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Patent Show Opens In Houghton Gallery

Have you been up to the second floor of The Foundation Building and stopped off in the Houghton Gallery in the last few weeks? If you haven't then you have missed a very unique exhibition called "A Better Mousetrap: Patents & The Process of Invention", which opened on January 17. This exhibition is about the history of both patents and the American patent system. It features more than one hundred patent models from the 1800's, displays about famous inventors and their inventions, as well as displays on important court cases involving patents. Jean LeMee, Professor of Mechanical Engineering, is the exhibition's curator.

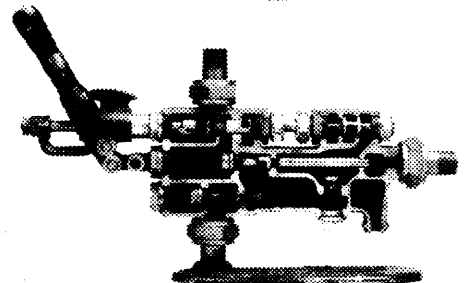
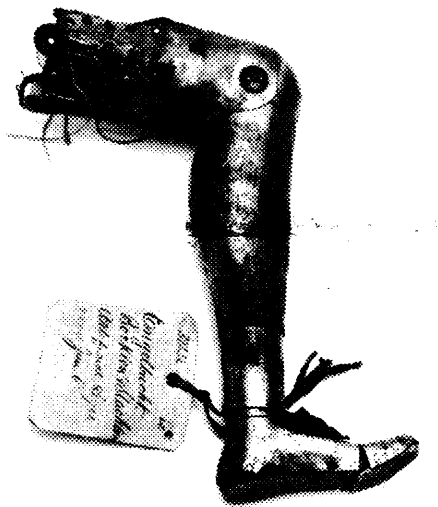
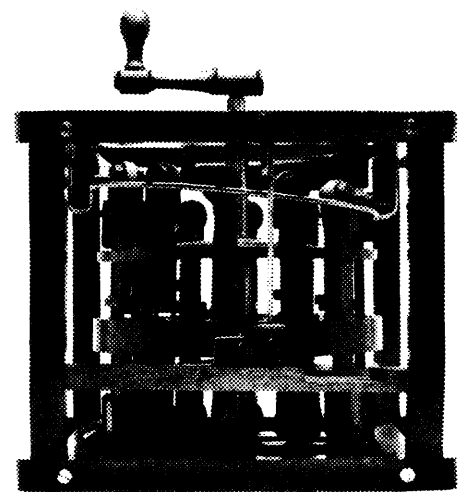
According to Professor LeMee the exhibit is an outgrowth of a class he taught last year, EID 111: Design, Illusion, and Reality. Of the various trips taken by the class, one was to the home of Mr. Cliff Petersen, an aerospace engineer and Cooper graduate (CE '43). In 1979 Mr. Petersen acquired the largest collection of patent models in the U.S. The collection is composed of some 60,000 models which are stored and displayed in Mr. Petersen's house, as well as two barns on his property. The majority of the models on display in the exhibit are from Mr. Petersen's collection.

The exhibit is being sponsored by General Motors Corporation and *American Heritage of Invention and Technology Magazine* which is published by Forbes, Inc. Over the years, this magazine has done several pieces and stories on inventions and patents. Additionally, the sole advertiser in this magazine is GM. As a result, Prof. LeMee decided to contact GM about possible sponsorship. GM was extremely enthusiastic about such a unique show, and decided to become the chief sponsor.

The models on display encompass all possible fields and areas of life. They range from "simple" mousetraps all the way to prosthetic devices. One of the more interesting parts of the exhibition is the display on folding structures. Included in this display is an actual working model of a "continuous surface system." Made from one piece of material, this model unfolds from a very compact bundle to form a tent-like structure.

So remember, if you haven't yet seen the show, you should go see it now since it closes on Friday, February 15. You'll enjoy yourself and you might even learn something while you're there.

-Eric A. Schweiger



From top right to bottom: Brick-making machine, circa 1849; an adjustable prosthetic, circa 1863; a boiler water-pump/injector, circa 1895; the iris-type retractable roof.

