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Guide to the Slaney Family Notebooks on Gas and Machinery 1810-1910



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Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary	3
Information on Use	3
Access	3
Citation	3
Biographical Note	3
Scope Note	4
Related Resources	4
Subject Headings	5
INVENTORY	5

Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.CRMS397
Title	Slaney Family. Notebooks on Gas and Machinery
Date	1810-1910
Size	5.25 linear feet (9 boxes)
Repository	Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract	This collection contains forty notebooks from three generations of the Slaney family, gas meter manufacturers and gas engineers active in the Mid-Atlantic area. John M. Slaney Sr., who emigrated to the U.S. in 1829, was among the first gas meter manufacturers in the country. The notebooks consist mostly of clippings and manuscript notes on societal, legislative, scientific, and technological information related to gas and machinery in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It also contains correspondence, diagrams, charts, photographs, and business information related to the manufacturing of gas meters, as well as a list of gas companies in the U.S. Materials in the collection date from 1810-1910, and the bulk of the material dates from 1870-1900.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Slaney Family. Notebooks on Gas and Machinery, [Box #, Folder #], Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

John M. Slaney Sr., who learned his trades as a gas meter manufacturer in London, immigrated to the United States and settled in Philadelphia in 1829. He moved to Baltimore in 1832 at the request of John Rodger, a machinist, and supervised the manufacturing of 1,000 gas meters for the Baltimore Gas Company, which until then had imported their gas meters from England. Roger's were among the first gas meters manufactured in the U.S. In the year 1834, John Slaney Sr. became superintendent of the meters department of the Baltimore Gas Company, where he remained until 1849.

In 1848 John M. Slaney Jr., who had previously apprenticed to the meters department of the Baltimore Gas Company from 1837 to 1839, formed the Collier and Slaney Jr., Copper and Tin Plate Workers, and gas Meter Manufacturers co-partnership, which dissolved in 1850. Also in 1850, John Slaney Jr. organized the Phoenix Meter Company with his father John Slaney Sr. and two others. They were located at No. 44 Holliday Street in Baltimore, and the junior Slaney served as its agent and superintendent. The Company remained in business until 1857.

John M. Slaney Sr. died in April, 1863 in Philadelphia, at the age of 69. John M. Slaney Jr., who in the subsequent years lived in Camden, New Jersey, died sometime after 1894. He was the father of H. C. Slaney, who was active in Brooklyn, New York from the 1870s onward, working for various gas companies as gas engineer or in managerial positions.

Scope Note

The collection preserves its previous numbering at the John Crerar Library. Each notebook is assigned a number from 1 to 40, and to each number is further appended a six-digit inventory number stamped on the first pages of the notebooks. The index containing the notebook number and the inventory number can be found in Box 1 Folder 1. The number scheme does not reflect thematic or chronological organization.

The vast majority of the notebooks contain clippings and handwritten notes on a broad set of topics such as the cost and efficiency of different energy sources, technological innovations from sewing machine to machine translation, discoveries in the chemical, material, and physical sciences, developments in street lighting infrastructure, and societal news related to the storage, transportation, and usage of gas. Together they form an informative reflection of the social, economic, and technological changes taking place in the crucial decades of industrialization in the United States, especially pertaining to the utilization of fossil fuels.

Some notebooks, such as Notebooks 2, 7, and 40, contain correspondence by members of the Slaney family and their business associates, sometimes hand-copied onto the notebooks and sometimes in their original form. Notebook 40 contains also documents related to the two short-lived business enterprises of John M. Slaney Jr., and Notebook 23 consists of an alphabetically-ordered list of gas companies in the U.S. Notebook 16, likely the oldest of the collection, contains accounting material around 1830 as well as numerous hand-drawn of gas meters and related machinery dating from as early as 1810. Other diagrams and photographs of gas meters can be found in Notebooks 39 and 40.

