

COLONEL BENJAMIN HANKS (1755 - 1824)

Norwich, Connecticut
Windham, Connecticut
Litchfield, Connecticut
Mansfield, Connecticut
West Troy, New York

Benjamin Hanks was born in Mansfield on October 29, 1755. His father, Uriah, was a farmer and a mechanic. Benjamin stayed on the farm until 1772 when he went to Norwich and was apprenticed to Thomas Harlan, a famous maker of clocks and watches.

He enlisted as a drummer, served twenty-seven days in the Lexington alarm, re-enlisted in the 3rd Regiment under General Putnam and was Colonel of a regiment of the Connecticut State troops.

In the early part of the Revolutionary War, Benjamin Hanks was a Tory. At that time he was very eager to procure tools to carry on the business of making clocks and watches; but, as Great Britain discouraged the growth of manufactures in the American Colonies, in order to keep her own population employed and to gain additional revenue from the taxes imposed on goods sent to this country, it was difficult to procure such tools. However, being a Tory, he stood a fair chance of getting them, and, going to New York City, by good luck he succeeded in purchasing a set of tools. He had, however, been watched; and, before he reached home, he found that, unless he made his escape, he would be arrested. Therefore, he locked the tools in a desk, and went away, telling his wife to invite the officers to search the house if they wished. Finding that he had left, the officers declined to search the house, saying that would be of no use, for, if he had purchased any tools, he had taken them with him. Soon after this he became a Whig, took an active part in support of the Revolutionary cause, and was made colonel of a regiment.

In 1777 he moved to Windham. On May 16, 1777, he advertised that he was a clock and watch maker, opposite the Court House, Windham. On August 14, 1777 he presented a petition to the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut that he be granted a "Premium" to construct a Stocking Loom. This petition was denied. On April 1, 1779 he advertised that he was still a Clock and Watch Maker in Windham.

In 1780 Hanks moved from Windham to Litchfield. After moving to Litchfield, he took a contract to make a clock for the Old Dutch Church at Nassau and Liberty streets in New York City, which would be wound automatically by air. In 1783, he petitioned the General Assembly for a patent for this invention which was granted. The patent was for fourteen years. He advertised in Litchfield in 1785 that he was a clock and watch maker and that he was making surveyors' compasses.

In 1786 he began casting church bells in Litchfield and on August 19, 1787 the Fairfield Gazette commented on the fact that Mr. Hanks had placed an excellent bell in the belfry of the Litchfield meeting-house.

Early in 1790 he announced in Litchfield that "The Brazier Business would be carried on (for a few weeks only) at the shop of Mr. Benjamin Hanks, a few rods south of the Court House." Shortly afterwards he moved to Mansfield where he continued to make clocks, bells, surveyor's compasses and carried on a woolen business.

In Mrs. Caroline Wright (Hanks) Hitchcock's original manuscript of the Hanks family is this statement. "In 1797 Benjamin (Hanks) made the first two 4-pound cannons made in the United States. They were carried by the First Company of Connecticut Artillery and are now at the foot of the Liberty Pole in the State Arsenal Building at Hartford, Connecticut." A recent letter (August 15, 1962) from the Connecticut State Library reads as follows - "From available evidence, these cannons are supposed to be the two noted in Middlebrook's Salisbury Connecticut Cannons' as Hanks guns. These were apparently in the State Arsenal in Hartford in 1888 and were probably transferred to the State Armory on, or soon after 1909. The State Library received two brass cannons from the State Armory in 1935. They are on display in our ground floor Museum."

He was Worshipful Master of St. Pauls (Masonic) Lodge in Litchfield from 1782 to 1786. The original charter was granted by the Massachusetts Grand lodge on June 1, 1781, and bears the signature of Paul Revere as Senior Warden, another maker of bells. Hanks was elected Senior Warden of the lodge at its organization meeting on June 13, 1781.

In 1808 he took his son Julius into partnership in the bell and brass foundry business in Gibbonsville (later West Troy, now Watervliet) New York. On July 20, 1808 there was an advertisement in one of the local newspapers.

"Bells cast in the old foundry at Mansfield, Connecticut and at Troy, N. Y. by Benjamin Hanks & Son. They also have surveyor's compasses upon the Rittenhouse improved plan. The business in Mansfield will be managed by Truman Hanks of Ashford."

