

HISTORY OF THE CALICO PRINTING



Preparing cylinders for calico printing

Calico-Printing is the art of dyeing in various colors on cotton cloth. The fact that a variety of colors is required makes the manipulation difficult.

India is usually regarded as the birth place of the art of textile printing, and various hand methods appear to have been employed there from very early times, and to have spread to other Eastern countries.

Indian chintzes, produced principally by painting, had a considerable vogue in Europe by the beginning of the 17th century. In the course of that century the printing of imported Indian calico by wooden blocks and, later, copper plates, in imitation of Indian chintzes, began in England. Linen and silk calicoes were also printed.

The popularity, both of the Indian chintzes and the home printed goods, caused the greatest alarm to the woollen manufacturers. In 1701 the use of Indian chintzes was prohibited by Act of Parliament; in 1712 an excise duty on printed calico was imposed, and two years later the duties were doubled. In 1721 the use and wear of all printed, painted or dyed calicoes was prohibited. This Act was repealed in 1774, but the duties were applied until 1831 when they ceased.

London was at first the main centre of the English printing industry. However the London trade declined and Lancashire and Scotland became the chief printing centres, the former being the more important.

1785 saw the introduction of a machine to allow printing by means of rollers. This immensely increased production. The older method of blockprinting persisted for some considerable time and various improvements were introduced into it. By 1888 it seems that the "replacing of tables" [for blockprinting] by machines was virtually complete

Block-printing had become a method of printing a relatively small amount of special work for which machine printing was not suited

Extracted from

THE MONOPOLIES AND RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES COMMISSION

"Report on the Process of Calico Printing" 1948