

The H. M. Pool Company

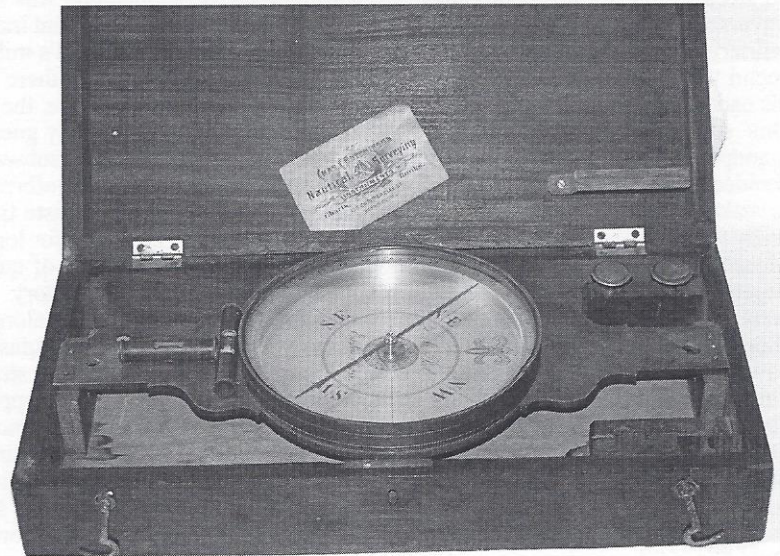
Horace Minot Pool (1803-1878) began working with his older brother John in the mid-1820s, making a variety of mathematical instruments in Easton, Mass. Using the name J. & H. M. Pool, they sold levels, compasses, and chains to surveyors, architects, and civil engineers. Within a few years, they had partnered with distributors in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Washington, D.C.

In 1841, when John withdrew from the firm to start another shop, H.M. Pool continued on his own. The brothers and their sons maintained personal and financial connection, with at least one of John's sons working for H.M. Pool. Pool showed two "circumferentors" [compasses] along with a tripod and two graduated sales, at the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association fair of 1850. The judges deemed the instruments "very well made."

The 1860 Federal Census of Industry reports that, with the help of six employees, Pool had an annual production rate of 55 compasses worth \$1650, 18 transits worth \$1800, 2 theodolites worth \$550, and miscellaneous items worth another \$500. Five years later, the shop's output included 3 theodolites, 6 engineers' transits, 15 surveyors' compasses, 12 portable compasses, 12 protractors, 30 leveling rods, 100 surveyors' chains, 107 sets of chaining pins, and 9,000 thermometers. H. M. Pool entered his surveying instruments into the 1874 Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association fair, and won a silver medal.

After Horace's death in 1878, his nephew John Murray Pool carried on the firm, as he had been shop foreman for the preceding twenty-five years. When John Murray Pool died in 1904, the firm continued under his son, Henry G. Poole (who added an "e" to his last name). The firm ceased operations about 1910. ■

Sources: *The Makers of Surveying Instruments in America Since 1700*, by Charles Smart; "The Pool Family of Easton, Massachusetts," by Donald & Anne Wing, *Rittenhouse Magazine* Vol. 4, No. 4 (1990).



Because of Pool's distributors in big cities, today it is not uncommon to find trade labels inside transit and compass cases from Boston makers G. C. King and S. Thaxter & Son, or Troy, New York maker W. & L. E. Gurley, and others. This plain compass, from a private collection, had a trade card for "Charles C. Hutchinson, Nautical & Surveying Instruments, Charts & Books," at 126 Commercial Street, Boston.