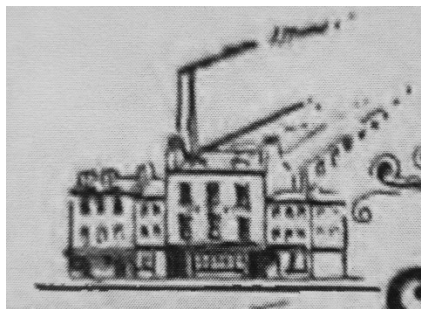


Henry Distin

London – New York – Philadelphia - Williamsport

- 1819 Henry John Distin born in London (photo 1 from 1845)
- 1845 father John Distin is founder of Distin & Sons, 31 Cranbourne St. in London; they are selling Sax horns (photo 2)
- 1850 Henry becomes owner of Distin & Sons and soon has 20 workers initially making just mouthpieces
- 1851 Distin advertises as Instrument Maker to Her Majesty's Army & Navy. They play newly invented Euphonic horns.
- 1853 Adolphe Sax transfers his right of representation in London from Distin to Rudall & Carte. (Farrar) Distin makes a solid silver cornet for an officer in India. (*Musical World*) They complete factory improvements in June.
- 1854 Distin advertises new Flugel horns as well as patent cornets, althorns, & euphoniums. (*Home News*)
- 1855 Application #1465 in June to patent a method for making field bugles chromatic. Application #1855 in November by brother William Distin for a rotary valve system.
- 1856 By November, they have opened a 3,000 sf factory, with brazing forges and lathes, at 9 Great Newport St. (*Home News*)



- 1858 September application #3509 to patent coiling of brass in front of player with bell forward.
- 1859 They announce new silver ventral horns in October.
- 1861 October applications #2559 to patent a combination bugle & field trumpet and #2592 to patent a key-change rotary valve on a bugle.
- 1862 They employ a workforce of 50. Some time after this they open a branch in Aldershott (see ad next page). William Hillyard leaves Distin to start his own shop. (Farrar)





HENRY DISTIN & CO.,
Military Musical Instrument Manufacturers
 TO HER MAJESTY'S ARMY, NAVY, AND VOLUNTEERS,
 9 & 10,
GREAT NEWPORT STREET, ST. MARTIN'S LANE, LONDON.

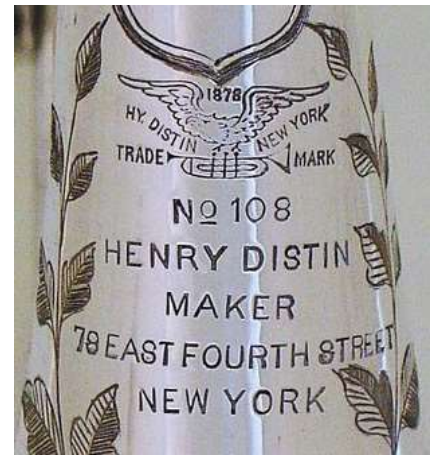


PRIZE MEDAL
1862.



BRANCH ESTABLISHMENT AT ALDERSHOTT.

- 1864 July application #1896 to patent an improved light piston valve, better air passage, and water reservoir in bottom cap. This is the piston design used by everyone today.
- 1867 Distin is awarded a prize medal at the Paris Exposition.
- 1868 Henry sells the business to Boosey & Co. but they continue to use his name on instruments until 1874. They add #10-11 Great Newport for the factory. Distin then moves to Paris for eight years (obituary).
- 1870 Distin invents the ballad horn.
- 1876 Distin applies for patents for a device to simulate castanets (Farrar). A London paper reports in June that, "Mr. Henry Distin, after a successful career of twenty years as a military musical instrument maker in England, disposed of his business some years ago, and is now preparing to leave for the United States, where he is called to establish and superintend a monster musical instrument factory." (*New York Herald*, June 6th) [Martin's factory]
- 1877 Distin is working in New York in June with Frederick Busch at #255 Bowery. (1900 census says emigr. 1877)



