**DISSTON-TACONY INDUSTRIAL WATERFRONT HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Proposed Action: Designation  
Property Owner: Various  
Nominator: Tacony Community Development Corporation  
Staff Contact: Allyson Mehley, allyson.mehley@phila.gov

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The proposed historic district is in the Tacony neighborhood and includes 16 tax parcels containing 45 historic resources. The proposed historic district is the location of the Henry Disston & Sons Keystone Saw Works which resided there from 1872 to 1955. The company transformed the saw making and tool making industry not only in Philadelphia but throughout the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The company was founded by English immigrant Henry Disston in the 1840s in the Northern Liberties neighborhood. With plans for expansion, he began developing the Tacony property for his company in 1872 with the intent to move all operations to this waterfront location.

Under Criterion A, the nomination contends that the historic district comprises the buildings, structures, and other physical features that historically represent, the formative and most important industrial complex in the Tacony neighborhood, as well as one of the most significant in Philadelphia. The firm and its manufacturing plant also satisfy Criterion A in the area the development of saw and tool manufacturing in Philadelphia and throughout the United States. Under Criterion G, the nomination asserts that the district is a distinctive industrial area which should be preserved for its ties to Philadelphia’s manufacturing history, and as an intact industrial plant that exemplifies the economic heritage of Tacony and Philadelphia. Finally, the nomination argues that the Keystone Saw Works and its manufacturing plant satisfy Criterion J in the areas of cultural, economic, and social heritage, as related to the Tacony neighborhood, and economic and social trends in the larger City of Philadelphia.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District satisfies Criteria for Designation A, G, and J. For the purposes of this nomination, staff recommends that all vacant land more than 20 feet from a resource identified in the inventory as contributing or significant shall be considered non-contributing.
1. NAME OF HISTORIC DISTRICT (CURRENT/HISTORIC)
The Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District

2. LOCATION
Please attach a map of Philadelphia locating the historic district.
Councilmanic District(s): 6th

3. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
Please attach a written description and map of the district boundaries.

4. DESCRIPTION
Please attach a written description and photographs of the built and natural environments/characteristic streetscape of the district.

5. INVENTORY
Please attach an inventory of the district with an entry for every property. All street addresses must coincide with official Office of Property Assessment addresses.
Total number of properties in district: 16 Parcels (OPA accounts)/45 resources in inventory
Count buildings with multiple units as one.
Number of properties already on Register/percentage of total: 0 / 0%
Number of significant properties/percentage of total: 13 / 31%
Number of contributing properties/percentage of total: 21 / 45%
Number of non-contributing properties/percentage of total: 11 / 24%

6. SIGNIFICANCE
Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.
Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1872 to 1955
**Criteria for Designation:**
The historic district satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ✔️ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ✔️ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ✔️ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**7. Major Bibliographical References**
*Please attach a bibliography.*

**8. Nominator:** Tacony Community Development Corporation  
Date: 29 August 2019

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Nominator is  ✔️ is not the property owner.  
*Edited and supplemented by PHC staff

**PHC Use Only**

Date of Receipt: 8/28/2019

✔️ Correct-Complete  □ Incorrect-Incomplete  
Date: 6/28/2021

Date of Preliminary Eligibility: 

Date of Notice Issuance: 6/29/2021

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission:

Date of Final Action: 

□ Designated  □ Rejected  
12/7/18
Nomination for the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

The DISSTON-TACONY INDUSTRIAL WATERFRONT HISTORIC DISTRICT

HENRY DISSTON & SONS’ KEYSSTONE SAW WORKS, TACONY
Boundary Description
The Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District is comprised of 16 tax parcels, each of which is defined by a metes and bounds description in its deed. A list of the tax parcels comprising the historic district can be found in the district inventory.

Physical Description
Located in the geological region known as the Piedmont Upland Section of the Piedmont Province, the Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District is located immediately upon the Delaware River in the northeast section of the City of Philadelphia. The subject historic district is located approximately 9 miles from City Hall, and two miles from the northeastern city limit on relatively flat topography. The district, which encompasses and/or includes approximately 8 city blocks, consisting of clusters of industrial buildings that comprised the Keystone Saw Works and were built by Henry Disston & Sons between 1872 and 1943. The following is a general description of the district’s physical boundary, but the legal boundary is defined by the 16 tax parcels in the historic district inventory.

1 Blocks 1, 2, 4, and 5 were are square blocks that were entirely devoted to the operations of the plant from the time of primary development to the sale of the firm in 1954. Blocks 3, 6, and 9 are partial blocks that were devoted to the operations of the plan from the time of primary development until the sale of the firm in 1954. Blocks 7 is a square block that was historically owned and partly developed for the purposes of the plant but was ultimately subdivided and sold off over time during the period of significance. Block 8 was owned, developed, and operated for the purposes of the plant, but was sold off during the period of significance. In addition, the Keystone Saw Works was a name that evolved overtime, including the Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel, and File Works.

The southeastern boundary of the district is the Delaware River, which was primary to the siting of the plant in the 1870s. The southwestern boundary of the district is parcel with the stone wall and iron fence on the southwest side of Unruh Avenue, extending from the southeast at the Delaware River to New State Road at the northwest. The northwestern boundary of the district is more irregular, primarily being New State Road, but also including one property to the northwest of New State Road and southeast of I-95. The northeastern boundary of the district is the curving path of a former railroad right-of-way bisecting Block 3. The path of Milnor Street runs Unruh Avenue at the southwest to Disston Street at the northeast between New State Road and the Delaware River. A small section of the street formerly known as Wissinoming runs from the southwest at Unruh Avenue to the northeast where it intersects with New State Road. The path of Knorr Street runs from the southeast at the Delaware River to the northwest beyond New State Road.

Figure 6. Aerial photograph of the former Keystone Saw Works with the small block divisions, delineated for the purpose of this nomination. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2019.

**BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

Formerly Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works, the Disston-Tacony Waterfront Historic District is entirely industrial in character, being defined by vignettes of late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century factory buildings, structures, and other physical features (Figure 7). All of the buildings are of masonry construction, detached and semi-detached, and range from one to three stories in height. While some buildings are large in scale for their intended purpose, others are small, but most of the buildings are medium size industrial buildings that were design and/or reconfigured over time for specific purposes and functions. Among its other physical features, the district includes a few ruins that appear to be structurally sound, as well as stone walls and iron fences and gates. In addition, there are both public streets and shared right-of-ways within the district, several of which retain historic paving and railroad features.
The boundary of the Tacony-Disston Industrial Waterfront Historic District is within the yellow dashed line. Source map: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2019.

**KEY**

- Historic District Boundary
- Significant and Contributing Resources
- Contributing Resources – Infrastructure & Site
- Features Non-Contributing Resources
Figure 8. Top: A topographic map of Philadelphia, showing the area in which the subject historic district is situated in the Tacony neighborhood. Source: USGS Topo Map Quad, Frankford, Topozone.com. Accessed on 13 August 2019. Figure 9. Bottom: Aerial photographic view of the area in which the subject historic district is situated. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2019.
Figure 10. This 1928 Sanborn Map (updated 1950) shows the contributing and some non-contributing resources to subject historic district, including Resources 1, 2A, 2B, 2C, 3, 3B, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, and 27. Source; Sanborn Map Collection via the Free Library of Philadelphia.
Figure 11. This 1928 Sanborn Map (updated 1950) shows Resource 24 (contributing) and Resource 26 (non-contributing) to subject historic district, including Resources 24 and 26. Source; Sanborn Map Collection via the Free Library of Philadelphia.
Statement of Significance

The Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District satisfies three Criteria for Designation (a, g, and j) as delineated in Section 14–1004(4) of the Philadelphia Code, the City’s historic preservation ordinance. Paraphrasing the Criteria, the proposed historic district:

(a) Has significant character, interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth and Nation and is associated with the lives of persons significant in the past;

(g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; and

(j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social and historical heritage of the community.

The period of significance of the subject historic district spans from 1872, when Henry Disston & Sons began developing the Tacony plant, to 1955, when the company was sold.\(^2\)

\(^2\)“Tacony Works,” Hexamer General Surveys, Volume 8, Plates 707–708, 1873.
The Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District comprises the buildings, structures, and other physical features that represent what was, historically, the formative and most important industrial complex in the Tacony neighborhood, as well as one of the most significant in Northeast Philadelphia and the larger City of Philadelphia. The firm and its manufacturing plant satisfy Criterion J in the areas of cultural, economic, and social heritage, as related to the Tacony neighborhood, and economic and social trends in the larger City of Philadelphia. The firm and its manufacturing plant also satisfy Criterion A in the area the development of saw and tool manufacturing in Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the United States.

Saw makers first appear in Philadelphia at the end of the eighteenth century. They were individual craftsmen making small sets of tools. The shift to larger scale operations occurred by the 1820s when William Rowland was running a business that employed twenty men. By the 1840s, when Henry Disston (1819–1878), an English immigrant, started his business, there were roughly twenty saw makers centered mostly in Old City. As with many industries during this period, tool making experienced many changes, and improvements with the advent of a variety of new saw types, such as hand saws, circular saws, and belt saws. This was coupled with a growing marketplace for tools, which was fueled by insatiable demand for building materials—principally, wood—for houses, furniture, and vehicles in the United States during the nineteenth century. The consumption of lumber in the United States grew exponentially from 220 board foot per capita in 1850 to 475 in

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1909. One critical component of this growth was the employment of saws that efficiently cut wood (i.e. thin blades which produce less saw dust and more cut board), and adapted to the varying needs of wood consumers.

Henry Disston transformed the saw making industry not only in Philadelphia, but also throughout the United States. In the 1840s, his first manufacturing facility was located at Front and Laurel Streets in Northern Liberties (no longer extant). The company, eventually known as the Keystone Saw Works, grew rapidly over the next three decades—from 65 employees in 1850 to 555 in 1870. The growth of Disston’s workforce was related to a variety of improvements and the expansion to his manufacturing operations, which included producing his own steel for making saws. Prior to the Civil War, all steel used for the manufacture of saws was imported from England, which made Disston’s steel works the most advantageous of his advancements, giving the company a market edge that allowed him to buy out three competitors between 1857 and 1870. The 1870 purchase of William Rowland & Company, then the second largest saw manufacturer in Philadelphia, was a major turning point for the Keystone Saw Works, causing the company to reach its physical limits in the dense urban confines of Northern Liberties.

In 1872 Disston started to acquire land near Tacony because its largely undeveloped, salubrious environs could accommodate a large manufacturing plant, as well as a “town within a city” that would ultimately provide housing for its workers, as well as the amenities of a well-appointed small town or suburb. Henry Disston had a strong care and concern for the welfare of his workers. He instilled this same spirit of paternalism in his own children who continued his work when they took over the company. This fostered a strong sense of loyalty among the workers, and it was not uncommon for multiple generations of the same family to work for the company. This helped to develop and shape the Tacony neighborhood as well which became in many ways a “company town.”

After the Keystone Saw Works moved to Tacony its growth was virtually unlimited, and the company flourished at its new home. News and trade journal accounts were abound with superlatives, and its accomplishments were practical and fantastical: “The largest saws ever made before, 108 inches in diameter, were also [manufactured by] Disston.” Henry Disston & Sons was “universally known as the largest manufacturer of saws and files in the United States,” being referred to as the “largest on Earth.” It was also known as “the largest and most efficient plant

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6 While originally founded by Henry Disston, the firm would take the name “Henry Disston & Sons” in 1865, as a result of Hamilton Disston becoming a partner. Horace C. Disston “took charge of the steel works in 1875, and William Disston became a partner in 1878.” After studying business at the University of Pennsylvania, the youngest of Henry Disston’s sons, Jacob S. Disston, joined the firm in 1882 (Harry C. Sileo, *A Place to Live and Work: The Henry Disston Saw Works and the Tacony Community of Philadelphia* [Penn State Press, 1994], 55).
7 McCarthy, “Saws and Saw Making."
9 The subject of “company towns” and paternalism is contextualized and discussed at length by Emily Cooperman (“Tacony Disston Community Development Historic District”).
in the world devoted to such manufactures.”¹² On many occasions newspapers proclaimed that “their works are the largest in the world,” a reputation that the firm maintained from second half of the nineteenth century until the mid-1950s: “Henry Disston & Sons is one of the world’s oldest manufacturers of saws and files. It employs about 2,500 workers and has an annual sales volume of more than $22 million.”¹³ These accounts are confirmed by more empirical measures of the Pennsylvania Department of Internal Affairs annual industrial directories: 1916 - 1,854 workers; 1920 - 1,769 workers; and 1940 - 2,501 workers.¹⁴