Related Resources

Subject Headings

- Slaney, John M. (circa 1794-1864)
- Slaney, John M. (d. after 1894)
-
- University of Chicago. Department of Physics
- Gas-meters
- Machinery
- Municipal lighting
- Manufacturing industries
-

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Index for the Notebooks

Box 1

Folder 2

Notebook 1, Clippings, 1895-1896.

Box 1

Folder 3

Notebook 2, Correspondence (H. C. Slaney), 1875-1878; Notes and Clippings, 1848-1911.

Box 1

Folder 4

Notebook 3, Clippings, 1895-1899.

Box 1

Folder 5

Notebook 4, Clippings, 1863-1895.

Box 1

Folder 6

Notebook 5, Clippings, 1840-1895.

Box 2

Folder 1

Notebook 6, Clippings, 1894-1899.

Box 2

Folder 2

Notebook 7, Correspondence, Notes, and Clippings, 1885-1900. List of Gas Companies, n.d.

Box 2

Folder 3

Notebook 8, Clippings, 1894-1895.

Box 2

Folder 4

Notebook 9, Clippings, 1864-1898.

Box 2

Folder 5

Notebook 10, Clippings, 1887-1900.

Box 2

Folder 6

Notebook 11, Notes and Clippings, 1844-1886.

Box 3

Folder 1

Notebook 12, Clippings, 1869-1895.

Box 3

Folder 2

Notebook 13, Clippings, 1885-1896.

Box 3

Folder 3

Notebook 14, Clippings, 1870-1894.

Box 3

Folder 4

Notebook 15, Notes and Clippings, 1865-1886.

Box 3

Folder 5

Notebook 16, Accounting (John M. Slaney), 1829-1933; Diagrams, Charts, Costs, and Repair Instructions for Gas Meters and Other Machines, 1810-1858.

Box 4

Folder 1

Notebook 17, Clippings, 1876-1895.

Box 4

Folder 2

Notebook 18, Clippings, 1892-1895.

Box 4

Folder 3

Notebook 19, Clippings, 1893-1894.

Box 4

Folder 4

Notebook 20, Clippings, 1885-1886.

Box 4

Folder 5

Notebook 21, Clippings, 1858-1895.

Box 4

Folder 6

Notebook 22, Clippings, 1864-1895.

Box 5

Folder 1

Notebook 23, List of Gas Companies, n.d.

Box 5

Folder 2

Notebook 24, Clippings, 1897.

Box 5

Folder 3

Notebook 25, Clippings, 1860-1897.

Box 5

Folder 4

Notebook 26, Clippings, 1891-1910.

Box 5

Folder 5

Notebook 27, Clippings, 1885-1896.

Box 5

Folder 6

Notebook 28, Clippings, 1852-1896.

Box 6

Folder 1

Notebook 29, Clippings, 1865-1895.

Box 6

Folder 2

Notebook 30, Clippings, 1896-1897.

Box 6

Folder 3

Notebook 31, Clippings, 1892-1902.

Box 6

Folder 4

Notebook 32, Clippings, 1893-1896.

Box 6

Folder 5

Notebook 33, Clippings, 1894-1897.

Box 7

Folder 1

Notebook 34-35, Clippings, 1861-1897.

Box 7

Folder 2

Notebook 36, Notes on Gas, Coal, Oil, Street Lighting etc., 1870-1878.

Box 7

Folder 3

Notebook 37, Clippings Titled "Inventions, Discoveries, and other Useful Information, 1875. John M. Slaney, Camden, N. J.", 1852-1877.

Box 7

Folder 4

Notebook 38, Notes Titled "Relating to Gas Works, on Apparatus, the Manufacture Storage, Distribution, Chemical Analysis, and useful Tables & useful information. John M. Slaney, Camden, N. J. 1871."

Box 7

Folder 5

Fragments, n.d.

Box 8

Folder 1

Notebook 39, Clippings of Diagrams Titled "Gas Meters and its Improvements since the year 1813. H. C. S. Slaney, 1894."

Box 9

Notebook NIL

NIL