In the records of Hadley, Massachusetts, we read of a bell weighing 932 pounds that was purchased of Benjamin Hanks of Mansfield.

On November 16, 1816, Hanks was granted a patent for "Moulding and casting Bells." He was then living in West Troy.

In the old burying ground in West Troy, near the Watervliet Arsenal, was for many years a single monument, bearing these words, "In Memory of Col. Benjamin Hanks Who Died December 17, 1824 Age 70 years."

In 1918 he was reinterred in the Albany Rural Cemetery.

This history of Benjamin Hanks was obtained from three sources: 'Connecticut Clockmakers of the Eighteenth Century' by Penrose R. Hoopes; Vol. LXXXVI, "The New England Historical Register" January 1932 and from manuscript compiled by Caroline Wright (Hanks) Hitchcock

In the Deerfield Museum, Deerfield, Massachusetts and in the Suffield Historical Society in Shuffield, Connecticut are two identical compasses. 15-7/8" overall, with 6" needle. The body is wood, a paper card, brass needle circle, a declination arc, one level vial, the brass sights are 6-1/2" high. The compass cards are engraved "Hanks" "Mansfield".

HORATIO HANKS (1790 - 1838)

Mansfield, Connecticut; Gibbonsville, New York; Auburn, New York; Troy, New York; Albany, New York; New York City; New Bern, North Carolina; Cincinnati, Ohio; Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Horatio Hanks, the seventh child (twin) and fourth son of Benjamin Hanks and Alice Hovey was born in Mansfield, Connecticut in 1790. After a varied career, he died in Vicksburg, Mississippi in 1838.

The "Boston Budget" newspaper, date unknown of Boston, Massachusetts had this item, "In 1810, the first silk mill in America run by water-power was erected by Rodney Hanks and his nephew, Horatio Hanks."

He left Mansfield in 1816 and came to Gibbonsville where his father, Benjamin, and his brother, Julius, were then engaged in the bell, clock and mathematical instrument manufacturing business. About 1820, he left Gibbonsville and went to Auburn, New York where he began making surveyor's compasses and casting bells. He was in Auburn until 1826. Andrew Meneely was a workman with him from 1823 to 1826. Horatio came to Troy in 1826 and advertised in the Troy Sentinel from July 14, 1826 through December 1826 as follows:

Philosophical and Mathematical INSTRUMENTS, &c.

HORATIO HANKS has recently commenced business in Troy, near Starbuck & Gurley's Furnace, Fifth-street, and also in the immediate vicinity of Langdon's Steam Engine Factory and Machine Shop, and of the Bell and Cannon Foundry and Mathematical Instrument Factory of Julius Hanks, and offers his services to the public in the various branches of his business. He will make and accurately graduate all descriptions of Mathematical and Philosophical Instruments—having an improved and perfect Graduating Engine of three feet radius, on Troughton's plan, of his own make. He makes and keeps constantly on hand Spirit Levels, and warrants them to be accurate. Surveyors' Instruments of all descriptions constantly on hand, and warranted superior to imported instruments of the same descriptions. Having very perfect Engine Lathes, he will execute all kinds of Engine Turning, in all kinds of metal, such as Air Pumps, Soda and Beer Pumps, Screws for Coupling Boxes, &c. &c., Steel Taps, &c. &c.

Mr. Hanks invites Machinists and others, who wish to procure any articles of his manufacture, to examine his machinery and work, which he is confident will be a sufficient recommendation. He will make all descriptions of Turning and Engine Lathes, from 30 to 500 dollars each.

The location of this establishment is such as presents uncommon facilities for the speedy manufacture of every description of metallic machinery.