1878 February 12th trademark granted to Distin for eagle perched on a trumpet. Residence at 306 13th St and shop at #78 East 4th St. (photo 1 last page)

May city directory listing for Distin, #255 Bowery (with Busch) & #386 Bowery (with Carl Fischer) (address on cornet #233, photo 2 last page)

“Henry Distin had, in 1878 and for a time previous and after, a shop ‘on the Bowery’ in New York, and I have always understood that Frederick Busch built his instruments while Distin remained there.” (Charles W. Warner, *Musical Messenger*, 1917)

1879-80 Shop at #115 E. 13th St. (cornet #559, photo 3 last page); home at #303 E. 12th St. with son William (1857-1907), a musician (directory)

1879 Distin of NY sold an echo bell cornet to Peck & Shilling music of Oswego, NY for Thomas Kingsford. (*Palladian*)

1880 Boosey & Co is still using the Distin trademark as found on Eb cornet #24002 (author’s collection).

Distin is performing on a new melody horn with son William accompanying on the piano. (*Brooklyn Union Argus*, November 16th)

1881 Moses Slater advertises Distin making instruments under his supervision at new factory at #42 Cortlandt St.; Distin is not listed. (see advertisement at end from Spring 1881)

Henry Distin, cornet manufacturer at Cortlandt St, stood as godfather to Minnie Conway’s two children at her marriage to Jules Levy. (*NY Herald*, June 2nd)

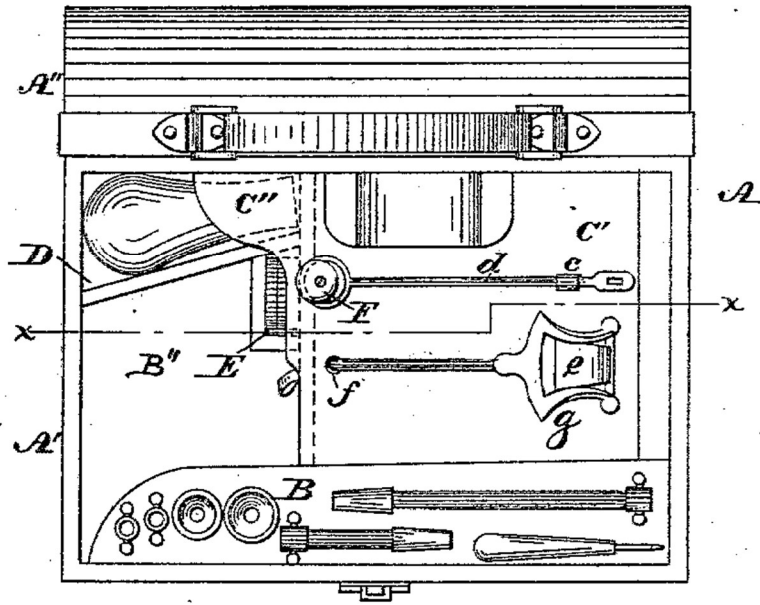
Distin is cornetist for the Bent Bros. in Port Chester, NY (*The Journal*, July 14th)

1882 Distin applies for a patent in March in New York for a Clear Bore cornet design. Distin moves to Philadelphia after March and is said to have worked with his son William for J.W. Pepper (photo 4 is Henry & William from April, 1889 *The British Bandsman*); instruments have serial numbers around 1000 to 7000. Distin is the subject of a feature article in Pepper’s *Musical Times* in August about his “Superior” band instruments (photo 2). Pepper advertises that Distin is importing instruments for him that are tested in Distin’s workshop. (cornet photo 3)

1883 Distin is granted patent #286,398 for tube forming tool and #286,399 for a cornet case (below & photo 5 is cornet #15955 from author’s collection).