By 1893, Henry Disston & Sons was known as the “largest in the world,” “turning out nearly two million saws a year and a multitude of other tools.”¹⁵ It also boasted 38 acres, 1,500 feet of Delaware waterfront, 21 buildings, over 1,000 employees, and manufactured 2,500 dozen hand saws per week; 50,000 circular saws per year; 200,000 cross-cut, mill, mulay and drag saws per year; 6,000 dozen hack and butcher saws per year; 43,000 dozen compass, keyhole, and web saws per year; 4,200 dozen brick trowels per year; and 1,000 dozen files daily.¹⁶ While the firm was founded as a saw manufactory, Henry Disston & Sons would go on to manufacture and advance

¹² *The Ranch* (Seattle), 15 January 1912, 12.
¹⁶ “A Great Industry, Henry Disston & Sons.”
the following categories of products: saws, machine knives, tools, and files, almost all of which was of “the finest, most serviceable steel” of their own make.\(^\text{17}\)

The success of the firm lead to branch offices and plants across the country and beyond. By the 1920s, the company established locations in Atlanta, Georgia; Bangor, Maine; Boston Massachusetts; Cincinnati, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; New York, New York; Memphis Tennessee; New Orleans, Louisiana; Portland, Oregon; San Francisco, California; and Seattle, Washington. Beyond the United States borders, the firm had works in Toronto, Canada, and a branch office in Vancouver, B.C.\(^\text{18}\)

As the plant grew and remained the “largest and longest makers of saws” in the nation, the physical scene at the Delaware River waterfront in Tacony would become a multi-block manufacturing operation, engaging in the production of all manner of files, saw, tool, etc.\(^\text{19}\)

\[\text{Figure 15. Exposition display of the Henry Disston & Sons, c1910-20. Source: Hagley Library.}\]

\(^{17}\) According to the \textit{Disston Lumberman Handbook}, their products included the following under the categories of saws, machine knives, tools, and files: anvils, back saws, brazing clamps, barrel saws, bilge saws, buck or wood saws, butcher saws, circular knives, circular saws, chisel points, solid tooth saws, chromyl hack saw blades, clamps, concave saws, combination cold-saw cutting-off machine, compass saws, cross cut saws, cylinder saws, emery wheels, files and rasps, flanges for shingle saws, frames for hack saws, gang saws, gauges for saws, grooving saws, guammers for saws, hack saws, hack saw frames, handles for cross-cut saws, handles for hand saws, hammers, heading saws, imperial cross-cut saw tools, jointer hand saw, handy saw clamp, handy saw kit, knives (cane, corn, hedge and machete), knives (circular), knives (machine), levels, lock corner cutters, machine hack saw blades, mandrels, metal saws, milling saws, millimeters mitre-box saws, plumb and levels, pruning saw teeth, re-filing cylinder and bilge saws, saw sets, setting-stake, screw-drivers, screw press, screw slotting cutters, scroll and web saws, set gauge, shingle saws, side file, slitting saws for metal, soft-back hacksaw blade, soft-back hacksaw blade, steel, swage bar, teeth of various saws, tenon saws, trammel for circular saws, trowels, try-squares, veneering saws, web saws, wood saws, etc. Source: \textit{Disston Lumberman Handbook}.

\(^{18}\) “Better Work,” \textit{The Disston Crucible}, September 1923, 58.

\(^{19}\) “Disston High-Grade,” \textit{The Disston Crucible}, May 1923, 28.
Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works is representative of the advancement and evolution of the manufacturing of a specific category of products at a time when Philadelphia’s booming economy was based on industry of this kind.\textsuperscript{20} Not only does this satisfy Criterion J, but, equally important, Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works satisfies Criterion A for its place in the history of not only the manufacture of specific products in Philadelphia, but in the advancement and progress of those products on a national and international level.

Primary to Henry Disston & Sons success and the overall advancement of their products, the Keystone Saw Works at Tacony was developed, from the time of its initial planning in 1872 through to the construction of its last known building by 1943, as one of the largest manufacturing plants of its kind in the world.\textsuperscript{21} Purchasing more than 61 acres over time, Blocks 1 to 9 contained more than 68 buildings, structures, and other physical features, employing as many as 3,600 at a high point of employment in 1920.\textsuperscript{22} As noted by historian Harry C. Silcox, “the factory itself—buildings and machinery—was valued at $931,435.50.”\textsuperscript{23} Roughly 41 buildings survive today, most of which embody the story of Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works.

\textsuperscript{20} Cooperman, “Tacony Disston Community Development Historic District.” 25–27.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Hardware Dealer’s Magazine}, 1902, 793; \textit{The Saturday Evening Post} vol. 182, issue 5 (1910), 40; \textit{Barrel and Box and Packages} (1909), 69; \textit{The Lumber Manufacturer and Dealer} (1910), 123; \textit{The Hardware Reporter} (1912), 82; \textit{Industrial Education Magazine} (1924), ii.

\textsuperscript{22} “1920 Marks Eightieth Year in the Growth and Development of the House of Disston,” \textit{The Disston Crucible} (1920), 118.

\textsuperscript{23} Silcox, \textit{A Place to Live and Work}, 110.
(g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif.

The Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District is significant under Criteria G as a distinctive industrial area which should be preserved for its ties to Philadelphia’s manufacturing history, and as an intact industrial plant that exemplifies the economic heritage of Tacony and the City of Philadelphia. In the Philadelphia Historical Commission’s nomination for the Wayne Junction Historic District, it categorizes industrial buildings as follows:

Industrial manufacturers in Philadelphia can be divided into three types of factories: workshops, mills and plants.24

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The industrial buildings, structures, and features of the subject historic district comprise what Chantry describes as a “plant,” the subject resource being the primary example provided in the Wayne Junction Historic District nomination:

Unlike Wayne Junction, the Disston Saw Works was a planned factory town from the 1870s that was meant to take advantage of the clean air and water available in Tacony. Other companies were soon attracted to the area because of the success of the Saw Works and the availability of skilled labor. These new factories included textile, glass, and iron works that required large factory buildings to produce their goods. Similar to Wayne Junction, the success of early companies and the strategic location near the railroad encouraged other businesses to construct factories in the area; however, Wayne Junction primarily contains workshops, whereas Tacony’s Disston Saw Works was considered a plant, built outside of the city center where there was ample open space for development.

While a primary example of an industrial plant in Philadelphia, the Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works is by no means an entirely unique specimen of this industrial property type. The city was home to many industrial plants that were located outside the center to accommodate a planned and/or growing industrial complex. That said, many early manufacturers grew out of smaller factories and/or workshops into larger complexes, as did Henry Disston & Sons at their Northern Liberties location. Perhaps the most important plant to develop in town was the Baldwin Locomotive Works, one of America’s greatest manufacturers of locomotives, at Broad and Spring Garden Streets. Starting smaller, Baldwin’s manufacturing operations eventually occupied 196 acres, occupying roughly eight city blocks from Broad to 18th Streets and Spring Garden Street to the Reading Railroad right-of-way. From 1906 through the 1920s, Baldwin moved its operations from its Broad Street plant to a 616-acre site near Eddystone, just outside of Philadelphia. Like the subject historic district, the Baldwin Locomotive Works was certainly a distinctive area that comprised an urban plant site; however, the complex has been entirely lost to history.


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One of the most important locations of large industrial plants in Philadelphia developed along Hunting Park Avenue near Nicetown. The William Butcher Steel Works, founded by William Butcher, Jr., the scion of W. & S. Butcher Steel Works of Sheffield, England, began at Nicetown in 1867. One of the principal investors in the firm was William Sellers, an influential businessman and engineer, who eventually forced Butcher out of the company. Located roughly midway between the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers, Sellers renamed the company the Midvale Steel Works, and over time it became one of Philadelphia’s principal steel manufacturers. Its fortuitous Nicetown location was perfect for its local expansion.27 Hunting Park Avenue, originally Nicetown Lane, was the scene of many old estates that passed away over time largely for industrial development. A neighbor of Midvale Steel, the Budd Company, originally manufacturers of metal stamping and later automobile parts and railroad cars, eventually, in 1917 built a large plant at 2450 W. Hunting Park Avenue near Nicetown. The plant was constructed on designs by the great industrial architect Albert Kahn.28 The Atwater Kent Radio Plant, a manufacturer of radios that started at 6th and Arch Streets, relocated to a 15-acre site at 5000 Wissahickon Avenue in 1923.29 These are just a few examples of large, modern industrial plants like the subject historic district.

In conclusion, the Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District comprises a distinctive industrial plant that represents this specific type of industrial property, as well as its place in local, national, and international history as one of the greatest manufacturers of saw and other tools during America’s great industrial age.
Development of Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works at Tacony

Henry Disston purchased land for a new plant at Tacony from three parties in 1872, leading to the first phase of development of the new Tacony plant of the Keystone Saw Works. Beginning in Block 1, the development included refurbishing a saw mill to serve as a file factory (no longer extant) and a lumber shed (no longer extant) in 1872, allowing the file and handle shop to remove from Northern Liberties to Tacony. This enabled Henry Disston & Sons to use the Tacony plant for the manufacture of “files, saw handles, and lumber,” employing roughly 75 men in this location. Between 1873 and 1875 the Tacony plant was enlarged with the construction of three additional buildings: a Brass Foundry with a Store Room & Office—then known as Building 4 and now known as Resource 1: Brass Foundry (1875); a boiler house (no longer extant); and lumber shed (no longer extant). This enlarged plant supported the manufacture of files, saw

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30 Henry Disston purchased the following properties in 1872: James Robinson to Henry Disston, 15 April 1872, Philadelphia Deed Book JAH 228, p. 470; C. Eastburn to Disston, 2 May 1872, Deed Book JAH 245, p. 428; George Hammersley to Disston, 5 June 1872, JAH 254, p. 269; C. W. Morris to Disston, 2 July 1872, JAH 261, p. 90; and Silcox, 33.


handles, and lumber, continuing to employ 75 men.\(^{33}\) Between 1875 and 1882, the following buildings were added to Block 1 of the Tacony plant: hardening & store room in 1879 (no longer extant); handle cutting & finishing rooms (no longer extant) in 1879; planing and tool finishing rooms in 1879 (no longer extant); grinding, turning, & planing rooms in 1881–82 (no longer extant); finishing rooms for long saws in 1881–1882 (no longer extant); hardening shop in 1881–1882 (no longer extant); saw & planning rooms in 1881–1882 (no longer extant); handle finishing rooms in 1881–1882 (no longer extant); handle cutting & finishing rooms in 1881–1882 (no longer extant); and boiler house in 1881–1882 (no longer extant). In Block 2, the Henry Disston & Sons built a large sheet rolling mill with a shearing shop and substantial machinery between 1880 and 1882.\(^{34}\) This resource survives to-date and is known as Resource 3: Rolling Mill (1880–82). Since 1855 Henry Disston & Sons had manufactured their own steel, and this operation was critical to their eminence in the tool making industry in the United States, as they had previously gotten their steel from England. Resource 3 is representative of the firm’s long-term accomplishments and success, as manufacturers of files, saws, tools, etc., using their own steel.

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\(^{34}\) “The Disstons’ New Rolling Mill,” The Times, 2 November 1880, 4.
Between 1882 and 1902, Block 1 was densely built-up, destroyed by fire, and rebuilt. The circular saw department moved from Northern Liberties to Tacony in 1882, indicating that a new building had been completed or reconfiguration had occurred. The jobbing shop followed suit in 1883, only remaining for two years before it moved back to Northern Liberties. Not present in the 1883 Hexamer Atlas, the construction of buildings for the handsaw department appears to have begun by the end of 1883, allowing relocation from Northern Liberties to Tacony in 1884. Later enlarged with the construction of a third floor, the primary, street-facing component of this building survives to-date and is known as Resource 2A: Saw Handle Department (1883–84).

Hamilton Disston formally incorporated Henry Disston & Sons in 1886, distributing the stock to family members. The square and level Departments moved from Northern Liberties to Tacony

35 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
36 Henry Disston & Sons, Tacony Works,” (Philadelphia: Hexamer General Surveys, 1883), Volume 19, Plates 1763 and 1764; and Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
38 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 56.
in 1887, indicating that another new building had been completed or addition reconfiguration had occurred. By this time the vast majority of the operations had been removed to the Tacony plant. The Saw Handle Department was enlarged between 1888 and 1895, a component of which survives in Resource 2C: Saw Handle Department.

Nearly ten years passed before the butcher saw and trowel department made the move from Northern Liberties to Tacony in 1896; and the jobbing shop returned to Tacony in 1899. These relocations were no doubt all related to the construction program, whether it was new buildings and/or reconfiguration. The Handsaw Department was enlarged with the construction of a new building that began between 1895 and 1901. Finished by 1901, Resource 2B: Saw Handle Department/Varnishing Building/Paper Box Factory (1895–1901) is extant to-date. These products were significant to the manufacture of hand saws, being of primary importance to the firm’s eminence in the manufacture of saws and tools. The office at Unruh Avenue and the appending hand and long saw grinding shop was constructed between 1895 and 1901. A small portion of the office survives, being identified in this work as Resource 6: Office Ruin (1895–1901); however, the larger industrial building has been demolished.

