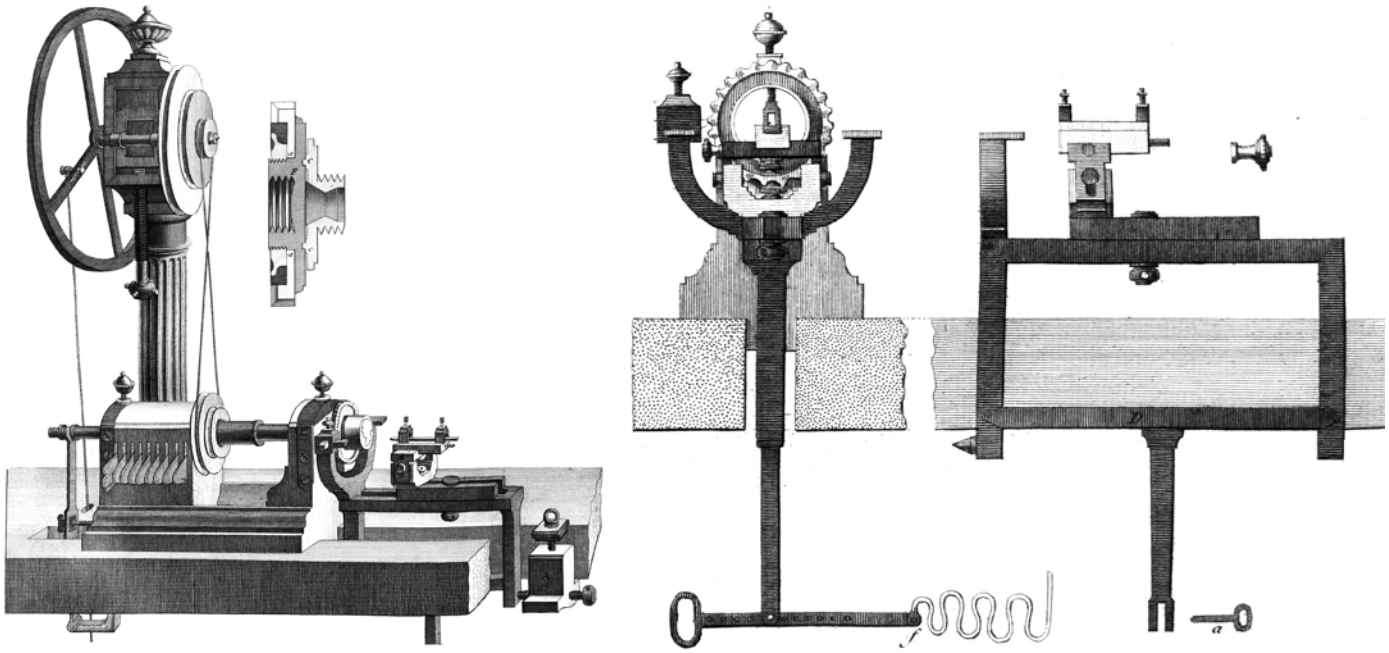
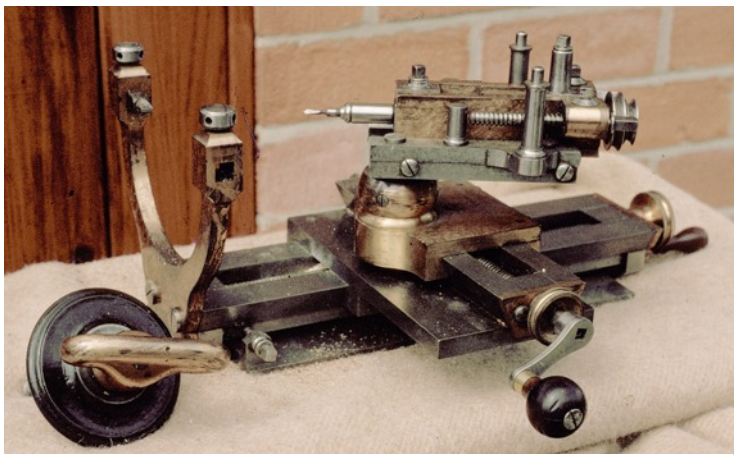
Q & A: Origin of the Rocking Slide-rest

The Rose Engine is believed to date from around the end of the 16th century. However, the Rocking Slide-rest was first illustrated in Bergeron's Manuel du Tourneur (Paris 1816 - Plate XLII) and, because of the great similarity in design, I suspect William James Evans saw this plate and based his rocking slide-rest on its design. W.J.Evans' lathe No.1217 is the only lathe I have seen with this type of slide-rest and I believe it was made c.1860. I don't know how effective it is in use but if it had been a great success I should have thought more would have been made. Holtzapffel & Co made a rocking slide-rest for their lathe No.1911 in 1875 and the owner, Rev C.C.Ellison, was reputedly pleased with it.





Rocking Slide-rest by W.J.Evans with lathe No.1217

The next significant design was by Richard Pudsey Dawson, who patented his 'Geometric Slide-rest' (with a sliding slide) in 1870. This most useful and versatile machine was later improved upon by the means of changing the angle of the slide to provide a pumping motion; but very few of these were made.

In 1885 George Budd patented his 'Rose Chuck'. This was a very expensive item and the fact that there are probably only some half-dozen or so of them around today indicates that they, too, were not wildly popular. This could be understandable when one considers that rose engine O.T. work (with a flying cutter) requires both slow and high speed drives simultaneously; and this is not easily provided by treadle power. Conversely, rose engines employing only fixed tools required only a single driving speed, and these proliferated in the jewellery trade during the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th.

In 1933 C.H.Chaplin wrote a treatise entitled: 'A New Apparatus for the Execution of Rose Engine Turning on the Ordinary Ornamental Lathe.' Chaplin was obviously unaware that his invention was not original, its only difference from the old design being that he used a rocking cradle on which he clamped a standard ornamental slide-rest.

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