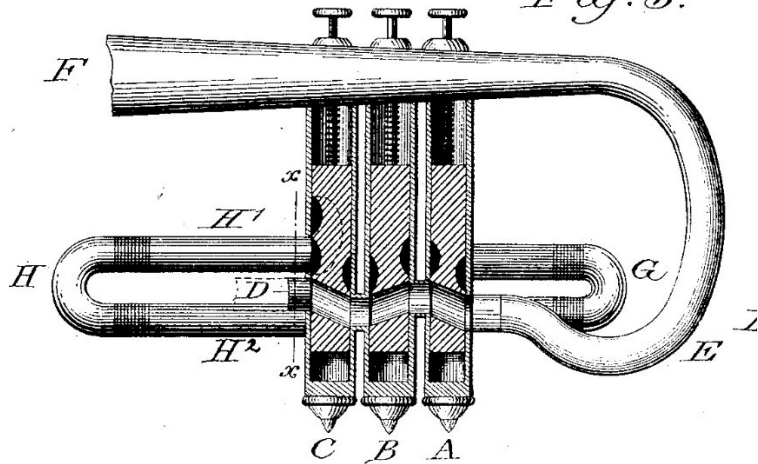


Fig. 1.



1884 Distin granted patent #308,655 for valve passage design (below); located at #114 S. 2nd St.

Fig. 3.



1884 Notice of dissolution of partnership with Florian Pincus as Distin & Pincus at #114 South 2nd St. (*Phila. Enquirer*, November 20th)

Notice of intent to file as The Henry Distin Band Instrument Manufacturing Co. (*Phila. Enquirer*, Dec 2nd)

1886 Distin becomes US citizen; filed to form Henry Distin Manufacturing Company on March 12th; #917 Filbert St.; the factory is in Cressona, PA (photo 1 next page). The Phil. directory has Distin's home at #819 Tasker and shop at #114 South 2nd St. (Farrar)

1886 The Rising Sun Cornet Band has presented their leader, Howard L. McCardell, with a magnificent cornet made by the Distin Mfg Co, Phila. (*Midland Journal*, Nov 2nd, MD)

1886-88 located at #917 Filbert St., Phila. (dir)

1889-90 located at #913 Arch St, Phila. (dir)

1888 Distin and president W. J. McCormick visit Williamsport, PA on December 14th to deliver an instrument to the Repasz Band and investigate the possibility of moving there. They currently employed about 50 men and were in negotiations with people in Dresden, London, California, and Canada to sell their instruments. During the visit, Distin performed a solo with the Gilmore Band on one of his bass horns. (*Grit*, Dec. 14th, 1888)

1889 January 10th; Distin & McCormick meet with the city of Wilmington, DE about the possibility of locating there. (*Delaware Gazette*)

In July, mayor Forseman, J. C. Hill, G. Morris Repasz, and Charles Tintle visit the Distin factory in Cressona. Distin was the largest of only three band instrument factories in the US (Boston & Conn?). The Cressona factory was inadequate and $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the railroad.

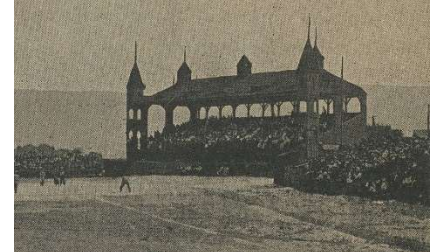
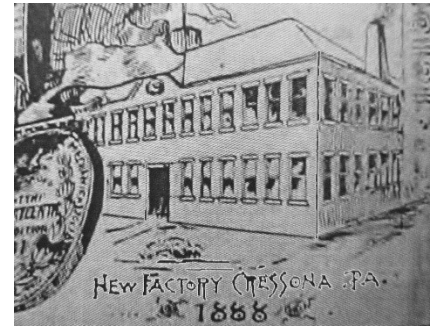
Distin celebrates his 50th wedding anniversary on September 9th with wife Jane Baynes, also an excellent musician. Their home is at #1441 S. 9th St, Phila.

