

Henry Distin & Brua Keefer

London – NYC – 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
- 1857 a second location at 9 Great Newport St. is added
- 1859 all business now at 9 Great Newport St. and they are now making their own instruments (Eb cornet photo 3)
- 1862 they employ a workforce of 50; some time after this they open a branch in Aldershott (see ad below)
- 1868 Henry sells the business to Boosey & Co. but they continue to use his name on instruments (author's photo 4)



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.

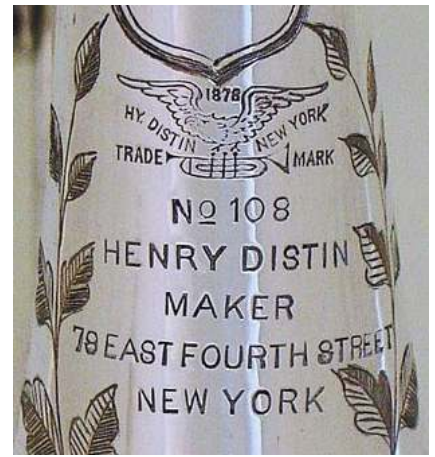


PRIZE MEDAL
1862.



BRANCH ESTABLISHMENT AT ALDERSHOTT.

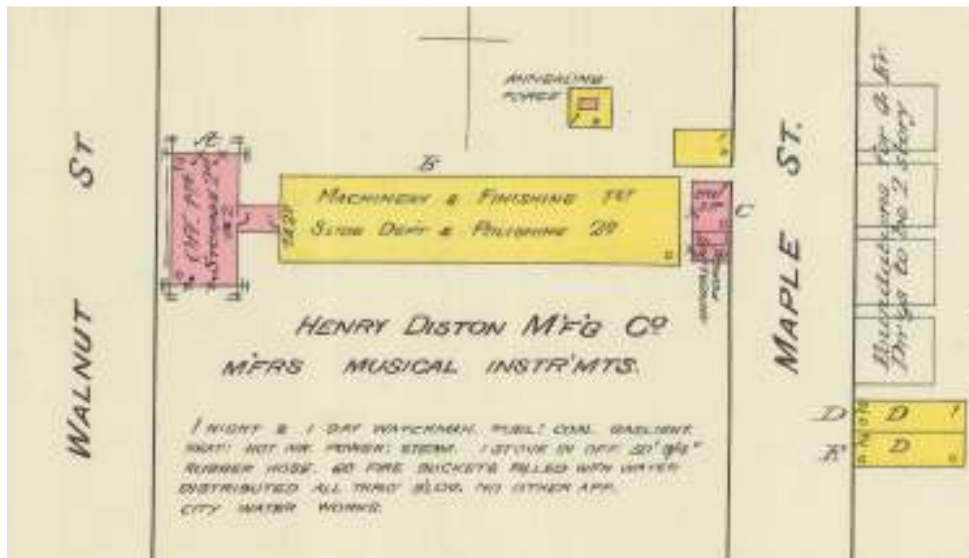
- 1876 possible move to NYC to work with Martin
- 1877 possible move to NYC in June and working with Frederick Busch at #255 Bowery (1900 census says 1877)
- 1878 first directory listing for Distin, #255 Bowery (with Busch) & #386 Bowery (with Carl Fischer) (directory from May), (address on cornet #233, photo 2)
- 1878 Distin granted trademark for eagle logo filed in February; cornet #108 has logo with #78 E. 4th St. (photo 1)
- 1879-80 now at #115 E. 13th St. (cornet #559, photo 3); home at #303 E. 12th St. with son William (1857-1907), a musician
- 1881 Moses Slater advertises Distin making instruments under his supervision at new factory; Slater at #42 Cortlandt St.; Distin is not listed (dir)
- 1882 Distin moves to Phila. after March and is said to have worked with his son William for J.W. Pepper; instruments have serial numbers around 1000 to 7000 (photo 4)
- 1883 Distin granted patent #286,398 for tube forming tool
- 1884 Distin granted patent #308,655; located at #114 S. 2nd St.
- 1886 becomes US citizen; filed to form Henry Distin Manufacturing Company on March 12th; #917 Filbert St.; the factory is in Cressona, PA
- 1886-88 located at #917 Filbert St., Phila. (dir)
- 1889-90 located at #913 Arch St, Phila. (dir)
- 1889 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 production at new factory in Williamsport starts in Jan. with Sen. Luther Keefer, president & Brua Keefer, Sr., secretary-treasurer; corner of Walnut St. & Louisa Ave.; the factory is a converted former grandstand at the Old Oak Park racetrack; serial numbers start at a little over 6000 and overlap with some from Philadelphia
- 1890 Henry Distin retires in July; home at #819 Tasker St, Phil.
- 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" (see drawing on next page)



- 1899 Distin at #1441 S. 9th St., Phila. (letter to Peruna Co.)
- 1900 Distin family at #831 Dickinson St., Phila. (census)
- 1903 Henry Distin dies on October 9th
- 1907 son William dies in Phila. in July, musician, single
- 1908 a receiver is appointed in December
- 1909 Brua Keefer, Sr. buys the company on Mar. 1st, he renames it the Brua C. Keefer Manufacturing Co.

See separate Keefer history for more information on that maker.

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.



1902 Distin London model cornet #17465 (photo 1)
 Engraving to left is of Henry and William Distin in the April, 1889 publication *The British Bandsman*, page 157.