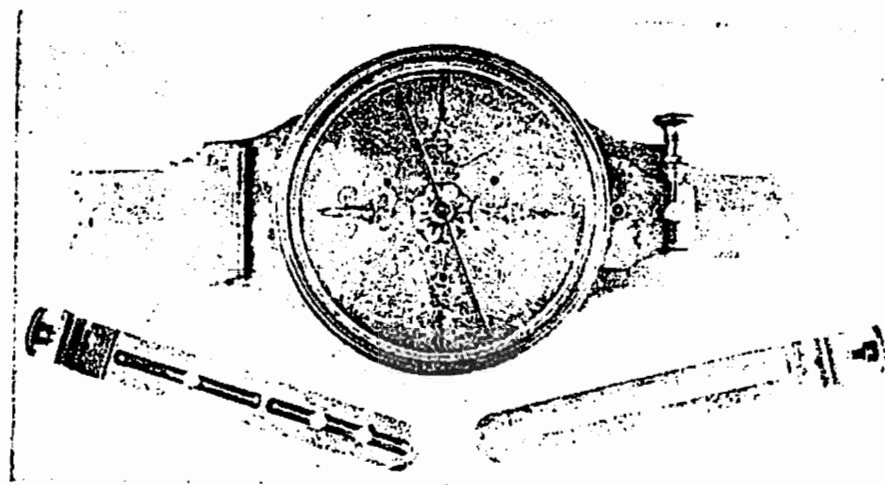
July 14 1826

He did not stay in Troy very long because in the Albany, New York directory of 1828 he is listed as an engineer. He had just started to make steam engines when his shop burned down and he lost all the tools that he had been accumulating for years.

He is in the New York City directories from 1828 to 1833, sometimes as a workman in a number of manufacturing establishments. He then moved to New Bern, North Carolina where he manufactured buckets until 1836. In that year, he went to Cincinnati, Ohio where he was employed by Hanks (L.B.) & Niles until 1838. In that year he went to Vicksburg, Mississippi where he erected a sawmill on the Yazoo River. He died there of typhoid fever in 1838.

There is illustrated a surveyor's

vernier compass which he made while he was in Auburn. It is 15-1/2" overall with a 5-7/8" needle.



Horatio Hanks Surveyor's Vernier Compass

JULIUS HANKS (1784 - 1855?)

Gibbonsville, New York
Troy, New York
Chicago, Illinois

Julius Hanks was born in Litchfield, Connecticut in 1784, the fifth child and third son of Colonel Benjamin Hanks (and Alice Hovey).

We have read in the history of Benjamin Hanks how he had taken his son, Julius, into business in Gibbonsville in 1808.

On September 11, 1810 Julius advertised in the Northern Budget as follows. Apparently he was in business for himself.

Bell-Founding.
JULIUS HANKS

INFORMS the public, that he has erected a **BELL FOUNDRY** on the west bank of Hudson River, opposite Troy, where may be had **CHURCH BELLS**, from 50 to 2000 weight. Broken Bells re-cast, and other Castings, in Copper or Brass, on the shortest notice.

J. HANKS also manufactures Surveyors' Compasses, Scales and Protractors, on the latest improved plan, which he warrants to be correct.

One or two Apprentices wanted, immediately, at the above business. (78) September 11, 1810.

In the Troy Sentinel of May 4, 1824 he advertised:

CHURCH BELLS,




WITH improved cast iron Yokes, made and warranted by JULIUS HANKS, at his old place at Gibbonsville, opposite the city of Troy, and near the Erie Canal. Also on hand, Town Clocks on an improved plan, and Surveyor's Instruments of the most approved construction, Copper and Brass Castings, &c.

85
May 4

In The Troy Sentinel of December 6, 1825 he advertised:

BELL FOUNDRY.



JULIUS HANKS having removed from Gibbonsville, and established himself in Troy, on Fifth-street near Starbuck & Gurley's Air Furnace and John C. Langdon's Machine Shop, is prepared to execute any orders in his line of business: viz:


CHURCH BELLS,

With Improved Cast-iron yokes—
Also Town Clocks, Copper and Brass Castings, Surveyor's Instruments of the most Improved Construction, &c. &c.

51
December 6

In the April 24, 1829 issue of The Troy Sentinel was this advertisement:

BELL FOUNDRY.




JULIUS HANKS, corner of Fifth and Elbow streets, Troy, is prepared to execute any orders in his line of business, viz: Church Bells with Improved Cast Iron Yokes; also, Town Clocks on a superior plan with escapements which operate without friction, and consequently require no oil. Copper and Brass Castings, Surveyor's Instruments of the most approved construction.

