's "Dustless" type, all single machines. The scalping was done on patent 'Vibrometer' rotary machines, and the



Messrs A John's Delhi Mill



The Turner Dustless Patent Purifier



The Delhi mill roller floor

dressing on two inter elevator reels and ten centrifugals.

Later in 1902 the company decided to more than double the output of the mill and another order was placed with Mr. Turner for all the new machinery.

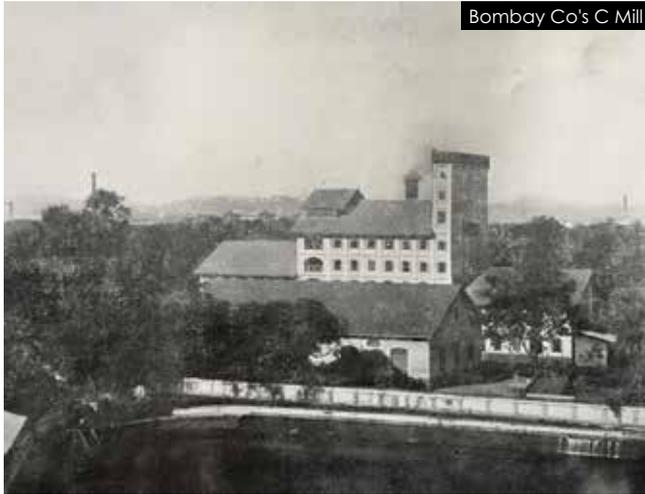
The Bombay Flour Mills Ltd

The Bombay Flour Mill Company Limited owned three mills, designated A, B and C. The first two adjoined the nearby C mill. Together they had a capacity of around 1,800 bags of 196 lbs in 24 hours. All the mills were equipped with the 'Simon' system and kept constantly up to date.

The A mill was re-modelled by Henry Simon in 1899 and was on

the five-break system. The brake rolls were 5 four roller mills, 40in x 40in and the smooth rolls eight four roller mills, 32in by 10in., along with one four roller mill for the scratch system. The scalping was done on Simon double horizontal scalpers, and the purification done on six No. 1 double 'Reform purifiers'. This was the smallest plant.

B mill was remodelled a year later in 1900 and was on the four-break system. The break rolls were also 5 four roller mills 40in x 10in., with half a mill for the first scratch, and the smooth rolls 11 and a half four roller mills, 32in 10in., with half a mill for the second scratch. The scalping was done on double horizontal scalpers and purification on eight of the latest type of double Reform purifiers.



Bombay Co's C Mill



The Delhi mill scalping and dressing floor

C mill was entirely remodelled from another system by Henry Simon when bought by the Bombay Company and had started milling in 1895. The plant was on a six-break system. Break rolls were six four roller mills, 40in x 10in., and the smooth rolls ten four roller mills, 32in. x 10in. for the scratch system. The scalping was done on double horizontal scalpers and purification on eight double Reform purifiers.

All the mills had Simon “Manchester” washers and the latest vertical whizzers, as well as a drying installation by Simon. The same firm’s machines were also in the wheat cleaning departments. They were also fitted with electric light, and “Grinnell” sprinklers.

Only Indian wheat varieties were used, principally Kurrachees and Delhis. However, in the early 1900s Australian wheat was

imported because of local bad harvests. Part of the output was consumed in Bombay, the remainder was shipped to Jeddah, Aden, Zanzibar, Mauritius, Madras and Colombo.

Conveying the flour to the docks and railway stations was difficult as there were no wharfs or sidings connected with the mills. Consequently, the flour had to be initially carried on bullock carts. This created additional problems as a bullock cart could only hold 9 bags and each load cost between 4 to 7 pence for hire of the cart.

The hot weather affected the woodwork in the mills and during monsoon the stout teak suffered from damp and had to be entirely renewed. This was regarded as part of the ongoing maintenance and despite these climate difficulties the mills were kept in splendid condition.