In 1896, Hamilton Disston commits suicide, which was likely because of a pending foreclosure on a $1 million loan approached. William Disston, the fourth son of Henry Disston, succeeded his brother as President of Henry Disston & Sons, a tenure that lasts through 1915. Henry Disstons other surviving sons were involved in the leadership of the company: Horace Disston in the steel department; Jacob Disston in the financial department; and Samuel Disston as secretary and general manager. The transition in leadership happened just as Henry Disston & Sons had paid off all the bonds that had originally funded the development of the Tacony plant.

At the turn of the century Block 1 saw another new building, when in 1900 a boiler house was commissioned at Unruh and Milnor Streets (no longer extant). In Block 2, Henry Disston & Sons purchased the property adjacent to the northeast of Resource 2 for $15,000. Disston used the buildings formerly occupied by the American Wire Glass Company until they were later replaced. In 1901, Henry Disston & Sons commissioned the Charles McCaul Company to build a one-story addition of brick and iron, measuring 90 by 150 feet, to the northeast side of Resource

41 Resource 2C was not extant in the 1888 Baist atlas but was present in the 1895 Baist atlas (1888 Baist Atlas, plate 39; and 1895 Baist atlas, plate 47).
43 Resource 2B: Saw Handle Department/Varnishing Building/Paper Box Factory (1895–1901) was not present in the 1895 Baist atlas but was extant in the 1901 Bromley atlas.
44 Resource 6: Office Ruin was not present in the 1895 Baist atlas but was extant by the 1901 Bromley atlas. Contextual information about the advent and manufacture of the band saw was published in the following article: *The Times* (Philadelphia), 28 May 1893, 21.
45 Silcox, *A Place to Live and Work*, 56.
47 Silcox, *A Place to Live and Work*, 35.
48 *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 June 1900, 11.
3. Identified in this nomination as Resource 3B: Rolling Mill Addition (1901), most of this resource has been demolished.\(^5^0\)

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\(^5^0\) *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 27 November 1901, 16.
Between 1902 and 1916, the Tacony plant underwent its largest period of physical expansion. During this time the stock of the company—"Henry Disston & Son, Inc."—was gradually on the rise, which justified the expansion of the plant. For example, in 1907, the capitol stock of the company increased from $8,000,000 to 8,850,000.\(^{51}\) The building program largely took place in Blocks 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. In Block 2, the following buildings were constructed for file, saw, and tool manufacturing between 1902 and 1916: a trimming shop built between 1901 and 1910, identified in this nomination as Resource 7: Trimming Shop (c1901–1910); a cold-rolling mill built in 1910, identified in this nomination as Resource 16: Cold-Rolling Mill (1910), and a crucible shop built in 1912, identified in this nomination as Resource 17: Crucible Shop (1912). In Block 4, the following buildings were constructed for file, saw, and tool manufacturing between 1902 and 1916: a pattern storage warehouse built between 1909 and 1910, identified in this nomination as Resource 8: Pattern Storage (1909–1910); a blacksmith shop built between 1909 and 1910, identified in this nomination as Resource 9: Blacksmith Shop (1909–1910); a machine shop built between 1909 and 1910, identified in this nomination as Resource 10: Machine Shop (1909–1910); the jobbing department building built in 1910, identified in this nomination as Resource 11: Jobbing Department (1910); a file shop built between 1910 and 1911, identified in this nomination as Resource 12: File Shop (1910–1911); a hardening department building between 1910 and 1916, identified in this nomination as Resource 13: Hardening Department (1910–1916); a file shop built between 1915 and 1916, identified in this nomination as Resource 14: File Shop (1915–1916); and a file shop built between 1915 and 1916, identified in this nomination as Resource 15: File Shop (1915–1916). One of the largest new buildings, Resource 11: Jobbing Department produced “tools of all types: bevels, squares, gauges, screwdrivers, levels, plumbs, miters, trowels, brick-pointing tools, hedge knives, wall scrapers, hedge trimmers, hand pruners, lopping shears, and pothole diggers.”\(^{52}\) One of multiple new file shops constructed,


Resource 12: File Shop contained large file cutting machines on the first floor and the “superfine file department” on the second.\(^{53}\) “The manufacturing of Files and Rasps is a long and tedious process requiring the exercise of great care throughout.” The files and rasps were made of crucible steel, which, once arriving from the steel works, was cut into sections of the length required in the File Shops.\(^{54}\) Resources 14 and 15: File Shops were used for similar purposes, but with room for alternative operations, as is shown in various atlases.\(^{55}\) Resource 13: Hardening Department provided a continuous feed hardening furnace for hand saw sheets was in operation, cutting direct labor costs and improving quality.\(^{56}\) All of these buildings were used to produce the files, saws, and other tools that made Henry Disston & Sons a great success during the early twentieth century.

![Figure 35. Henry Disston & Sons Letterhead. Source: http://www.disstonianinstitute.com/gallery2.html.](image1)

During this time stone walls and gate posts were built with iron trimmings all about the Tacony plant and within the community itself. Using refuse grindstones from the works, the stone walls were largely constructed between 1900 and 1907, including Resource 18: Stone Wall and Iron Fence/Gates (1900–1907) in Block 7; Resource 19: Stone Wall and Iron Fence/Gates (1900–1907) in Block 5; and other sections of stone walls and iron trimmings, as well as gates.

![Figure 36. Workers at Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works at Tacony celebrate the end of the First World War. Source: Library of Congress.](image2)

\(^{53}\) The Iron Trade Review, 24 March 1910, 579.
\(^{55}\) The Iron Age, 20 January 1916, 237.
\(^{56}\) Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 96.
In the 1920s and 1930s there was very little new construction; however, Disston focused on upgrading the quality of face-hardening, light-gauge armor plate for navy gun shields, aircraft, and light tanks,” a recalibration that would later prove beneficial to the firm. This work was done through regular communication and testing of plates at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds near Baltimore, Maryland. In 1920, a transformer house was built in Block 3, which is identified in this nomination as Resource 24: Transformer House (1920). A warehouse was built between 1920 and 1929, completing the group of buildings that comprise Block 4. This building is identified in this nomination as Resource 22: Warehouse (1920–29).

57 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 129.
59 Resource 22: Warehouse (1920–29) was not present in the 1920 Baist Atlas, but was present in the 1929 Bromley atlas.
Since the change in leadership of 1896, Henry Disston & Sons introduced advertising and publications that showcased and created a cultural context for their products, as well as their clients and employees. Catalogues had always been a component of the corporate culture, but, in 1913, Henry Disston & Sons began using advertising advantageously.60 The above-shown illustration is just one of numerous modern advertisements that made the company stand out among their competitors. Publications, completed by Henry Disston & Sons were also a large component of the advancement of their product for both the client and the employee. The Disston Crucible was published by Henry Disston & Sons after the turn of the twentieth century through the 1920s.61 Disston Lumberman Handbook was published in 1912 by Henry Disston & Sons, being updated on numerous occasions over the years.62 Other publications included The Saw in History in 1916, The File—Its History, Making and Uses in 1920, Tool Manual for School Shops in 1927, and The Disston Saw, Tool, and File Book in 1929.63

Amidst this progressive period for the company, there was a change of leadership, when in 1915 Frank Disston, grandson of Henry Disston and son of Albert Disston, became president of Henry Disston & Sons, a tenure that lasted through 1929.64

60 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 49.
61 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 51.
64 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, Appendix B.
The Crash of 1929 did not immediately effect Henry Disston & Sons, but, by 1931, the effects, due to the lack of construction, and, in turn, a major reduction in demand for files, saws, tools, etc. did lead to a decline in revenue. The colossal workforce of 2,500 in 1925 was reduced to 1,400 by 1933. While the Disston family saw no real dividends after 1931, Henry Disston & Sons was saved due to the fact that it manufactured “the best steel plate in the world,” meaning that orders still continued despite the economic depression. As the nation geared up for World War II, Disston focused on the manufacture of new products, which would win the company government contracts in the late 1930s through the end of World War II. As part of their expansion in the 1920s and 1930s, Henry Disston & Sons made efforts at “upgrading the quality face-hardening, light-gauge armor plate for navy gun shields, aircraft, and light tanks,” which ultimately saved the company during the war. Because of their superior armor steel, Disston received large orders in 1939 for “face-hardening armor plate fabricated to different shapes and different thicknesses—for Army tanks, armored scout cars, and bombers, or for Navy gun shields.” Preparing for and supporting World War II would keep many workers employed at the Tacony plant.

With the government contracts came the need for further improvements to the Keystone Saw Works. Between 1940 and 1941, a boiler house was constructed, which is identified in this nomination as Resource 25: Boiler House (1940–1941). Constructed in Block 2, Resource 25 was built for the World War II efforts, but also served the larger plant operations afterwards. During that same period, large and non-descript factory buildings were constructed between 1939 and 1941 in Block 6. While the new buildings made a major mark on the Tacony plant, their

65 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 123.
purpose was largely related to the war effort and had very little to do with the manufacture of files, saws, tools, and other products that relate to Criteria A and J.

Figure 41. Top: Looking northwest at Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel, & File Works, showing the sites where Resource 25 and Resource 26 would eventually be constructed. Figure 42. Bottom: Looking northwest at Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel, & File Works, showing the newly built Resource 25. Source Dallin Aerial Survey Collection, Hagley Digital Archives.

Among the other new products developed during the 1930s, the two of the most important was the chain saw and the beet knife blade. In 1934, William D. Disston and Norman Bye, an employee, returned from the Leipzig Fair in Germany, where they had seen the Maryfield chain saw. They were so enthusiastic about the product, “they brought with them a German named Arthur N. Blum,” who was “put in charge of the new Products Department headquartered in the Cafeteria building [Resource 20].” Eventually appointed the “chain saw developer,” Blum created what became known as the Chain Saw Department. By 1938, Disston & Sons were producing an air-powered chain saw. This tool was one of the few that became important to the Federal government for the war effort, becoming known as the Disston-Kiekhaefer chain saw.66 In order to support the manufacture of chain saws, the cafeteria would be reconfigured to serve as the Chain Saw Division,

a building identified in this nomination as Resource 20. Aside from the chain saw, the beet knife and the sharpening business became one of the company’s most profitable products in the 1940s and 1950s, though this market would eventually turn to Germany.67

In 1938, S. Horace Disston, nephew of Henry Disston and son of Samuel Disston, took the reigns as president of Henry Disston & Sons in 1938, starting a ten-year tenure.68 After the war, Jacob Disston, Jr. became president of Henry Disston & Sons, serving in that post until 1954.69 John D. Thomas, the only non-Disston to serve as president of Henry Disston & Sons, assumed the presidency in 1954, serving briefly until the sale of the company in 1955.70 Leading to split in the family, the Disstons voted to sell the company in 1955 to H.K. Porter in Pittsburgh, changing the name to Carlson Rules and Measures/Henry Disston Division of H.K. Porter Inc.71
Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works, Tacony – General Photographs

Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works, Tacony – General Photographs

Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works, Tacony – General Photographs

Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works, Tacony – General Photographs

Top: Looking east from Milnor Street with the southwest elevation Resource 7: Trimming Shop on left and the southwest elevation of Building 3: Rolling Mill (1880) on right. Bottom: Looking north at Resources 7 (left) and Resource 3 (right). Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.
Henry Disston & Sons’ Keystone Saw Works, Tacony – General Photographs

Examples of the Disston factory workforce, ca. 1917. Left, a worker who started with the company under Henry Disston and, right, a member of the Disston family learning the business as worker on the line. Source: Frank Disston, “How We Hold Our Men” in Handling Men: Selecting and Hiring, How to Hold Your Men, Breaking In and Developing Men, Putting More than Money in Pay Envelopes (Chicago: A.W. Shaw Co., 1917), 70, 77.
Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District Inventory
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<th>ADDRESS</th>
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For the purposes of this nomination, all vacant land more than 20 feet from a resource identified in the inventory as contributing or significant shall be considered non-contributing.
**Historic Name:** File Shop  
**Current Name:** Unknown  
**Hist. Resource Type:** Industrial  
**Historic Function:** Manufacturing  
**Year Built:** 1915-16  
**Associated Individual:** Henry Disston & Sons  
**Architect:** Unknown  
**Builder:** F. W. Van Loon  

**Social History:**
Resource 14: File Shop was built part of a $1.5 million investment in Henry Disston & Sons, which took place between 1902 and 1916. Built between 1915 and 1916 as one of two File Shops at a cost of $52,000, the subject building served the Annealing, Pickling, Straightening, and Grinding Shops.

