



The 1880 Smith & Robards catalog

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A Note From the Editor

Leonardo da Vinci famously wrote, "Time stays long enough for those who use it." We at Smith & Robards have spent every spare second in toil since our operation was founded in the winter of 1871. Far be it from us to disagree with the master builder, but it's been our unhappy experience that time stays still for no man—and there's never quite enough of the blasted stuff.

All the more reason to keep reading, shrewd shopper! This new, 1880 edition of the world-renowned Smith & Robards Catalog contains a bounty of labor-saving devices that make time stay for whatever purpose you deem fit.

Through nine years, a Civil War in conflict and in stalemate, a transcontinental race of Rail Barons, the Great Rail Wars tearing the West asunder, and the most recent catastrophe to shatter the once-proud City of Lost Angels, your friends at Smith & Robards have never once faltered, never allowed our dogged pursuit of perfection to flag for even an instant.

In short, valued customer, we remain dedicated to bringing you the finest, most amazing machinery money can buy. And though we have not discovered the secret of making time stand still—yet!—we are committed to our calling in science, now as ever.

Excelsior!

Sir Clifton Robards

September, 1880

The Story of Smith & Robards

Erastus T. Gould was kind enough to offer a full revision of his now-famous accounting of the Smith & Robards story. Updated to include recent events and meticulously scoured for factual inaccuracies, Dr. Gould's 1880 revision follows.

—Ed.

Esteemed Reader,

My name is Dr. Erastus T. Gould. I am a close friend of both Dr. Smith and Sir Clifton Robards. When it came to my attention that they intended to publish a catalog enumerating their many wondrous inventions, I immediately importuned them for the opportunity to preface the tome with a recitation of the circumstances that led to the formation of their enterprise. I felt this necessary because there is a common misperception held by the public—and, I might add, often propagated by negligent journalists—that those who engage in such innovative endeavors are, to use the vernacular, “mad.”

This is assuredly not the case. Some of my scientific brethren may, with some justification, be considered eccentric, but actual cases of mental aberration are rare. I feel this fallacious perception is due to the fact that many of the contrivances developed by this “new” science are beyond the understanding of the average layperson. As has

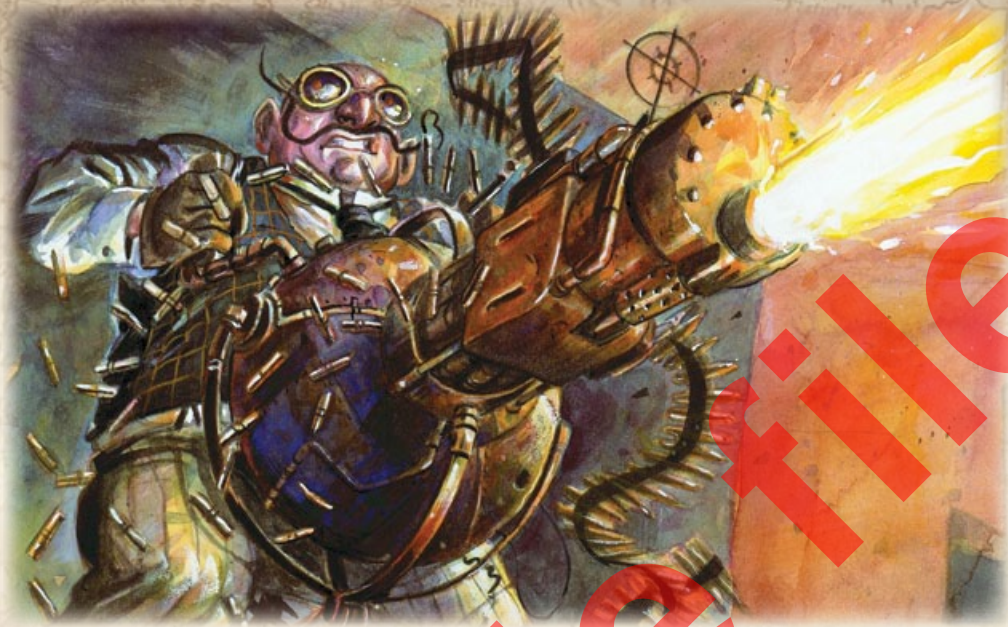
been so throughout history, the masses fear what they cannot understand.

But I digress.

Roswell

The Smith & Robards story begins in the year 1869, when Jacob Smith was approached by a member of the Texas constabulary and offered a position at a government research facility. He was in serious financial straits at the time and the offers of unlimited funding and resources were a heady ambrosia. Smith accepted the proposition and journeyed to the Confederate laboratory in Roswell, New Mexico.

It was in Roswell that I made his acquaintance. I too had been lured there with promises of lucre and free creative license. Nothing could have been further from the truth. The living conditions were wretched. We were often without sufficient water to drink, much less perform proper



personal hygiene. Our quarters were little more than ramshackle hovels which kept the sun off. I can't recall the number of times I awoke to discover members of the local fauna sharing my accommodations.

As for our work, it was explained to us that we could proceed with any form of research we desired, after we had discharged our obligation to the Confederacy. It was made pointedly clear that no one would be permitted to depart from the facility until they had fulfilled every clause in those accursed Faustian contracts.

We toiled long hours in furnace-hot workshops to create a wide spectrum of weaponry. Some grumbled about the conditions, but not very loudly, for the brutish troglodytes who were responsible for the camp's security would seize upon any excuse to torment us. Occasionally we heard shots late at night. The guards insisted they were "shootin' ky-yoats," but our numbers were often one fewer the day after one of these incidents.

It was during this time that Jacob Smith began to turn away from instruments of destruction and speak of his dream of scientists working together for the betterment of mankind. His vision struck a chord with many of our fellows and he became the de facto leader of our band.

An Infernal Plan

In the autumn of 1870, circumstances changed. Our collection of deadly devices was shipped Back East for the assault on Washington, and the pace of work in the laboratories slowed. Those of us who had resolved to leave looked for an opportunity to escape. It was not long in coming.

There was a problem with the system that removed ghost rock vapor from the storage bunkers. We were tasked with repairing the system—instead, we sabotaged it! Smith rerouted the system to discharge all the vapor into an unused bunker. A few days later he fabricated a pretext to check the system again and planted a small, timed charge in one of the vent shafts.

The explosion which ripped through the camp that night must have shaken the foundations of Hell. Massive ghost-rock fires lit the sky, and the Lords of Chaos danced over our infernal camp. Smith and I, accompanied by some compatriots, made our exit in the confusion.

The Maze or Bust!

We struck out west, toward California's Great Maze, hoping to find other enlightened minds who shared our vision of a scientific utopia.