



Milling Industry in Shanghai: The Opening of a New Mill, Wah Shing Flour Mills

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Milling journals of the past at The Mills Archive

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“A representative of a Shanghai newspaper recently had the pleasure of eating some very delicious cake, which had been wheat in the husk that very same morning”

Milling (20 Dec 1902) reported that the newspaper man quoted above was attending the opening of the Wah Shing Flour Mill on the North Soochow Road, an establishment which was only one of many industry ventures which owed their origins to the enterprise and commercial sagacity of Mr. Chu Lai-Fong, better known as Yuen Chong. No doubt the marked success of his experience of operating two mills in Shanghai inspired Mr. Chu with the idea that there was room for a third. There was luck proverbially in odd numbers and, as he had already a rice mill running on the creek-side and room for a kindred industry, he decided to install an extensive mill grinding wheat. The result was to be his fine new, well-equipped mill.

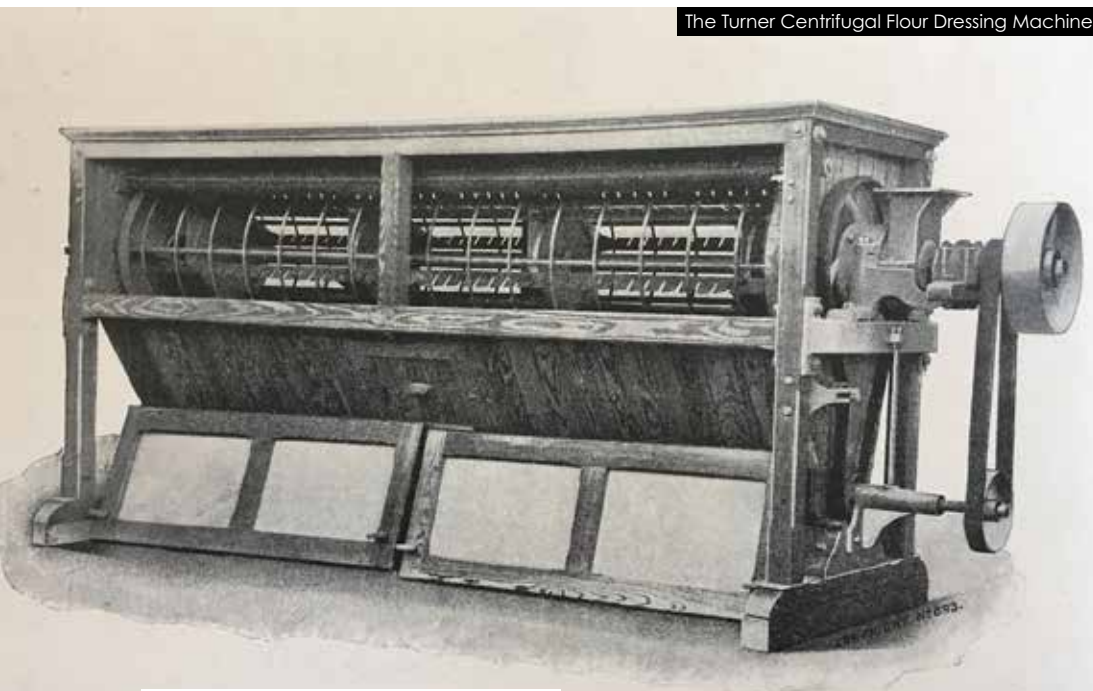
Visitors at the opening of the mill were conducted over the establishment and had the entire working explained to them by

experts, at the end of which they had a fair idea of the processes the wheat had to undergo before it could be delivered to the baker to make bread. The processes, they were told, involved cleaning and grinding, which required a multitude of elevators, scourers, sieves and rollers, all connected together by a bewildering mass of shaftings and wooden spouts and chutes.

On the ground floor the main line of shafting was fixed on brick pillars, with the required number of double and single elevators. The packing apparatus for the flour, bran and shorts was also on this floor. A staging above the ground floor had been added to the building to accommodate nine sets of double roller mills of neat design.

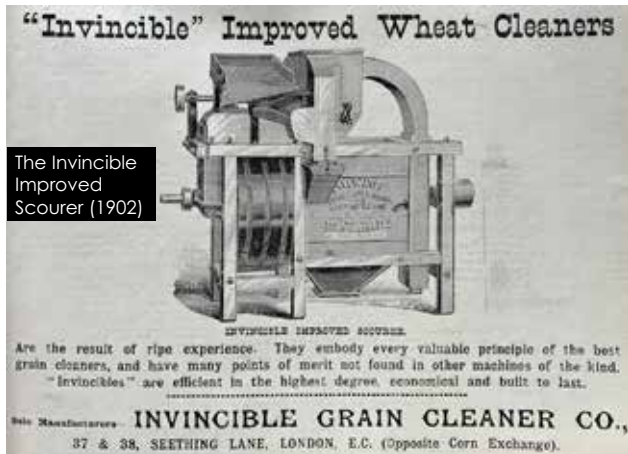
Above these, on the main floor, were two centrifugals, two rotary sieves, three double purifiers and two scalpers, one for the first and one for the second break. There was also a line of shafting for driving these machines as well as those on the floor above. On this upper floor there were 14 centrifugals of 24in. diameter and 2 and a half sheets in length as well as the flour-

The Turner Centrifugal Flour Dressing Machine



Mr Chu Lai Fong





dressing department, where the finished product was transmitted through wooden chutes to the ground floor to be packed.

The machinery in the wheat cleaning department was especially interesting. Great care had been taken in its selection. The apparatus handled the grain by an elaborate system of dry cleansing, a method which had always given the best possible results wherever it had been adopted. The wheat on being delivered into the department from the elevator passed into one of the three bins. From here it was drawn as required on to a magnetic separator where it passed to two scourers then to cock and barley cylinders, after which it was washed and sent along to be treated by an 'Invincible' brush, which gave it a final polish.

The entire work of equipping the mill was entrusted to Messrs. Jardine, Matheson and Co., and reflected well on their expertise. The firm was not called upon merely to import the machinery and erect a suitable building to cover it, they had to alter existing buildings, engines and driving apparatus. This proved a difficult

undertaking to suit the flour mill machinery imported.

The entire equipment, machines and accessories came from Messrs. E.R. & F. Turner of Ipswich, whose special expert at that time, Mr. P. Gillen, saw over the installation and starting up of the plant. He had just been in Constantinople to fit out a mill when he set off to China. The mill at Shanghai could turn out 850 bags of finished flour per day. The flour was 'first class' in quality and bore the name 'Flying Horse'.

"Who's who in China" (China Weekly Review, 1936) records that Mr. Chu Lai Fong was, at the end of the 19th century, Chairman of the Wusih Chamber of Commerce and Director of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, Shanghai. He came to Shanghai in 1872 establishing a company trading in coal and other minerals. With the profits made, he invested in mills, amassing sufficient capital to also build the Yuen Chong Rice Mill, established in 1888 and later amalgamated with the Shanghai Rice Mill.