**References:**
The construction of Resource 14 was specifically referenced in The Philadelphia Inquirer, 31 December 1915, 16. The subject building was not present in the Atlas of the 41st Ward in 1910, but was present in a 1918 photograph taken by the U.S. Quartermaster, and was also present in the 1920 Atlas.

**Physical Description**

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**Notes:**
**HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY**

**Address:** 5101-49 UNRUH AVE

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<td>Builder:</td>
<td>F. W. Van Loon</td>
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**Social History:**

Resource 15: The File Shop was built part of a $1.5 million investment in Henry Disston & Sons, which took place between 1902 and 1916. Built between 1915 and 1916 as one of two File Shops at a cost of $52,000, the subject buildings served as the Forge and Pipe Shops.

**References:**


**Physical Description**

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**Notes:**

Resource 14: Annealing & Picking Shops (c1910-1918)
Resource 15: Forge Shop (c1910-1918)

# HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

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## Historical Data

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<td>Roof:</td>
<td>Sidewalk Material:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows:</td>
<td>Site Features:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doors:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Materials:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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**Notes:**
Built after 1954, this is a non-contributing addition to Resources 14 and 15: File Shops, which is delineated below in black.

**Classification:** Non-contributing

**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019
HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

Address: 5101-49 UNRUH AVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternate Address: 5101-4900 UNRUH AVE</th>
<th>OPA Number: 884180500</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individually Listed: NA</td>
<td>Base Reg. Number: 111N210060</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Historic Name: Addition: Forge Shop</th>
<th>Year Built: Post-1954</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Associated Individual:</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hist. Resource Type:</td>
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<td>Historic Function:</td>
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Social History: NA

References: NA

### Physical Description

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<td>Subfunction:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additions/Alterations:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ancillary:</td>
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<td>Sidewalk Material:</td>
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<td>Site Features:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stories:</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation:</th>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Exterior Walls:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roof:</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Windows:</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doors:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Materials:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Notes: Built after 1954, this is a non-contributing addition to Resources 15: File Shop, which is delineated below in black.

Classification: Non-contributing

Survey Date: 5/1/2019

Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District 50
**Historic District Inventory**

**Address:** 5101-49 Unruh Ave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternate Address:</th>
<th>OPA Number:</th>
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<th>Infrastructure and Site Features</th>
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<th>c1880-1940</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Name:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Associated Individual:</td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hist. Resource Type:</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>Architect:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Function:</td>
<td>Road for Manufacturing</td>
<td>Builder:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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**Social History:**

Historic infrastructure and site features on parcel may include paving (brick/flagstone/other), railroad tracks, fencing, walls, gates and other historic features were built as part of the Keystone Saw Works. These are within or along the right-of-way areas associated with this parcel.

### References:


### Physical Description

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>Exterior Walls:</td>
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<td>Windows:</td>
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**Notes:**


**Classification:** Contributing

**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019

**Classification:** Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District

**51**
## Historical Data

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<td>Social History:</td>
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<td>Associated Individual:</td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect:</td>
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<td>Builder:</td>
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### References:

This is a vacant lot.

## Physical Description

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<tr>
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<td>Other Materials:</td>
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<td>Notes:</td>
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</table>

This is a vacant lot.

### Notes:

- Non-contributing
- Survey Date: 5/1/2019

**Address:** 5101R-49 UNRUH AVE

**Alternate Address:** 5101R UNRUH AVE

**Individually Listed:** NA

**OPA Number:** 885908140

**Base Reg. Number:** 111N210049

**Classification:** Non-contributing

**Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District**
## Historical Data

<table>
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<th>Infrastructure and Site Features</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Name:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Associated Individual:</td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hist. Resource Type:</td>
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<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic Function:</td>
<td>Road for Manufacturing</td>
<td>Builder:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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</table>

Historic infrastructure and site features on parcel may include paving (brick/flagstone/other), railroad tracks, fencing, walls, gates and other historic features were built as part of the Keystone Saw Works. These are within or along the right-of-way areas associated with this parcel.

## References:

## Physical Description

<table>
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<th>Style:</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Exterior Walls:</td>
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<td>Additions/Alterations:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roof:</td>
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<td>Ancillary:</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Windows:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doors:</td>
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<td>Site Features:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Materials:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 

Classification: Contributing  
Survey Date: 5/1/2019
Historic Name: Stone Wall & Iron Fence/Gates
Year Built: c1900-1907
Associated Individual: Henry Disston & Sons
Architect: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Social History:
Resource 18: Stone Walls and Iron Fence/Gates. Parcel contains stone walls built between 1900 and 1907, being present on the southwest side of Unruh Avenue. While this resource appears to have been associated with the Tacony Woolen Mills for much of its history, the style and material construction is consistent with the same features of the stone walls and iron gates and fences of the Disston plant and were likely built by the firm when they owned the property.

References:
Resource 18 was built between 1900 and 1907 as referenced in the following article: "Grindstones," The Disston Crucible. (Philadelphia: Henry Disston & Sons, 1915).

Physical Description
Style: Industrial
Stories: Bays: 
Foundation: Stone
Exterior Walls: Stone
Roof: 
Windows: 
Doors: 
Other Materials: 

Notes:
A stone wall, driveway pillars, iron fencing, and iron gates, is delineated below in black with yellow shading, being located along New State Road between Knorr and Disston Streets. Complete list of historic site features: driveway pillars, iron fence, stone wall, and wrought iron gate.

Classification: Contributing
Survey Date: 5/1/2019
Resource 18: Stone Walls and Iron Fencing/Gates (c1900-07)

Top: Looking northeast from the southwest side of Unruh Avenue to the southeast of Wissonoming Street, this photograph shows that Resource 18: Stone Walls and Iron Fencing/Gates were extant by 1918 at the time this photograph was taken by the U.S. Quartermaster. Source: Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Resource 18: Stone Walls and Iron Fencing/Gates (c1900-07)

Resource 18: Stone Walls and Iron Fencing/Gates (c1900-07)

Resource 18: Stone Walls and Iron Fencing/Gates (c1900-07)

Historic Data

Historic Name: 
Current Name: 
Hist. Resource Type: 
Historic Function: 

Social History: 

The buildings on the parcel are not contributing to the district. The parcel has primarily been associated with the history of Tacony Woolen Mills.

References:

Physical Description

Style: 
Stories: 
Bays: 
Foundation: 
Exterior Walls: 
Roof: 
Windows: 
Doors: 
Other Materials: 

Resource Type: Industrial 
Current Function: Unknown 
Subfunction: Commercial 
Additions/Alterations: 
Ancillary: Other 
Sidewalk Material: 
Site Features: Driveway pillars, iron fence, stone wall, wrought iron gate

Notes:

Classification: Non-contributing
Survey Date: 5/1/2019
HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

**Address:** 5201-21 UNRUH AVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternate Address:</th>
<th>5201 UNRUH AVE</th>
<th>OPA Number:</th>
<th>882021700</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individually Listed:</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Base Reg. Number:</td>
<td>111N220011</td>
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**Historical Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Name:</th>
<th>Forge Shop/Brass Foundry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Name:</td>
<td>LENET LAURA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hist. Resource Type:</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Function:</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Built:</td>
<td>1875</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associated Individual:</td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builder:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Social History:**

Resource 1: The Forge Shop is the oldest building on site and is a component of the once larger Forge Shop that was part of the original Disston plant at Tacony. Based on the Hexamer General Surveys of the site from 1875, the Forge Shop was approximately 320 to 330 feet from the present day line of Unruh Avenue, an approximation made possible by the consistent measurements of buildings and physical features shown on the surveys. In 1875, Resource 1 is shown as "Building 4," a free standing, one-story brick structure with a beveled brick walls at the southwest elevation. At this time the building was in use as a Brass Foundry. By 1878, the southwest elevation has been concealed by an addition to the southwest of a Steam Hammer & Forge Shop. The 1878 Hexamer Survey's bird's eye view shows that the beveled southwest elevation is extant and submerged in the addition, further noting that the brick wall remained to separate the rooms.

**References:**

Resource 1 was not present in the 1873 Hexamer General Surveys, Plates 707-708, for the "Tacony Works," but is extant in the 1875 Hexamer General Surveys, Plate 955, for the "Henry Disston & Sons' Tacony Works."

**Physical Description**

<table>
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<th>Style:</th>
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<td>Bays:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundation:</td>
<td>Stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exterior Walls:</td>
<td>Brick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roof:</td>
<td>Multiple gable; other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows:</td>
<td>Historic and non-historic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doors:</td>
<td>Historic and non-historic</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Notes:**

Illustrations of the Tacony plant from the early twentieth century show that the addition was later taken down, though it is entirely possible that a new building was constructed as the building width seems to have grown from 40 to 60 feet over time. That said, the current distance of Resource 1 is very similar to the historic distance based on an approximate measurement in Atlas, City of Philadelphia.
Resource 1: Forge Shop (1873-1875)


The southwest elevation of Resource 1: Forge Shop. Source: “Fig. 5.2.9: Small building in the center of the site, potentially one of the earliest Disston buildings,” Penn Design. <https://www.design.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/2008_Disston_Final_Report_Part_1.2_-_Research_Analysis-2.pdf>
### HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

**Address:** 5201-21 UNRUH AVE  

**Alternate Address:** 5201 UNRUH AVE  
**Individually Listed:** NA  

**OPA Number:** 882021700  
**Base Reg. Number:** 111N220011

### Historical Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Name</th>
<th>Saw Handle Department &amp; Manufactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Name:</strong></td>
<td>Laura Lenet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hist. Resource Type:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Historic Function:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Built:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Associated Individual:</strong></td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Architect:</strong></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Builder:</strong></td>
<td>3rd Floor: Michael Magee &amp; Co</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Resource 2A: Saw Handle Department & Manufactory was likely constructed as a two-story brick factory between 1883 and 1884. A third floor and a fire tower was added to Resource 2A in 1902 at a cost of $5000 by Michael Magee & Co. The first and second floors were remodeled at that time. Resource 2A was used as a Varnishing Room as of 1902 and was used in later years as a Paper Box Manufactory for the firm. Attached at the south corner of Resource 2A is a stone wall and wrought iron fence along the northeast side of Unruh Street that was built between 1900 and 1907. Resources 2A, 2B, and 2C, components of the Saw Handle Department, were used to manufacture wooden handles for saws.

References:
Resource 2A was not extant in the Hexamer General Surveys, Vol. 19 (1883), but was present in an 1887 illustration of the site, which was confirmed in an 1888 Atlas. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network (http://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/HGSv19.1763-1764).

### Physical Description

- **Style:**
  - **Stories:** 3
  - **Bays:** NA

- **Foundation:** Stone
- **Exterior Walls:** Brick
- **Roof:** Gable; other
- **Windows:** Historic and non-historic
- **Doors:** Historic and non-historic
- **Other Materials:**

- **Notes:**
  - Resource 2A is delineated below in black. Additional reference information: The third floor addition to Resource 2A was referenced in "The Latest News In Real Estate," The Philadelphia Inquirer, 31 March 1902, 7. However, references to a relocation of the Saw Handle Department from Northern Liberties was found by Harry C. Silcox. Source: Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.

- **Classification:** Significant
- **Survey Date:** 5/1/2019
Resource 2A: Saw Handle Department (1883-84)

Top left: Looking south, Resource 2A: Saw Handle Department (1883-84) in an 1884 engraving of the Keystone Saw, Tool, and File Works, showing the subject building when it was just two stories. Source: HSP. Top middle: Looking northwest, Resource 2A of the Keystone Saw, Tool, and File Works, showing the subject building when it was two stories. Bottom left: Looking east, the northwest and southwest elevations of Resource 2A, showing the subject building when it was two-stories. Right: Looking north at the southwest and southeast elevations of Resource 2A after it was enlarged to include a third floor in 1918. Source: Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Resource 2A: Saw Handle Department (1883-84)

Resource 2A: Saw Handle Department (1883-84)
Resource 2B: Saw Handle Department/Varnishing Building/Paper Box Factory (1895-1901)

Top: Looking northeast at the southwest elevation of the stone wall, which is a contributing feature of Resource 2A: Saw Handle Department. Source: Oscar Beisert. Bottom: The Shipping Department, which was eventually located in Resource 2B. Source: Hagley Museum & Library.
Resource 2A: Saw Handle Department (1883-84)
Resource 2B: Saw Handle Department/Varnishing Building/Paper Box Factory (1895-1901)

**Historic Name:** Saw Handle Department/Varnishing Building

**Current Name:** Laura Lenet

**Hist. Resource Type:** Industrial

**Historic Function:** Manufacturing

**Year Built:** c1895-1901

**Associated Individual:** Henry Disston & Sons

**Architect:** Unknown

**Builder:** Unknown

**Social History:**
Resource 2B: The Saw Handle Department/Varnishing Building/Paper Box Factory is a two-story factory building that was built between 1895 and 1901. While originally part of the Saw Handle Department, the building was eventually used for varnishing and later for manufacturing boxes for products. Resources 2A, 2B, and 2C, components of the Saw Handle Department, were used to manufacture wooden handles for saws.

