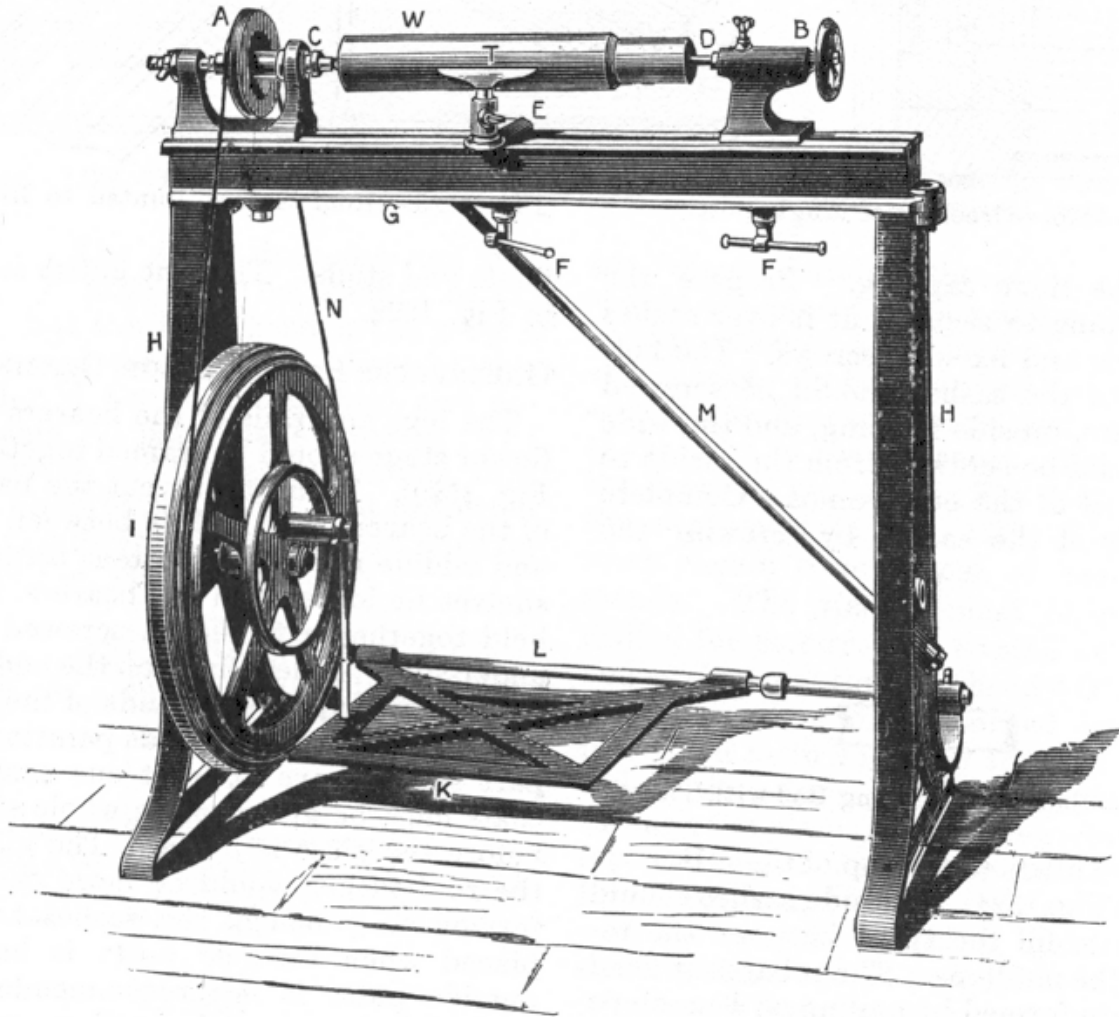


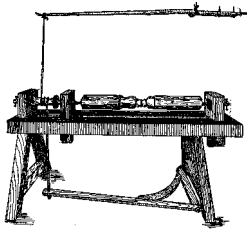
A Treadle Lathe from 100 years ago

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I recently came across this fascinating picture and description of a treadle lathe. The picture and description come from “The Handyman’s Book”, a reprint of a book originally published in 1903, from Ten Speed Press.



The lathe is made from cast iron, as was the custom in those days, illustrating Victorian expertise with this newly mastered material. The treadle K is operated by foot, coupling to the heavy flywheel I, and hence via the belt N to the headstock via a three speed pulley at A, with drive ratios ranging over approximately 5:1 to 12:1, giving practical speeds I estimate of up to 1000 rpm. The remaining parts of the lathe should be recognizable by those familiar with a modern lathe. A number of accessories such as face-plates, cup and screw chucks are described in the book, all found on a modern lathe. Of course, we now have the benefit of electricity to power our lathes. Foot power may have slowed down the turner 100 years ago, but he was probably forced to keep his tools sharper and use slicing rather scraping cuts, which would have been more energy efficient. I imagine, that if possible, he would have roughed out the blanks while they were still green and soft, before setting them aside to dry and then finish turning them. I think we would have been surprised at the productivity that he could have achieved using muscle power and skill alone.



Simple Pole Lathe