Nov 20
1829

On May 10, 1830 Alpheus and Truman Hanks have taken over the business with Julius Hanks as agent:

CHURCH BELLS,
Town Clocks, and Surveyors' Instruments.



The undersigned having purchased the establishment, stock, tools, &c. of J. Hanks, situated in Troy, N. Y. are now prepared to furnish Church Bells of all sizes, from 100 to 3000 lbs. Also, Town Clocks and Surveyors' Instruments of the most approved construction. Copper and brass Castings of all kinds, will be furnished at short notice and on the lowest terms.

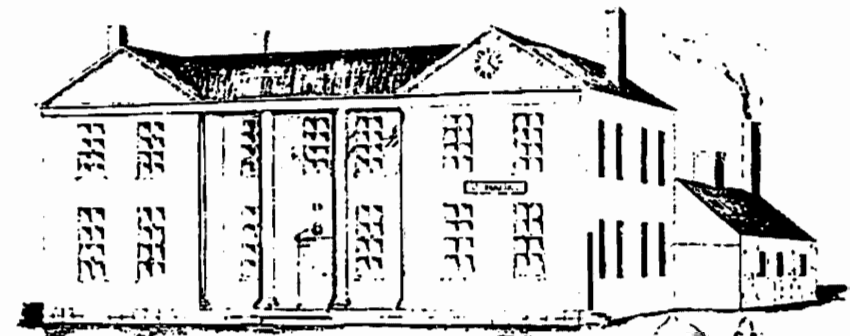
Orders addressed to **JULIUS HANKS, Agent,** Troy, N. Y. or to the undersigned, will be promptly attended to.

A. & T. HANKS.
Hartford, May 10

This arrangement continued until April 26, 1834 when Oscar Hanks, a son of Julius, states that he is successor to A. & T. Hanks "at the old stand, corner Elbow & Fifth Streets".

"Julius Hanks had moved from Gibbonsville to Troy in 1825. On June 15th, of that year he had purchased from Jacob D. VanderHeyden the corner lot (795) on the northeast corner of Fifth and Elbow Streets and afterward the one adjoining it (796), and there erected a two-story weather boarded building; the north half of which he occupied as a dwelling, and the south part divided into work and sale rooms. The entablature of the doorway within the columned recess on Fifth Street he had ornamented with a small bust of Benjamin Franklin. The dial of the clock, which he placed in the gable above the workshops, windowing on Fifth Street, gave considerable signifi- cance to the establishment where 'church bells, town clocks, copper and brass castings, and surveyors' instruments of the most improved construction' were made. East of the building and on the west side of the alley, he had built a foundry, a small wooden structure with a tall brick chimney" ("In Memoriam William Gurley, Troy, N. Y., 1890")

Herewith is an illustration of the building



"Julius Hanks was brought up by his father in the bell and mathematical instrument business. In 1808 his father established him in the bell foundry business at West Troy, N. Y. In time he built up quite a large business, and became the most celebrated bell founder of his time. He continued his business in West Troy (then called Gibbonsville) until 1825 when he removed to Troy and built a new foundry where he continued for some time in business until he failed, (when he left West Troy one of his former apprentices, Andrew Meneely, continued the business in that place, and in time became the most celebrated bell founder in the United States.) Julius Hanks in his prosperous days was a man of considerable importance in Troy, was a deacon in the Reformed Dutch Church, and highly respected, was a man of the strictest integrity in all business transactions, but like many others was unfortunate in business.

The writer has often heard the following story of him - Many years ago and at the time he was a bell founder most people were led to believe that bells contained silver to give them a better tone (such however was not the case in bells made in this country - although many of the old Spanish bells undoubtedly did have silver in them). In those days when a bell of any considerable size, say a thousand pounds or over was cast, he would have many visitors to see the operation - It is said that Julius had a large quantity of block tin dollar pieces cast for such occasions, and would throw them into the heated metal by handfuls, thus convincing the spectators by ocular demonstration that such was the fact, no doubt, but what most people in those days believed there was silver in all bells. In personal appearance Julius was a large fine looking man and one who always commanded respect. After his failure he removed west and died in Chicago." (From a Manuscript not dated, unsigned.)