**References:**
Resource 2B was not present in the 1895 Baist Atlas, but was extant in the 1901 Bromley Atlas.

**Physical Description**

**Style:**

**Stories:** 3

**Bays:** NA

**Foundation:** Stone

**Exterior Walls:** Brick

**Roof:** Gable; other

**Windows:** Historic and non-historic

**Doors:** Historic and non-historic

**Other Materials:** Steel

**Notes:**
Resource 2B is delineated below in black. Complete list of site features includes: chain-link fence, iron fence, stone wall, CMU wall, and wrought iron gate.

**Classification:** Significant

**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019
Resource 2B: Saw Handle Department/Varnishing Building/Paper Box Factory (1895-1901)

Top left: Looking northwest, Resource 2B: Saw Handle Department/Varnishing Building/Paper Box Factory (1895-1901) of the Keystone Saw Works, showing the subject building when it was two stories. Bottom left: Looking east, the northwest and southwest elevations of Resource 2B, showing the subject building when it was two-stories. Right: Looking north at the southwest and southeast elevations of Resource 2B in 1918. Source: Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Historic Name: Saw Handle Department
Current Name: Laura Lenet
Hist. Resource Type: Industrial
Historic Function: Manufacturing
Year Built: c1888-1895
Associated Individual: Henry Disston & Sons
Architect: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Social History:
Resource 2C: The Saw Handle Department was built between 1888 and 1895 as part of the Saw Handle Department. Resources 2A, 2B, and 2C, components of the Saw Handle Department, were used to manufacture wooden handles for saws.

References:

Physical Description
Style: 3
Stories: 3
Bays: NA
Foundation: Stone
Exterior Walls: Brick
Roof: Flat; other
Windows: Historic and non-historic
Doors: Historic and non-historic
Other Materials:

Notes:
While this may contain components of the original building, Resource 2C is so severely altered that the nominator finds the building to be non-contributing. Resource 2C is delineated below in black.

Classification: Non-contributing
Survey Date: 5/1/2019
HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

Address: 5201-21 UNRUH AVE

Alternate Address: 5201 UNRUH AVE
Individually Listed: NA
OPA Number: 882021700
Base Reg. Number: 111N220011

Historical Data

Historic Name: Power-related Building
Current Name: Unknown
Hist. Resource Type: Industrial
Historic Function: Manufacturing
Year Built: c1887-1895
Associated Individual: Henry Disston & Sons
Architect: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Social History:

Resource 5: Power-related Building was built between 1887 and 1895, appearing to serve as a power source for manufacturing operations.

References:

Resource 5 was not present in the 1887 illustration of the plant, but was extant in the 1895 Baist Atlas.

Physical Description

Style: 
Stories: 1
Bays: 2
Foundation: Stone
Exterior Walls: Brick
Roof: Gable; other
Windows: Historic and non-historic
Doors: Historic and non-historic
Other Materials:

Resource Type: Industrial
Current Function: Unknown
Subfunction: Unknown
Additions/Alterations: Shed addition to the north.
Ancillary: Other, Shed
Sidewalk Material: Brick and Concrete
Site Features: Asphalt driveway, Concrete driveway

Notes:

Address: 5201-21 UNRUH AVE
Alternate Address: 5201 UNRUH AVE
Individually Listed: NA
OPA Number: 882021700
Base Reg. Number: 111N220011

Classification: Contributing
Survey Date: 5/1/2019

Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District 70
## Historical Data

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<th>Historic Name:</th>
<th>Infrastructure and Site Features</th>
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<td>Historic Function:</td>
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<td>Social History:</td>
<td>Historic infrastructure and site features on parcel may include paving (brick/flagstone/other), railroad tracks, fencing, walls, gates and other historic features were built as part of the Keystone Saw Works. These are within or along the right-of-way areas associated with this parcel.</td>
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## References:

## Physical Description

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<td>Other Materials:</td>
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## Classification: Contributing

## Survey Date: 5/1/2019

Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District 71
### Historical Data

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Historic Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Name</td>
<td>DELAWARE AUTO SPRING CO, ROBERT</td>
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<td>Historic Function</td>
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<td>Associated Individual</td>
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<td>Architect</td>
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<td>Physical Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>This parcel/vacant lot is set beyond the ruins of the office portion of the property and is non-contributing.</td>
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</table>

### References

- During the period of significance there was a large building on this parcel that is no longer extant.

### Physical Description

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
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<td>Bays</td>
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<td>Doors</td>
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<td>Other Materials</td>
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<td>Notes</td>
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<td>Non-contributing</td>
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<td>Survey Date</td>
<td>5/1/2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Historic Name: Band Saw Division/Shops
Current Name: 5201 UNRUH AVENUE INC
Hist. Resource Type: Industrial
Historic Function: Manufacturing

Social History:
Resource 4: Band Saw Division/Shops was built between 1895 and 1901. By 1893, the advent of the band saw led to widespread use, requiring "a separate band saw department." The band saw was manufactured for large timber operations, as it went "clean through a log of any size." Many of the band saws made were 45 to 55 feet long, requiring a specific, purpose-built building for manufacture.

References:
Resource 4 was not present in the 1895 Baist Atlas, but was extant by the 1901 Bromley Atlas. Contextual information about the advent and manufacture of the band saw was published in the following article: The Times, (Philadelphia: 28 May 1893), 21.

Physical Description

Style: NA
Stories: 2
Bays: NA
Foundation: Stone
Exterior Walls: Brick
Roof: Gable; other
Windows: Historic and non-historic
Doors: Historic and non-historic
Other Materials:

Notes:
Complete list of site features: brick walkway, chain-link fence, concrete driveway, concrete walkway, driveway pillars, parking Lot

Classification: Significant
Survey Date: 5/1/2019
Resource 4: Band Saw Division (c1895-1901)

Resource 4: Band Saw Division (c1895-1901)


Historic Name: Office Headhouse  
Current Name: 5201 UNRUH AVENUE INC  
Hist. Resource Type: Industrial  
Historic Function: Manufacturing  
Year Built: c1894-1910  
Associated Individual: Henry Disston & Sons  
Architect: Unknown  
Builder: Unknown  

Social History: Resource 6: The Office Headhouse was built between 1894 and 1910, as the headhouse for the Hand & Long Saw Grinding Shop, which is no longer extant. Connecting Resource 6 and Resource 4 along the northeast side of Unruh Avenue are two stone gate posts with iron gates, which were built from grindstones used on the site between 1900 and 1907.

References: Resource 6 was not present in the 1895 Baist Atlas, but was extant by the 1901 Bromley Atlas. Contextual information about the advent and manufacture of the band saw was published in the following article: The Times, (Philadelphia: 28 May 1893), 21.

Physical Description

Style:  
Stories: 2  
Bays: NA  
Foundation: Stone  
Exterior Walls: Brick  
Roof: Flat; other  
Windows: Historic and non-historic  
Doors: Historic and non-historic  
Other Materials:

Notes: Complete list of site features: brick walkway, concrete walkway, iron fence, and wrought iron gate.

Classification: Significant  
Survey Date: 5/1/2019
Resource 6: Ruins of Office (c1894-1910)

Historic Data

Historical Name: NA
Current Name: Parking Lot
Hist. Resource Type: NA
Historic Function: NA
Social History: NA

Historically, this parcel contained a large factory building of Henry Disston & Sons and is now a vacant lot with a few small structures.

References:
During the period of significance there were several large buildings on this parcel that are no longer extant.

Physical Description

Style: 
Stories: Bays: 
Foundation: 
Exterior Walls: 
Roof: 
Windows: 
Doors: 
Other Materials: 

Notes:
There may be historic features along the waterfront but this is not known. The non-contributing buildings/structures are delineated below in black.

Classification: Non-contributing
Survey Date: 5/1/2019
Historic District Inventory

Address: 5247-57 Unruh Ave

Alternate Address: 

Individually Listed: NA

OPA Number: 884462837

Base Reg. Number: 111N220010

Historical Data

Historic Name: Infrastructure and Site Features

Current Name: 

Hist. Resource Type: Industrial

Historic Function: Road for Manufacturing

Social History: Historic infrastructure and site features on parcel may include paving (brick/flagstone/other), railroad tracks, fencing, walls, gates and other historic features were built as part of the Keystone Saw Works. These are within or along the right-of-way areas associated with this parcel.

Associated Individual: Henry Disston & Sons

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Year Built: c1880-1940

References:

Physical Description

Style: 

Stories: 

Bays: 

Foundation: 

Exterior Walls: 

Roof: 

Windows: 

Doors: 

Other Materials: 

Resource Type: Industrial

Current Function: 

Subfunction: Unknown

Additions/Alterations: NA

Ancillary: Other

Sidewalk Material: 

Site Features: 

Notes: 

Classification: Contributing

Survey Date: 5/1/2019

Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District
HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

Address: 6745-95 NEW STATE RD

Alternate Address: 6745-95 STATE RD
Individually Listed: NA

OPA Number: 884180900
Base Reg. Number: 111N210063

Historical Data

Historic Name: Pattern Storage
Current Name: DISSTON PRECISION INC
Hist. Resource Type: Industrial
Historic Function: Manufacturing

Year Built: 1909-1910
Associated Individual: Henry Disston & Sons
Architect: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Social History:
Resource 8: The Pattern Storage was part of a $500,000 third of a larger $1.5 million investment in the Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel and File Work at Tacony, which was made between 1902 and 1916. Built between 1909 and 1910, the subject building was designed, constructed, and used for the storage of pattern plates that were used and/or manufactured in this section of the plant.

References:
Construction of Resource 8 is noted in "Trade Notes," Electrician and Mechanic, December 1910, xii. This building was not present in the Atlas of the 41st Ward in 1900, and was present in 1910 by G.W. Bromley (not J.L. Smith). Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1910 by G.W. Bromley.

Physical Description

Style: 
Stories: 1
Bays: 4
Foundation: Stone
Exterior Walls: Brick
Roof: Gable; other
Windows: Non-historic- other
Doors: Non-historic- other

Resource Type: Industrial
Current Function: Mixed Use- Other
Subfunction: Industrial
Additions/Alterations: There are non-contributing additions to the east and west.
Ancillary: Other
Sidewalk Material: Brick and Concrete
Site Features: Asphalt driveway, Brick walkway, Courtyard, Iron

Notes:
Resource 8 is delineated below in black. There are non-contributing additions to the east and west, which are not included in the contributing delineation below. Additional map source information: Great Philadelphia GeoHistory Network. 23rd, 35th, 41st Wards of Philadelphia, 1900. Source: Historical Society of Frankford, via Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network (https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/HSF.D2F14).

Classification: Contributing
Survey Date: 5/1/2019
### Historical Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Name:</th>
<th>Blacksmith Shop</th>
<th>Year Built:</th>
<th>1909-1910</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Name:</td>
<td>DISSTON PRECISION INC</td>
<td>Associated Individual:</td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hist. Resource Type:</td>
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<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic Function:</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Builder:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Social History:**
Resource 9: Blacksmith Shop was part of a $500,000 third of a larger $1.5 million investment in the Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel and File Work at Tacony, which was made between 1902 and 1916. Built between 1909 and 1910, the subject building served the Jobbing Department and Machine Shop in this section of the plant.

**References:**
Construction of Resource 9 is noted in "Trade Notes," Electrician and Mechanic, December 1910, xii. This building was not present in the Atlas of the 41st Ward in 1900, and was present in 1910 by G.W. Bromley (not J.L. Smith).

### Physical Description

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<tr>
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<td>Roof:</td>
<td>Monitor; other</td>
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<td>Windows:</td>
<td>Non-historic- other</td>
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<td>Doors:</td>
<td>Non-historic- other</td>
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</table>

**Notes:**

**Classification:** Significant
Resource 9: Blacksmith Shop (1909-1910)

Resource 9: Blacksmith Shop (1909-1910)

Historic District Inventory

Address: 6745-95 New State Rd
Alternate Address: 6745-95 State Rd
Individually Listed: NA
OPA Number: 884180900
Base Reg. Number: 111N210063

Historical Data

Historic Name: Machine Shop
Current Name: DISSTON PRECISION INC
Hist. Resource Type: Industrial
Historic Function: Manufacturing
Year Built: 1909-1910
Associated Individual: Henry Disston & Sons
Architect: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Social History:
Resource 10: Machine Shop was part of a $500,000 third of a larger $1.5 million investment in the Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel and File Work at Tacony, which was made between 1902 and 1916. Built between 1909 and 1910, the subject building served the Machine Shop, where the following products were manufactured: machine knives; woodworking knives; chipper, bed and hog knives; paper trimming, leather-splitting knives; shear blades, etc. In the machine shop were employed a large number of "mechanical engineers, designers, a large corps of machinists," also designing machinery for the firm.

