



# Account Books of Henry Disston & Sons, Inc. and Subsidiary Firms 2414

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Manuscripts and Archives

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Wilmington, Delaware 19807  
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URL: <http://www.hagley.org/library>

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## Summary Information

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| <b>Repository:</b>               | Manuscripts and Archives   |
| <b>Creator:</b>                  | Henry Disston & Sons, Inc. (Philadelphia, Pa.)   |
| <b>Title:</b>                    | Account Books of Henry Disston & Sons, Inc. and Subsidiary Firms   |
| <b>ID:</b>                       | 2414   |
| <b>Date [inclusive]:</b>         | 1824-1918, bulk 1967-1907  |
| <b>Physical Description:</b>     | 5.9 Linear Feet  |
| <b>Language of the Material:</b> | English .  |
| <b>Abstract:</b>                 | The collection consists of company account books for Tacony Fuel Gas Company, Henry Disston & Sons File Company, Ltd., and Henry Disston & Sons Iron & Steel Works. Also includes is an insurance ledger from the Estate of Henry Disston. |

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## Historical Note

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Henry Disston, the founder of the firm, was born in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, in 1819 and emigrated with his father to Philadelphia in 1833. His father died soon after, and Henry was apprenticed to Lindley, Johnson & Whitcraft, saw manufacturers. The firm failed in the depression in 1840, and young Disston took the tools and stock in lieu of back wages and established his own shop. Disston introduced the Sheffield practice of using crucible steel with the assistance of skilled workers imported from the Sheffield district. Disston produced the first crucible saw steel manufactured in the United States in 1855. A rolling mill was added in 1862.

Hamilton Disston, Henry's eldest son, joined the firm in 1865 as Henry Disston & Son. Albert Disston joined in 1870. In 1872 fire destroyed a large part of the original factory, and Disston gradually moved the entire operation to Tacony on the Delaware River in Northeast Philadelphia. Here Disston built substantial houses for his employees, a school, library, and music hall. The firm remained under the control of Henry Disston's extended family after his death in 1878. The firm was incorporated under the laws of Pennsylvania in 1886. It gained an international reputation for the quality of its products, its skilled work force, and its ability to respond quickly to the demands of a competitive market.

The Disston family sold the company to the H.K. Porter Company, Inc. of Pittsburgh in 1955. Operated by Porter as a subsidiary, Disston, Inc., the operation was sold to Sandvik AB of Sweden in 1972. It was sold to R.A.F. Industries, Inc. in 1984 and reorganized as Disston Precision Incorporated. The new

company still manufactures saws and other flat steel products in custom lots under the Disston brand name in Philadelphia.

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## Scope and Content

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

Manuscripts and Archives

PO Box 3630

Wilmington, Delaware 19807

[askhagley@hagley.org](mailto:askhagley@hagley.org)

URL: <http://www.hagley.org/library>

### Provenance

Gift of the Disston family

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## Related Materials

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### Related Material

The Disston history (Accession 1567), Manuscripts and Archives Department, Hagley Museum and Library

Patent and design drawings for saws (Accession 1675), Manuscripts and Archives Department,  
Hagley Museum and Library

Atwater Kent Museum, 15 South 7th Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

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## Collection Inventory

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### Journals, 1898-1918

| Title/Description                        | Instances |
|--|-----------|
| General Journal, 1911-1918               | volume 1  |
| Day Book, Department Accounts, 1898-1901 | volume 2  |

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### Ledgers, 1867-1898

| Title/Description                | Instances |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| General Ledger No. 1, 1867-1869  | volume 3  |
| General Ledger No. 2, 1869-1875  | volume 4  |
| General Ledger No. 6, 1887-1891  | volume 5  |
| Private Ledger No. 2, 1880-1887  | volume 6  |
| Suspended Debt Ledger, 1869-1898 | volume 7  |
| Atlantic City Ledger, 1883-1896  | volume 8  |

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### Cash Books, 1861-1907

| Title/Description                  | Instances |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Cash Books, 1861-1867              | volume 9  |
| General Cash Book No. 1, 1867-1869 | volume 10 |
| General Cash Book No. 3, 1878-1880 | volume 11 |
| Cash Books, 1883-1896              | volume 12 |

|                                     |           |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Private Cash Book No. 2, 1882-1884  | volume 13 |
| Private Cash Book No. 3, 1884-1886  | volume 14 |
| Private Cash Book No. 4, 1886-1887  | volume 15 |
| Private Cash Book No. 13, 1897-1899 | volume 16 |
| Private Cash Book No. 17, 1902-1904 | volume 17 |
| Private Cash Book No. 18, 1904-1907 | volume 18 |

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### Stock Books, 1876-1909

| Title/Description      | Instances |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Stock Books, 1876-1894 | volume 19 |
| Stock Books, 1895-1909 | volume 20 |

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### Tacony Fuel Gas Company, 1888-1897

| Title/Description   | Instances |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Day Book, 1888-1897 | volume 21 |
| Ledger, 1888-1897   | volume 22 |

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### Henry Disston & Sons File Company, Ltd., 1877-1913

| Title/Description        | Instances |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Journal No. 1, 1887-1913 | volume 23 |
| Ledger No. 1, 1877-1899  | volume 24 |

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### Henry Disston & Sons Iron & Steel Works, 1887-1916

| Title/Description       | Instances |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Ledger No. 1, 1887-1916 | volume 25 |

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## Estate of Henry Disston, 1824-1905

| Title/Description           | Instances |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Insurance Ledger, 1824-1905 | volume 26 |

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