

## = Crane and Company Old Stone Mill Rag Room =

The Crane and Company Old Stone Mill Rag Room is one of the oldest surviving buildings ( built in 1844 ) of Crane & Co . , one of the oldest papermaking businesses in Berkshire County , Massachusetts . It is located in southwestern Dalton , on a site where paper has been manufactured since the early 19th century . The building , originally used for processing rags , has housed the Crane Museum of Papermaking since 1930 , and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1983 .

Zenas Crane began making paper in Dalton in 1801 , taking full ownership of an established operation at the Rag Room site in 1822 . In the mid @-@ 1840s his sons constructed the Old Stone Mill , of which the Rag Room is the only surviving portion . The Rag Room is where Crane 's grandson Winthrop Murray Crane learned the business ; through his efforts Crane secured a monopoly contract to provide paper for the nation 's currency , which it still holds today .

The Rag Room is a gray fieldstone building with a slate roof . Its interior is a large open space that houses exhibits and artifacts of the company 's history . It is open to the public at no charge .

## = = History = =

Zenas Crane ( 1777 ? 1845 ) was educated in the processes of paper manufacturing in a mill owned by his brother Stephen in Newton Lower Falls , Massachusetts . After a stint at another paper mill in Worcester , Crane traveled west into Berkshire County in 1799 , looking for potential papermaking sites . He found a highly desirable site in Dalton , but the owner , a local farmer , was unwilling to part with it . Crane instead established his business on a nearby parcel in 1801 . Other papermakers followed over the next ten years , notably Henry Wiswell and David Carson , who acquired the more desirable site and established what became known as the Red Mill . Through a series of partnership and purchase transactions , Crane eventually acquired control of the Red Mill , taking full ownership in 1822 .

In 1842 Zenas Crane retired , leaving control of the Red Mill to his sons Zenas Marshall Crane and James Brewer Crane . They founded Crane & Co . , and set about expanding the business , beginning construction of what became known as the Stone Mill . The Rag Room was part of this construction effort , and was built in 1844 . In 1869 the Stone Mill was damaged by fire ; while it was being repaired in 1870 the Red Mill was destroyed by fire . The Stone Mill was then expanded , and also became known as the Pioneer Mill . The Stone Mill was used by the firm until the 1890s , when most of it was demolished , leaving only the Rag Room .

In 1930 the company adapted the Rag Room for use as the company museum , a role it has filled since . Following plans developed by architect Charles S. Keefe , the company reinforced the building 's foundation with steel and concrete , filling in a number of its windows with stonework . The interior was significantly reworked , with new structural woodwork and flooring . Upon completion the interior was said to resemble that of the Old Ship Church in Hingham , Massachusetts . In 1967 the company retained the Olmsted Brothers firm to design landscaping of the area , although their work has since been compromised to some extent by later development on the property . The site was declared a National Historic Landmark and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 . In 2005 it became part of the listed Cranesville Historic District , which includes , among other properties , the 1816 home of Zenas Crane .

The Rag Room was where Zenas Marshall Crane 's son , Winthrop Murray Crane ( 1853 ? 1920 ) , began his career in the papermaking business . In 1878 he was responsible for acquiring Crane & Co . ' s exclusive government contract to manufacture the paper used in the currency of the United States . In addition to running Crane & Co. during the late 19th century , Murray Crane served as Governor of Massachusetts and United States Senator , and played an influential role in Republican Party politics .

## = = Description = =

The Rag Room is a single @-@ room single @-@ story gray fieldstone building . It is three window bays wide and seven long , featuring stepped gable ends and a slate roof . It originally stood at the southwest part of the Stone Mill complex , and its north end was where it connected to the larger mill buildings . The building was where rags arriving at the mill were processed at the start of the papermaking operation .

In 1930 the northern facade was given a proper entranceway with transomed doors and Doric columns below a frieze identifying the building as the Crane Museum . Above this doorway a circular window was also added . The slate roof and its support beams were also replaced in 1930 , but without altering the exterior lines of the building . A late 19th century brick addition to the east side of the building ( not a part of the landmark designation ) is screened from view by plantings . The interior of the building is a single large space in which artifacts from the company 's history are displayed . Displays include tools used by Zenas Crane and a replica of the early vat process equipment used to make paper .

The museum is open weekday afternoons from June to October ; there is no charge .