References:
Completion of Resource 10 in its present form is noted in "Trade Notes," Electrician and Mechanic, December 1910, xii. This building was not present in the Atlas of the 41st Ward in 1900, and was present in 1910. 23rd, 35th, 41st Wards of Philadelphia. Source: HSP, via Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network (https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/HSF.D2F14). Atlas of the

Physical Description

Style: 2.5 Stories
Bays: 5
Foundation: Stone
Exterior Walls: Brick
Roof: Monitor; other
Windows: Non-historic- other
Doors: Non-historic- other

Notes:
Complete list of site features: asphalt driveway, brick walkway, chain-link fence, concrete walkway, courtyard, iron fence. A non-contributing addition extends to the west, connecting the building with the Pattern Storage.

Classification: Significant

Survey Date: 5/1/2019


Resource 11: Jobbing Department was part of the a $500,000 investment in the Henry Disston & Sons, which was made around 1909 and 1911. Built between 1910 and 1911, Resource 11 was a building designed and used for the manufacture of steel plates for cutting and creasing machines, cylinder presses, pattern plates, lawn mowers, circular cloth, candy, paper knives, multiple clutch discs, and flat steel springs. The subject building, measuring 70 by 112 feet and 63 by 290 feet, was built by the Charles McCaul Co., (located at 10th and Sansom Streets).

References:
Plans for Resource 11 were announced in The Philadelphia Inquirer, 3 July 1910, 22. The construction of this building was noted in "Trade Notes," Electrician and Mechanic, December 1910, xii. The reference to the contractor was found in the following announcement: "Contracts Awarded," The American Contractor, 9 July 1910, 44.

Physical Description

Resource 11 is delineated below in black. Resource 11 is a two-story L-shaped building, measuring 290 by 63-1/2 feet, with an L, 181 by 69-1/2 feet. The complete list of site features: asphalt driveway, brick walkway, chain- link fence, concrete walkway, courtyard, iron fence, parking lot, stone wall.

Classification: Significant
Survey Date: 5/1/2019
Resource 11: Jobbing Department (1911-12)

**Historic Name:** File Shop  
**Current Name:** DISSTON PRECISION INC  
**Hist. Resource Type:** Industrial  
**Historic Function:** Manufacturing  

**Year Built:** 1910-1911  
**Associated Individual:** Henry Disston & Sons  
**Architect:** Unknown  
**Builder:** Unknown

**Social History:**
Resource 12: The File Shop was part of a $500,000 third of a larger $1.5 million investment in the Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel and File Work at Tacony, which was made between 1902 and 1916. Built between 1910 and 1911, the subject building served as the File Shop, which was part of the extensive file-making department. At the time of its construction the building was said to be "equipped, of course, with all modern operating machinery, all of which has [was] designed and built by the Disston organization. This two-story brick structure is 180 by 43 feet.

**References:**
Construction of Resource 12 was announced in "Trade Notes," Electrician and Mechanic, December 1910, xii. This building was not present in the Atlas of the 41st Ward in 1910, and was present in 1920. Atlas of the 23rd, 35th, & 41st Wards of the City of Philadelphia, 1910 by JL Smith.

**Physical Description**

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<th>Style:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Exterior Walls: Brick</td>
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<td>Roof: Gable; other</td>
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<td>Windows: Non-historic- other</td>
<td>Site Features:</td>
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<td>Doors: Non-historic- other</td>
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</table>

**Notes:**
Resource 12: File Shop (1910-1911)

Resource 12: File Shop (1910-1911)

Talk About Quick Work. If You Can Beat This...

An order was received 7:30 Saturday morning, November 16, immediately for 500 bushels of Disston saws on their way to the United States Expeditionary forces in France. The good Harry Batty, John Arnold, Edison Roberts and Joseph Elies.

Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District


Taken between 1910 and 1920, the southwest elevation of Resource 12: File Shop. Source: Google Books.

Resource 12: File Shop (1910-1911)

Top: Disston employee working in one of the File Shops, as captured by the U.S. Quartermaster in 1918. Bottom: A wide variety of file types manufactured by Henry Disston & Sons, as documented by the U.S. Quartermaster in 1918. Source: Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress.
### HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

**Address:** 6745-95 NEW STATE RD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternate Address:</th>
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<td>Base Reg. Number:</td>
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### Historical Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Name:</th>
<th>Hardening Department</th>
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<tr>
<td>Current Name:</td>
<td>DISSTON PRECISION INC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hist. Resource Type:</td>
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<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Builder:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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</table>

**Social History:**

Resource 13: The Hardening Department was built as part of a $500,000 third of a larger $1.5 million investment in the Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel and File Work at Tacony, which was made between 1902 and 1916. Built between 1910 and 1920, the subject building was constructed as the Hardening Department, an addition and component of the Jobbing Department. Once the steel products were made they were "soft and unfit" for use, being sent to the Hardening Department where they were put into "a special hardening bath, requiring "special care until the steel had tempered." The durability of the tools depended on the quality of this operation.

### References:


### Physical Description

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Classification: Contributing

Survey Date: 5/1/2019
**HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY**

**Address:** 6745-95 NEW STATE RD

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<tr>
<td><strong>Base Reg. Number:</strong></td>
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</table>

### Historical Data

**Historic Name:** Warehouse  
**Current Name:** DISSTON PRECISION INC  
**Hist. Resource Type:** Industrial  
**Historic Function:** Manufacturing  
**Year Built:** c1920-1929  
**Associated Individual:** Henry Disston & Sons  
**Architect:** Unknown  
**Builder:** Unknown

**Social History:**

Resource 22: The Warehouse was a modernist addition to the Jobbing and Hardening Departments that was used for light manufacturing and storage purposes.

**References:**


### Physical Description

**Style:**  
**Stories:** 2  
**Bays:** 3

**Foundation:** Concrete  
**Exterior Walls:** Brick  
**Roof:** Flat; other  
**Windows:** Non-historic- other  
**Doors:** Non-historic- other

**Other Materials:**

**Resource Type:** Industrial  
**Current Function:** Mixed Use- Other  
**Subfunction:** Industrial  
**Additions/Alterations:**

**Ancillary:**

**Sidewalk Material:**

**Site Features:**

**Classification:** Contributing  
**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019

Historic Name: Addition: Pattern/File  
Current Name: DISSTON PRECISION INC  
Hist. Resource Type: Industrial  
Historic Function: Manufacturing  
Social History: NA  
Associated Individual: Unknown  
Architect: Unknown  
Builder: Unknown  

References: NA  

Physical Description  
Style:  
Stories: 1  
Bays: NA  
Foundation: Concrete  
Exterior Walls: Brick  
Roof: Flat; other  
Windows: Non-historic- other  
Doors: Non-historic- other  
Other Materials:  

Notes:  
Built after 1954, this addition between Resource 8 and 10 is non-contributing, which is delineated below in black.
### Historical Data

<table>
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<th>Historic Name:</th>
<th>Infrastructure and Site Features</th>
<th>Year Built:</th>
<th>c1880-1940</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Name:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Associated Individual:</td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hist. Resource Type:</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>Architect:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Function:</td>
<td>Road for Manufacturing</td>
<td>Builder:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Historic infrastructure and site features on parcel may include paving (brick/flagstone/other), railroad tracks, fencing, walls, gates and other historic features were built as part of the Keystone Saw Works. These are within or along the right-of-way areas associated with this parcel.

### References:

- 

### Physical Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style:</th>
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<td>Notes:</td>
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### Classification: Contributing

Survey Date: 5/1/2019
### HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

**Address:** 6800 NEW STATE RD  
**Alternate Address:** 6800 STATE RD  
**Individually Listed:** NA  
**OPA Number:** 884804700  
**Base Reg. Number:** 111N210064

#### Historical Data

| Historic Name: | Cafeteria/Chain Saw Division | Year Built: | 1919 |
| Current Name: | 6800 NEW STATE ROAD ASSOC | Associated Individual: | Henry Disston & Sons |
| Hist. Resource Type: | Industrial | Architect: | Unknown |
| Historic Function: | Manufacturing | Builder: | Unknown |

**Social History:**

Resource 20: Cafeteria/Chain Saw Division was completed in 1919, being originally known as the "Disston Cafeteria." The building was designed to accommodate 900 people with kitchen facilities equipped to feed 1500 meals at one time. This building was later repurposed to serve as the Chain Saw Division.

**References:**

Marking the construction date of Resource 20, the opening of the "Disston Cafeteria" is announced in "New Restaurant Opened for Employees," American Machinist, 8 May 1919, 922.

#### Physical Description

**Style:** Colonial Revival  
**Stories:** 1  
**Bays:** 3  
**Foundation:** Stone  
**Exterior Walls:** Brick  
**Roof:** Flat; other  
**Windows:** Historic and non-historic  
**Doors:** Historic and non-historic  
**Other Materials:** Stone

**Resource Type:** Commercial  
**Current Function:** Mixed Use- Other  
**Subfunction:** Industrial  
**Additions/Alterations:** Additions to the south, infilling the T-shape form along New State Road.  
**Ancillary:**  
**Sidewalk Material:** Concrete  
**Site Features:** Stone Wall

**Notes:** Resource 20 is delineated below in black. Historically a T-shaped building, there were additions to the south, infilling the T-shape form along New State Road.

---

**Classification:** Contributing  
**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019
Historic Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Historic Name:</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Historic Function:</strong></td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Built:</strong></td>
<td>c1910-1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Associated Individual:</strong></td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Architect:</strong></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Builder:</strong></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Social History:**

Resource 19: Stone Walls and Iron Fence/Gates appears to have been constructed between 1910 and 1918, as similar stone work is present in 1918 when the U.S. Quartermaster photographed the property. A section of the existing wall was created from Disston offices and garage buildings that formerly stood on this site. These buildings were used for administrative and vehicle storage purposes. The stone walls extant about and around the district are usually "one and a half feet thick and has a net length of nearly a mile." The walls are "made from grindstones worn down in the manufacture of Disston Saws," representing "the accumulation only the few years from 1900 to 1907, in which time the stone wall was completed."

**References:**
The stone wall and iron fence/gates were built between 1900 and 1907 as per the following article: "Grindstones," The Disston Crucible. (Philadelphia: Henry Disston & Sons, 1915). The office and the garage were present in the Atlas of the 41st Ward in 1910, but appear to have been extant in 1918 when the U.S. Quartermaster visited the site, and was extant in the 1920 Atlas.

Physical Description

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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td><strong>Bays:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Foundation:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exterior Walls:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Roof:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Windows:</strong></td>
<td>Historic and non-historic</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Doors:</strong></td>
<td>Historic and non-historic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Materials:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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**Classification:** Contributing

**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019
HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

Address: 6801 NEW STATE RD

Alternate Address: 6801 WISSINOMING ST
Individually Listed: NA
OPA Number: 884181000
Base Reg. Number: 116N130042

Historical Data

Historic Name: Office
Current Name: 6801 NEW STATE HOLDING CO
Hist. Resource Type: Industrial
Historic Function: Manufacturing

Social History:
Resource 27: Office used by Henry Disston & Sons.

Year Built: c1929-1943
Associated Individual: Henry Disston & Sons
Architect: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

References:
Resource 27 appears in the 1943 aerial photograph.

Physical Description

Style: 
Stories: 2 Bays: NA
Foundation: Concrete
Exterior Walls: Brick
Roof: Flat; other
Windows: Infilled
Doors: Historic and non-historic
Other Materials: 

Notes:
Built at some point between c1929 and 1943, the subject building was used as an office and is in character with the other contributing buildings in the historic district.

Classification: Contributing
Survey Date: 5/1/2019
Resource 27: Office (c1929-1943)

**Historic Name:** Infrastructure and Site Features  
**Year Built:** c1880-1940

**Current Name:**  
**Associated Individual:** Henry Disston & Sons

**Historic Function:** Road for Manufacturing  
**Architect:** Unknown

**Social History:**  
**Builder:** Unknown

Historic infrastructure and site features on parcel may include paving (brick/flagstone/other), railroad tracks, fencing, walls, gates and other historic features were built as part of the Keystone Saw Works. These are within or along the right-of-way areas associated with this parcel.