Julius Hanks was the first president of the Board of Trustees of the village of Gibbonsville, which was incorporated in 1824.

The village of West Troy was incorporated in 1836.

The city of Watervliet was incorporated in 1896.

He is listed in the Troy directories as follows: From 1829 to 1838 as either a bell founder or a mathematical instrument maker, In the 1838-40 he is listed as sealer of weights and measures for the city of Troy. From 1840-41 to 1846-47, listed as living at different addresses in Troy.

In the Chicago, Illinois directory listed: From 1852 to 1857 as a clock-maker.

Gager's Chicago directory: For the year ending June 1, 1857, lists: "Hanks, Julius h. Sangamore bt. Adams & Monroe Conn. 9 years."

It is not known where Julius was located in Connecticut between the years 1846 when in Troy and 1852 in Chicago, nor is the exact date of his death or his burial place known.

There is illustrated a "Hoop Compass" patented by Julius Hanks on July 22, 1833. A copy of the patent cannot be located at the Patent Office in Washington, D. C. Apparently the Patent Office records of this period were destroyed by fire which occurred in the 1830's.

In the State Education Building in Albany, New York there is a Julius Hanks Hoop Vernier Compass. It is engraved "J. Hanks, 1830, Troy, N.Y." The hoop is 11" in diameter, with a 6" needle.

The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan has a Julius Hanks Surveyor's Vernier Compass. It is 14-3/8" overall, with a 6" needle and the sights are 6-1/2" high.

OSCAR HANKS (1810 - 1883)

Troy, N. Y.

Oscar Hanks was born in Gibbonsville (now Watervliet) about 1810, the second child and first son of Julius and Olive Hanks. He died in Cincinnati on April 21, 1883.

He is listed in the Troy directories from 1831 through 1845-46 as a math. inst. maker.

In the Chicago directories 1856-57 and 1860.

In the Cincinnati directories from 1876 to 1883.

In the May 21, 1830 issue of Troy Sentinel there is an advertisement to the effect that A. (Alpheus) & T. (Truman) Hanks have purchased the establishment of Julius Hanks in Troy and that Julius Hanks will be their agent. Alpheus was the brother and Truman was the son of Benjamin Hanks.

In the July 1, 1834 issue of The Troy Daily Whig, Oscar Hanks advertises that he is the successor to A. & T. Hanks and that he will continue the same line at the same address.

On July 25, 1838, David L. Seymour, Master in Chancery, sold to Truman Hanks, the Oscar Hanks property and land (lots No. 795 and 796) (North East Corner of Fifth & Elbow Streets). Truman Hanks, in turn, deeded the property to Anson G. Phelps, William E. Dodge and Daniel James.

The Gurley Museum has a "hoop" compass made by Oscar Hanks, that was patented by Julius. It has a 5-3/8" needle.

Also a Compass-Transit made by him. Telescope 11" overall, 4-3/4" limb, single vernier, 5-1/4" needle. This Compass-Transit is illustrated on page 78.

There is privately owned in Tennessee an O. Hanks Surveyor's Plain Compass. 15" overall, with a 5" needle.

Also one privately owned in New York State an O. Hanks Surveyor's Plain Compass. 9-1/4" overall, with a 5-3/8" needle.

The State Historical Society, State of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, has an O. Hanks Surveyor's Compass. It is 11" overall, with a 5-3/8" needle.

HANNA MANUFACTURING COMPANY (1904 - 1928)

John Hanna (1853 - 1932)

Troy, New York

John Hanna was born in Ireland on December 15, 1853. He died in Troy on March 17, 1932.

He entered the employ of W. & L. E. Gurley on December 27, 1886. He left on December 31, 1902 to start his own company, Hanna Manufacturing Company. It was incorporated on September 14, 1904. Mr. Hanna was elected president of the company. He re-entered the employ of W. & L. E. Gurley on June 29, 1919. His last working day with Gurley was September 9, 1922.

The Hanna Company manufactured transits and levels.

The Corporation was dissolved on January 2, 1928.

There is a Hanna Transit in the Gurley Museum. It has a single vernier, an 8" telescope, a 4-1/2" limb and a 3" needle. It was made about 1910.