Distin accepts a deal on Sept 17th to move the factory to Williamsport, PA; W. J. McCormick, the president of Distin, supervises the move; McCormick resigns soon after due to his health

1890 The first production cornet was finished on Jan 16th with Sen. Luther Keefer (photo 2), president & Brua Keefer, Sr (photo 3), secretary-treasurer; corner of Walnut St. & Louisa Ave.; the factory is a converted former grandstand at the Old Oak Park racetrack (photos 4 & 5). Serial numbers start at a little over 6000 and overlap with some from Philadelphia. The first cornet was a Bb in silver and gold with ivory tipped keys. It was elegantly engraved and after being exhibited at the D. S. Andrus music store in town, it was sold to W. A. Brown of Spring Mills, PA.

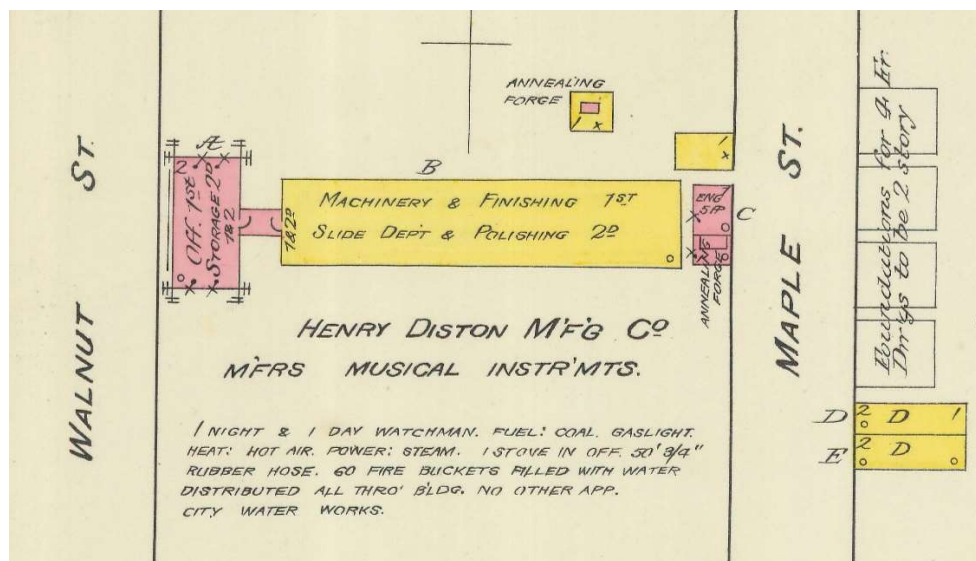
1890 Henry Distin retires in July; home at #819 Tasker St, Phil.; son William sails to London on July 23rd with a full set of instruments to open a branch there. (news report)

1891 the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows the factory between Walnut & Maple streets; there is a 25' x 50' two



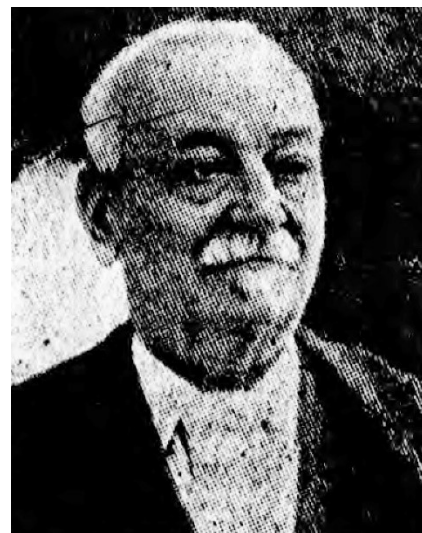
story office on Walnut St connected by a narrow passage to a 2-1/2 story 30' x 140' factory, a small building to the north and another on Maple St. are labeled "annealing forge".