**References:**

---

### Physical Description

**Style:**  
**Resource Type:** Industrial

**Stories:**  
**Current Function:**

**Bays:**  
**Subfunction:** Unknown

**Foundation:**  
**Additions/Alterations:** NA

**Exterior Walls:**  
**Ancillary:** Other

**Roof:**  
**Sidewalk Material:**

**Windows:**  
**Site Features:**

**Doors:**

**Other Materials:**

**Notes:**

---

**Classification:** Contributing  
**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019
HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

Address: 6801 NEW STATE RD #A

Alternate Address: 6801 NEW STATE RD; 6809 STATE RD
Individually Listed: NA
OPA Number: 884351865
Base Reg. Number: 116N030013

Historical Data

Historic Name: Cold-Rolling Mill
Current Name: Unknown
Hist. Resource Type: Industrial
Historic Function: Manufacturing
Year Built: 1910
Associated Individual: Henry Disston & Sons
Architect: Unknown
Builder: Charles McCaul Company

Social History:
Resource 16: The Cold-Rolling Mill was built part of a $1.5 million investment in the Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel and File Work at Tacony, which took place between 1902 and 1916. The subject building cost roughly $52,000 to construct. “Cold-Rolling” is a metal forming process in which steel ingots are forged and/or rolled into sheets of other shapes.

References:
Construction of Resource 16 is referenced in the following article: “Contract Awarded,” The Philadelphia Inquirer, 6 August 1910, 13.
"Contracts awarded" for the construction of the Cold-Rolling Mill were referenced "Metal Working," American Machinist, 18 August 1910, 327.

Physical Description

Style: 
Stories: 2
Bays: 3
Foundation: Concrete
Exterior Walls: Brick
Roof: Gable; other
Windows: Historic and non-historic
Doors: Historic and non-historic
Other Materials: Steel

Resource Type: Industrial
Current Function: Parking
Subfunction: Manufacturing
Additions/Alterations: Ancillary:
Sidewalk Material: Brick and Concrete
Site Features: Asphalt driveway, Brick walkway, Chain- link fence,

Notes:
Resource 16 is front building in the aerial photograph shown below (right photo). There is a non-contributing addition to the south of the building connecting it to the Crucible Shop. Complete list of site features: asphalt driveway, brick walkway, chain- link fence, concrete driveway, concrete walkway.

Classification: Contributing
Survey Date: 5/1/2019
Resource 16: Cold Rolling Mill (1910)
Resource 21: Annealing Furnace Shop (c1929-1940)

Resource 16: Cold Rolling Mill (1910)

Resource 16: Cold Rolling Mill (1910)
Resource 21: Annealing Furnace Shop (c1929-1940)

**DISSTON CRUCIBLE STEEL**

Our facilities for making and rolling crucible steel being more than adequate for our own purpose, we are in position to furnish the trade with the following classes:

- **DISSTON TOOL STEELS**
- **SPECIAL HIGH-SPEED STEEL**
- **SPECIAL TOOL**
- **BETT TOOL**
- **EXTRA TOOL**
- **STANDARD TOOL**

**DISSTON SAW AND SHEET STEELS**

**SPECIAL HIGH-SPEED MILLING**

**DISSTON MISCELLANEOUS STEELS**

- **FILE STEEL**
- **SCREWDRIVER STEEL**
- **AXE, HATCHET, CHISEL STEEL**
- **MAGNET STEEL**
- **SKATE STEEL**
- **PLIER STEEL**
- **HAMMER STEEL**
- **AUGER BIT STEEL**
- **CANT HOOK STEEL**

**DISSTON MISCELLANEOUS STEELS**

- **FORK AND HOE STEEL**
- **TROWEL STEEL**
- **SPRING STEEL, ETC.**

**COLD-ROLLED STEEL**

**COLD-ROLLED HARDENED AND TEMPERED**

**COLD-ROLLED HARDENED, TEMPERED AND POLISHED**

Prices quoted on application

---

Resource 16: Cold Rolling Mill (1910)
Resource 21: Annealing Furnace Shop (c1929-1940)

Disston employees work in Resource 17: Crucible Shop (Cutting Shop), as documented by the U.S. Quartermaster in 1918. Source: Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress.
Historic Name: Crucible Shop (Cutting Shop)  Year Built: 1912
Current Name: Unknown  Associated Individual: Henry Disston & Sons
Hist. Resource Type: Industrial  Architect: Unknown
Historic Function: Manufacturing  Builder: F.W. Van Loon

Resource 17: The Crucible Shop (Cutting Shop) was built in 1912 as part of a $1.5 million investment in the Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel and File Work at Tacony, which took place between 1902 and 1916. The brick cold-rolling mill cost roughly $23,000 to construct.

References:
The Philadelphia Inquirer, 17 May 1912, 5. This is further justified by the historic atlases. This building was not present in the Atlas of the 41st Ward in 1910, and was present in 1920. Atlas of the 23rd, 35th, & 41st Wards of the City of Philadelphia, 1910 by JL Smith.

Physical Description

Style:  
Stories: 2  Bays: 3
Foundation: Concrete  
Exterior Walls: Brick
Roof: Gable; other
Windows: Historic and non-historic
Doors: Historic and non-historic
Other Materials: 

Notes:
## Historical Data

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Name:</th>
<th>Addition to Crucible Shop</th>
<th>Year Built:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Current Name:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Associated Individual:</td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
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<td>Hist. Resource Type:</td>
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<td>Builder:</td>
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<td>Social History:</td>
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Resource 17B: Addition to Cutting Shop was built after 1954.

### References:
The date of construction is based of available maps from the Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

## Physical Description

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<th>Style:</th>
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<td>Ancillary:</td>
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<td>Sidewalk Material:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Site Features:</td>
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</table>

Notes: Appearing to be built after 1954, Resource 17B is non-contributing, being delineated below in the aerial photograph in black.
HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

Address: 6801 NEW STATE RD #A

Alternate Address: 6809 STATE RD; 6801 NEW STATE RD
Individually Listed: NA
OPA Number: 884351865
Base Reg. Number: 116N030013

Historical Data

Historic Name: Annealing Furnace Shop
Current Name: Unknown
Hist. Resource Type: Industrial
Historic Function: Manufacturing
Year Built: c1929-1940
Associated Individual: Henry Disston & Sons
Architect: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Social History:
Resource 21: The Annealing Furnace Shop was built between 1929 and 1940. Furnace annealing is a process used in metal fabrication, which consists of heating multiple semi-conductor wafers in order to effect their electrical properties.

References:

Physical Description

Style: 
Stories: 1
Bays: 3
Foundation: Concrete
Exterior Walls: Brick
Roof: Sawtooth
Windows: Historic and non-historic
Doors: Historic and non-historic
Other Materials: Steel

Resource Type: Industrial
Current Function: industrial
Subfunction: Manufacturing
Additions/Alterations: None
Ancillary: 
Sidewalk Material: Brick and Concrete
Site Features: Asphalt driveway, Brick walkway, Concrete walkway,

Notes:

Classification: Contributing
Survey Date: 5/1/2019

Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District
# HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

**Address:** 6801 NEW STATE RD #A  
**OPA Number:** 884351865  
**Base Reg. Number:** 116N130044

## Historical Data

<table>
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<th>Infrastructure and Site Features</th>
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<td>Hist. Resource Type:</td>
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<td>Architect:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<td>Historic Function:</td>
<td>Road for Manufacturing</td>
<td>Builder:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<td>Social History:</td>
<td>Historic infrastructure and site features on parcel may include paving (brick/flagstone/other), railroad tracks, fencing, walls, gates and other historic features were built as part of the Keystone Saw Works. These are within or along the right-of-way areas associated with this parcel.</td>
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**References:**

## Physical Description

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<td>Roof:</td>
<td>Sidewalk Material:</td>
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<td>Windows:</td>
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<td>Doors:</td>
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<td>Other Materials:</td>
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<td>Notes:</td>
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**Classification:** Contributing  
**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019
**HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY**

**Address:** 6801 NEW STATE RD #B

<table>
<thead>
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<th>6801 STATE RD</th>
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**Historical Data**

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<td><strong>Historic Function:</strong></td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
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**Social History:**

Resource 3A: Ruins of Rolling Mill Addition (1901)

**References:**

The construction of Resource 3A is referenced in the following article: The Philadelphia Inquirer, 15 June 1900, 11.; and The Philadelphia Inquirer, 27 November 1901, 16.

**Physical Description**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Bays:</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Foundation:** | Metal |
| **Exterior Walls:** | Metal |
| **Roof:** | Side-gable; other |
| **Windows:** | Historic and non-historic |
| **Doors:** | Historic and non-historic |
| **Other Materials:** | Steel |

**Notes:**

Resource 3A: Rolling Mill is the ruin of an addition to the once larger resource. While the subject property may contain components of the original building, it is so severely altered that the nominator finds the building to be non-contributing. Resource 3A is delineated below.

**Classification:** Non-contributing

**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019

**Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District** 113
### Historical Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Name:</th>
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<td>Hist. Resource Type:</td>
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<td>Historic Function:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associated Individual:</td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Architect:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Builder:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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</table>

Social History:

Resource 3B: Ruins of Rolling Mill Addition (1901). Otherwise, this property is largely a vacant lot.

References:

The construction of Resource 3B is referenced in the following article: The Philadelphia Inquirer, 15 June 1900, 11.; and The Philadelphia Inquirer, 27 November 1901, 16.

### Physical Description

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<td>Roof:</td>
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<td>Windows:</td>
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<td>Doors:</td>
<td>Historic and non-historic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Materials:</td>
<td>Steel</td>
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</table>

Resource Type: Industrial

Current Function: Unknown

Subfunction: Unknown

Additions/Alterations: NA

Ancillary: Other

Sidewalk Material: Brick and Concrete

Site Features: Asphalt driveway, Parking Lot

Notes:

Resource 3B: Rolling Mill is the ruin of an addition to the once larger resource. While the subject property may contain components of the original building, it is so severely altered that the nominator finds the resource to be non-contributing.
**HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY**

**Address:** 6801R NEW STATE RD #D

**Alternate Address:** 6801R NEW STATE RD  
**Individually Listed:** NA  
**OPA Number:** 884181505  
**Base Reg. Number:** 116N030022

---

### Historical Data

<table>
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<td>Year Built:</td>
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<td>Associated Individual:</td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Architect:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Builder:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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</table>

**Social History:**

Resource 3: The Rolling Mill was built between 1880 and 1882 with subsequent additions. "In 1855 Henry Disston made a departure from the custom of securing saw-steel from England and established a crucible steel melting plant of his own. This was followed in a few years by a rolling mill which made it possible for the Disston Works to conduct every operation in the manufacture of saws within their own walls. This marked a new era in saw making in the United States." The building was enlarged and reconfigured over time to accommodate the evolving industry needs.

**References:**

Construction of Resource 3 is referenced in the following article: “The Disstons’ New Rolling Mill,” The Times, 2 November 1880, 4. The prominent addition at the southeast side of Resource 3 is referenced in the following article: “Contract Awarded,” The Philadelphia Inquirer, 21 August 1912, 5.

---

### Physical Description

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exterior Walls:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roof:</td>
<td>Monitor; other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows:</td>
<td>Historic and non-historic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doors:</td>
<td>Historic and non-historic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Materials:</td>
<td>Cast Iron, Concrete, Iron, Metal, Stone</td>
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</table>

**Notes:**

At the east elevation of the south portion of the historic resource is a historic addition known as the Curbo-Generator House & Power Plant (1912). Complete list of site features: asphalt driveway, brick walkway, chain-link fence, concrete driveway, concrete walkway, iron fence, parking Lot, wrought iron gate.

**Classification:** Significant

**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019
Resource 3: Rolling Mills (1880-82)

Resource 3: Rolling Mills (1880-82)

Top: A photograph taken in 1941 by Dallin Aerial Survey showing the southeast elevation of Resource 3: Rolling Mills and the later addition. Source: Hagley Digital Library. Middle: Fig. 8.2.34 of the Southwest and Southeast elevations of Resource 3. Fig. 8.2.34 of the southwest elevation of Resource 3. Source: Sarah Van Domelen, 2008.
Resource 3: Rolling Mills (1880-82)

Resource 3: Rolling Mills (1880-82)

Resource 3: Rolling Mills (1880-82)

HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

Address: 6801R NEW STATE RD #D

Alternate Address: 6801R NEW STATE RD
Individually Listed: NA
OPA Number: 884181505
Base Reg. Number: 116N030022

Historical Data

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<td>Year Built:</td>
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<td>Architect:</td>
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</table>

Social History:
Resource 7: The Trimming Shop was built between 1894 and 1910 and used for trimming in the industrial process. Note: This building was not entirely present in the 1901 Bromley Atlas, but was extant in the 1910 Smith Atlas of the 41st Ward.

References:
Source: 23rd, 35th, 41st Wards of Philadelphia. Source: HSP, via Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network

Physical Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Brick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roof:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows:</td>
<td>Historic and non-historic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doors:</td>
<td>Historic and non-historic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Materials:</td>
<td>Brick and Concrete</td>
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</tbody>
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Notes:

Classification: Significant
Resource 7: Trimming Shop (c1894-1910)

Resource 7: Trimming Shop (c1894-1910)

### HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

**Address:** 6801R NEW STATE RD #D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>OPA Number:</th>
<th>884181505</th>
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### Historical Data

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<th>Historic Name:</th>
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<th>Year Built:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Name:</td>
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<td>Associated Individual:</td>
<td>Henry Disston &amp; Sons</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Architect:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic Function:</td>
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Social History:

Historic infrastructure and site features on parcel may include paving (brick/flagstone/other), railroad tracks, fencing, walls, gates and other historic features were built as part of the Keystone Saw Works. These are within or along the right-of-way areas associated with this parcel.