* Thomas Harland WM. HART
* William Hart

The New Hampshire Historical Society of Concord, New Hampshire has a semi-circumferenter and a surveyor's plain compass made by Mr. Hart.

The semi-circumferenter is engraved Wm. Hart Fecit 1753. It is an oblong piece of wood, 15/16" thick. It is 4" wide and 8-1/4" long. The semi-circle 0° to 180° figures and degree marks are marked on the wood. The compass is nearly in the center of the main plate. The needle is 4-1/4" long. The brass alidade is one piece 8-1/4" long.

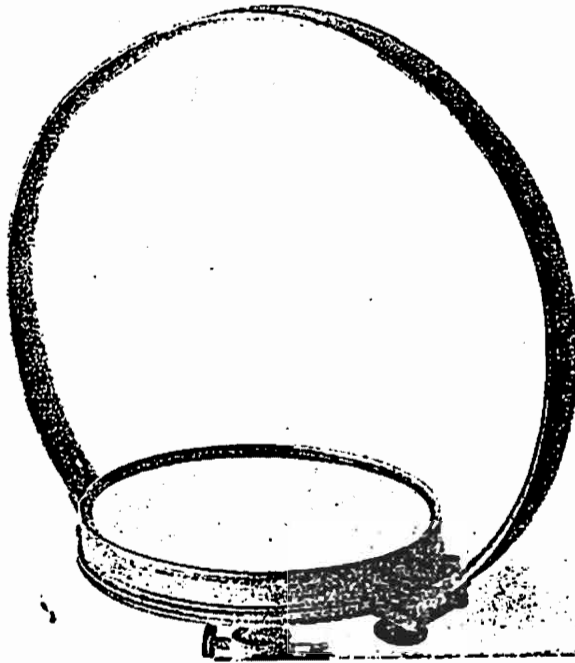
The surveyor's plain compass is engraved W. Hart Fecit. The main plate is wood 1-5/16" thick. There are 2 brass folding sights 5-1/4" long, 1-3/16" wide and 1/16" thick. There are brass hooks to hold the sight upright when the compass is in use. The needle circle is brass 5-1/8" outside diameter, 4-1/2" inside diameter. Engraved figures in quadrants. Paper Compass Card is figured 0 to 360.

Thomas Hartmann
STEPHEN HASSAM (1761 - 1861)

Charlestown, New Hampshire

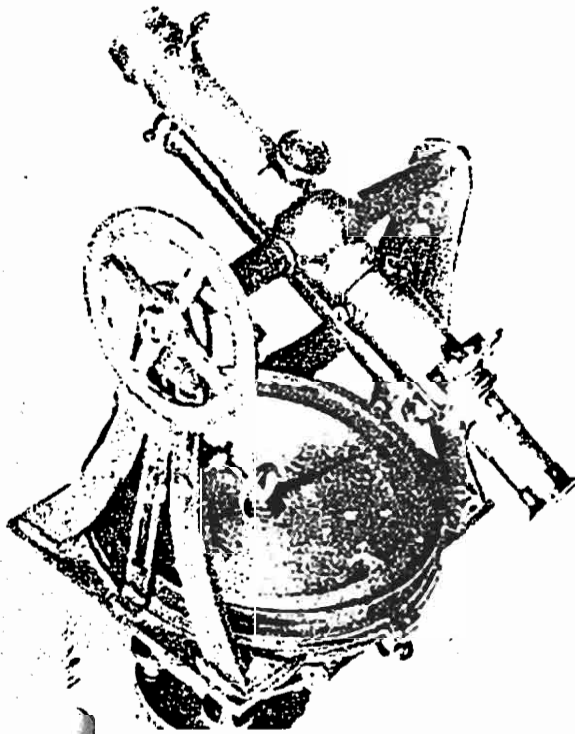
Stephen Hassam was born in Boston, Massachusetts about 1761. He died in Charlestown on February 4, 1861 and is buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Charlestown.

He learned his trade as a clockmaker in Grafton, Massachusetts. He may have been an apprentice of Aaron Willard in Grafton. He was married in Charlestown, New Hampshire on September 27, 1787 so he probably went to Charlestown before that date.



Oscar Hanks Hoop Vernier Compass

* John Harrison



Oscar Hanks Compass Transit