1891 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map:



Using the map key, this shows us that the main, two-story factory was a wood framed structure with a slate roof and probably the original grandstand building from the park. The two-story office on Walnut Street is brick with a cornice on front and 12" high brick walls on the roof and was probably a new addition. The annealing forge on Maple St. is brick and the other two separate structures are wood frame.

- 1891 The Distin Co. publishes *The Band World* in December.
- 1899 Distin at #1441 S. 9th St., Phila. (letter to Peruna Co.)
- 1900 Distin family at #831 Dickinson St., Phila. (census)
- 1902 Distin London model cornet #174xx (photo 1)
- 1903 Henry Distin dies on October 9th (photo 3 from obit.) His home was at #831 Dickinson St., Phila.
- 1907 son William dies in Phila. in July, musician, single
- 1908 Following a period of financial decline, a receiver is appointed in December. Luther Keefer had died on July 28th due to a stroke suffered in April.
- 1909 Brua Keefer, Sr. buys the company on Mar. 1st and renames it the Brua C. Keefer Manufacturing Co. Distin serial numbers end around 20000.



See separate Keefer history for the rest of the story.

Eb cornet #6997 New American model (photos 1 & 2 by author)

Rare bass trumpet below (internet auction photo)



Bugle made in London (author's photo #2 at right)

Henry Distin c.1900



Spring 1881 Ad

All Orders and Correspondence for the Henry Distin Patent Light Valve Instruments, to be addressed to the Principal Office, M. SLATER, 42 Cortlandt St., New York City,

M. SLATER,
MANUFACTURER OF
BAND INSTRUMENTS,

BRASS, GERMAN SILVER ROTARY AND PISTON VALVE BAND INSTRUMENTS,
AND IMPORTER AND DEALER IN ALL KINDS OF MUSICAL MERCHANDISE.
Principal Office and Salesroom for

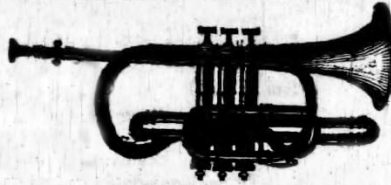


HENRY DISTIN'S AMERICAN BRASS BAND INSTRUMENTS
Manufactured in New York by Henry Distin from London, England, the Original Patentee of Distin's Patent Light Valve.

No. 42 CORTLANDT STREET. — M. SLATER.
Steam Factory New York. — HENRY DISTIN.

Beware of Imitations. Trade Mark American Eagle and Trumpet.

INSTRUMENTS REPAIRED AND TAKEN IN



EXCHANGE FOR NEW ONES.

MANUFACTURER OF AND DEALER IN
Military Goods, Uniforms, Dress Hats, Fatigue Caps
and Helmets, Music Pouches, Swords and Bolts,
Epaulettes, Plumes, Pompons, &c., &c.

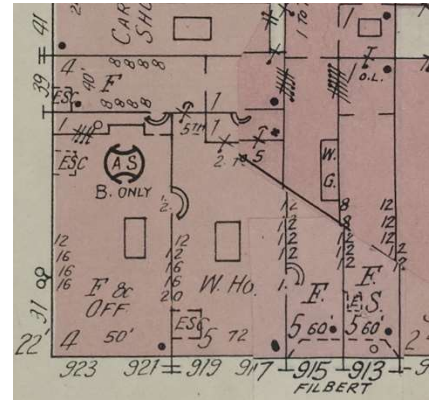


Roman Helmet.

I HAVE A LARGE STOCK OF
Second Hand Instruments for Sale Cheap
(GOOD AS NEW). WRITE FOR PRICES.

Instruments Rented on Most Favorable Terms.
Note of Light Piston Valve Instruments
my own make.

Send for Full Illustrated Catalogue.



FILBERT



917 Filbert St, Philadelphia: shop c.1886-1888 (photo1)

1441 South 9th St, Phil: residence c.1889-1899 (photo 2)

831 Dickinson St, Phil: residence c.1900-1903 (photo 3)