### References:

### Physical Description

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<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Windows:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Other Materials:</td>
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Notes: 

*Classification: Contributing*  
*Survey Date: 5/1/2019*
**Historic Name:** Transformer House  
**Current Name:** Unknown  
**Hist. Resource Type:** Industrial  
**Historic Function:** Manufacturing  
**Year Built:** 1920  
**Associated Individual:** Henry Disston & Sons  
**Architect:** Unknown  
**Builder:** Unknown  

**Social History:**
Resource 24: Transformer House was built in 1920.

**References:**
Resource 24 was built in 1920, as per the 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company.

---

**Physical Description**

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<td>Doors: Historic and non-historic</td>
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<td>Other Materials: Steel</td>
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**Notes:**
Resource 24 is delineated in the aerial photograph below in black.

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**Classification:** Contributing  
**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019
### Historical Data

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<tr>
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<td>Historic Function:</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
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</table>

**Social History:**
Resource 25: The Boiler Plant was designed and constructed to produce energy for the plant using coal with an option of fuel oil in an emergency situation. At that time the plant was producing armor plate, using 26 to 28 railroad cars of 50 tons of coal each week--3500 tons of coal lasted for roughly three weeks.

**References:**
Resource 25 was not extant in the 1939 J. Victor Dallin Aerial Survey, but was present in the 1940 J Victor Dallin Aerial Survey. Source: Hagley Museum and Library. The "new boiler plant" was under construction according to "Industries Here Have Coal Supply," The Philadelphia Inquirer, 3 April 1941, 12.

### Physical Description

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Style:</th>
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<td>Sidewalk Material:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Site Features:</td>
<td>Chain- link fence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roof:</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Windows:</td>
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<td>Historic and non-historic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doors:</td>
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<td>Historic and non-historic</td>
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**Notes:**

### Classification:
**Classification:** Contributing

**Survey Date:** 5/1/2019

**Address:** 6801R NEW STATE RD #F

**Individually Listed:** NA

**OPA Number:** 884181510

**Base Reg. Number:** 116N030020
Resource 25: Boiler Plant (1940-1941)

Appendix A


**TIMELINE of Henry Disston & Sons & the Keystone Saw Works at Tacony.**

1819. Henry Disston is born on May 24, 1819 at Tewkesbury, England, the third child of Thomas and Ann Disston.73

1833. Henry Disston came to the United States in 1833 at the age of fourteen.74

1840. Keystone Saw Works was founded by Henry Disston in Philadelphia.75

1841. Henry Disston married Amanda Mulvina Bickley in 1841 at Philadelphia, who later died in 1842 while pregnant with twins.76

1843. Henry Disston married for a second time to Mary Steelman, producing five sons that would survive to adulthood.77

1844. Hamilton Disston, Henry Disston’s oldest, is born in 1844.78

1850. The first catalog of the Keystone Saw Works is produced in Philadelphia.

1850. Samuel Disston, a relative of Henry Disston, is hired by Henry Disston in 1850.79

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72 This timeline shall serve as an overview of the history of Henry Disston & Sons and the Keystone Saw Works at Tacony. For a comprehensive overview of the history of the firm, please Harry C Silcox’s *A Place to Live and Work: the Henry Disston saw works and the Tacony Community of Philadelphia.* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 1994), 44.


74 Silcox, *A Place to Live and Work*, 44.

75 Silcox, *A Place to Live and Work*, 44.


Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District
1855. Henry Disston began producing his own steel for use in his manufacture of saws, making him the first saw maker in the United States to produce his own steel. 

1865. The oldest son, Hamilton Disston, had served seven years an apprentice and joins his father as a partner, creating Henry Disston & Sons.

1871. Albert Disston, a relative of Henry Disston, transitioned from working in the accounting department to being responsible for the financial management of the company.

1872. Henry Disston purchases land for a new plant at Tacony, leading to the removal of the handle shop to the new facility. It was also at this time that Disston began his paternalistic “company town” known as Tacony. Perhaps Emily Cooperman, Architectural and Landscape Historian, put it best in the National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Tacony Disston Community Development Historic District: “The creation of the idealistic, intentional community at Tacony, which offered both paternalistic control and protection of his workforce’s welfare, was a natural outgrowth of the way that Disston conducted his personal and professional life.”

1872. Henry Disston & Sons employed nearly 900 in Northern Liberties.

1873. The file shop moved to Tacony.

1874. The Disstons began a building and loan association in 1874, enabling workers to purchase homes.

1877. Henry Disston & Sons began building the steel works at Tacony in 1877, though this operation would be greatly enlarged between 1880 and 1882 with the construction of the sheet rolling mills.


1879. Henry Disston & Sons moved the steelworks to Tacony in 1879 with the completion of the new facility.

81 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 55.
82 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 157.
83 Henry Disston purchased the following properties in 1872: James Robinson to Henry Disston, 15 April 1872, Philadelphia Deed Book J.A.H., No. 228, p. 470; C. Eastburn to Disston, 2 May 1872, Deed Book J.A.H., No. 245, p. 428; George Hammersley to Disston, 5 June 1872, Deed Book J.A.H., No. 254, p. 269; C. W. Morris to Disston, 2 July 1872, Deed Book J.A.H., No. 261, p. 90; and Silcox, A Place to Live, 33.
86 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
87 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
88 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
89 American Biographical Library. Salt Lake City, UT, USA: Ancestry Inc., 1996; and Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 55.
90 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
1880. Henry Disston & Sons begin construction on the new sheet rolling mill, which survives to
date as Resource 3: Rolling Mill (1880–82).91

1881. Henry Disston & Sons moved the long saw and hardening departments to Tacony in 1881.92
1882. Henry Disston & Sons moved the circular saw department to Tacony in 1882.93
1883. Henry Disston & Sons moved the jobbing shop to Tacony in 1883.94
1884. Henry Disston & Sons moved the handsaw department to Tacony in 1884, moving back to
Northern Liberties in 1885.95

1886. Hamilton Disston incorporated Henry Disston & Sons in 1886, distributing the stock to
family members.96 Sons Horace C. Disston, William Disston, and Jacob Disston join the firm
after their apprenticeships.

1887. Henry Disston & Sons moved the square and level departments to Tacony in 1887.97 By this
time the vast majority of the operations had been removed to the Tacony plant.98

1892. The Disstons established a second building and loan association in 1892.99
1896. Henry Disston & Sons moved the butcher saw and trowel departments to Tacony in 1896.100
1896. Hamilton Disston commits suicide, as foreclosure on a $1 million loan approached.101

1896. William Disston, the fourth son of Henry Disston, takes his bother’s place as President of
Henry Disston & Sons, a tenure that lasts through 1915. Horace Disstondevotes himself to
the steel department. Jacob Disston devotes himself to the financial department. Samuel
Disston was secretary and general manager.102

1897. Henry Disston & Sons had paid off all the bonds that had funded the expansion of the firm
into Tacony.103

1899. Henry Disston & Sons moved the jobbing shop to Tacony in 1899.104

1900. Henry Disston & Sons built the steel plant in 1900.105

92 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
93 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
94 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
95 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
96 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 56.
97 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
98 “The Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel and File Works,” in Annual Report of the Secretary of Internal Affairs of the
99 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 17.
100 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
101 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 56.
102 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 56.
103 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 35.
104 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 8.
105 Silcox, A Place to Live and Work, 44.
1901. *The Disston Crucible* was published by Henry Disston & Sons after the turn of the twentieth century through the 1920s.106

1910. Tacony had grown to a population of approximately 12,000.107

1912. *Disston Lumberman Handbook* was published in 1912 by Henry Disston & Sons.108

1913. Henry Disston & Sons began using advertising advantageously in 1913.109

1915. William Disston’s tenure as president of Henry Disston & Sons comes to a close.110

1915. Frank Disston, son of Albert Disston and grandson of Henry Disston, becomes president of Henry Disston & Sons, a tenure that lasts through 1929.111

1916. *The Saw in History* is published by Henry Disston & Sons in 1916.112

1920. *The File—Its History, Making and Uses* was published by Henry Disston & Sons in 1920.113

1925. Henry Disston & Sons employed 2,500.

1927. Henry Disston & Sons’ *Tool Manual for School Shops* was published in 1927.114

1929. *The Disston Saw, Tool, and File Book* was published by Henry Disston & Sons in 1929.115

1929. The stock market crashed in 1929.

1929. Henry Disston, grandson of Henry Disston and son of Hamilton Disston, takes the reigns as president of Henry Disston & Sons, starting a tenure that lasts through 1938. After Henry Disston II suffers a stroke in 1931, William D. Disston, a grandson of Henry Disston and son of William Disston, becomes president of the company until his own heart attack in 1937.116

1933. Henry Disston & Sons employed 1,400.

1938. S. Horace Disston, nephew of Henry Disston and son of Samuel Disston, takes the reigns as president of Henry Disston & Sons in 1938, starting a ten year tenure.117

1938. During a period of new product development at Henry Disston & Sons between 1938 and 1939, production of air-powered chain saws began in 1938.118

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110 Silcox, *A Place to Live and Work*, 56.
111 Silcox, *A Place to Live and Work*, Appendix B.
114 Silcox, *A Place to Live and Work*, 126.
116 Silcox, *A Place to Live and Work*, Appendix B.
117 Silcox, *A Place to Live and Work*, Appendix B.
118 Silcox, *A Place to Live and Work*, 129.
1940–60s. The beet knife blade and sharpening business became one of Henry Disston & Sons most profitable product lines.\textsuperscript{119}

1948. Jacob Disston, Jr. takes the reigns of Henry Disston & Sons as president in 1948, starting a tenure that lasted until 1954.\textsuperscript{120}

1949–52. When the modern steel plants of Germany, Japan, and England began operations between 1949 and 1952, this severely limited Henry Disston & Sons’ European operations, decreasing profitability.\textsuperscript{121}

1954. John D. Thomas, the only non-Disston to serve as president of Henry Disston & Sons, took the reigns in 1954, starting a tenure that ended in 1955.\textsuperscript{122}

1955. The Disston family sold Henry Disston & Sons in 1955 to H.K. Porter in Pittsburgh, changing the name to Carlson Rules and Measures/Henry Disston Division of H.K. Porter Inc.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{119} Silcox, \textit{A Place to Live and Work}, 127.
\textsuperscript{120} Silcox, \textit{A Place to Live and Work}, Appendix B.
\textsuperscript{121} Silcox, \textit{A Place to Live and Work}, 163.
\textsuperscript{122} Silcox, \textit{A Place to Live and Work}, Appendix B.
\textsuperscript{123} Silcox, \textit{A Place to Live and Work}, 141.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
Through the leadership of Alex Balloon, this nomination was commissioned and sponsored by the Tacony Community Development Corporation. The nomination was completed by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia with the primary author as Oscar Beiser, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, and J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian.

The following sites were used to create the nomination:
Ancestry.com
Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network
Hagley Museum & Library
Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Newspapers.com
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress
Proquest Historical Newspapers

Major Bibliographic References
“1920 Marks Eightieth Year in the Growth and Development of the House of Disston,” The Disston Crucible (1920), 118.


“American Hardware Makes Offer For Disston Firm,” Hartford Courant, 9 November 1955, 28;

Barrel and Box and Packages (1909).

“Better Work,” The Disston Crucible, September 1923, 58.

Disston-Tacony Industrial Waterfront Historic District


Deed: C. Eastburn to Disston, 2 May 1872, Deed Book JAH 245, p. 428.

Deed: C. W. Morris to Disston, 2 July 1872, JAH 261, p. 90; and Silcox, 33.

Deed: George Hammersley to Disston, 5 June 1872, JAH 254, p. 269.

Deed: James Robinson to Henry Disston, 15 April 1872, Philadelphia Deed Book JAH 228, p. 470.


*Hardware Dealer’s Magazine*, 1902.


*Industrial Education Magazine* (1924).


*The Hardware Reporter* (1912).

*The Iron Age*, 20 January 1916, 237.

*The Iron Trade Review*, 24 March 1910, 579.

The Lumber Manufacturer and Dealer (1910).


The Philadelphia Inquirer, 15 June 1900, 11.

The Philadelphia Inquirer, 27 November 1901, 16.

The Ranch (Seattle), 15 January 1912, 12.

The Saturday Evening Post vol. 182, issue 5 (1910).


Thomson, Ross, Structures of Change in the Mechanical Age: Technological Innovation in the United States, 1790–1865 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 92–94.