

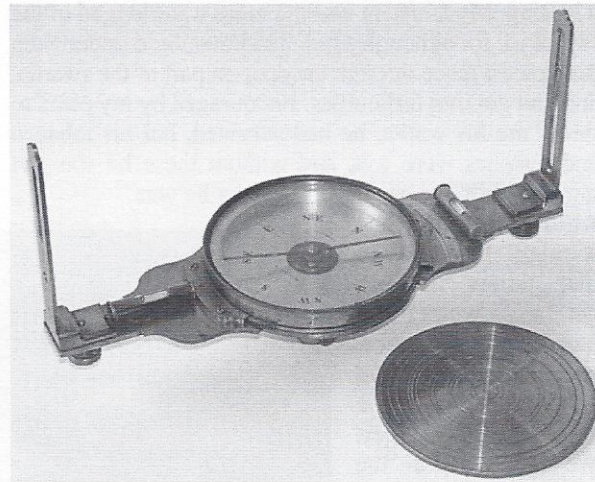
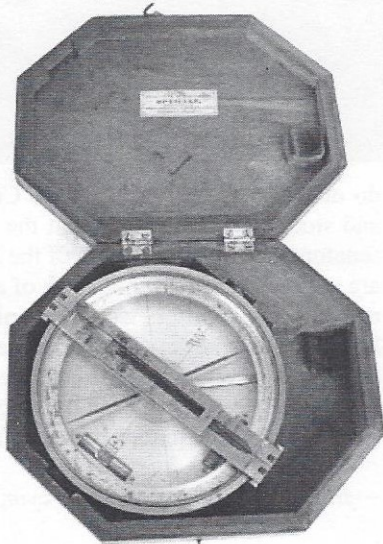
WILLIAM E. STIEREN OPTICAL CO.



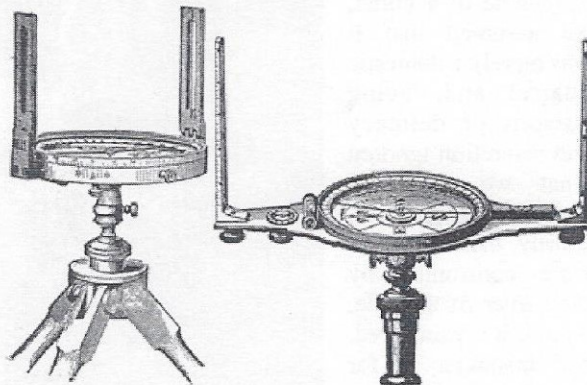
In 1891, the city of Pittsburgh's business tax assessment for the firm was \$41,161. In 1892, the W. E. Stieren company was awarded an Allegheny Public Works general contract for supplying the Bureau of Engineering and Surveys. By 1907, in addition to optical, scientific and meteorological products, the firm of "William M. Stieren Optical Company" was also selling a new kind of product – cameras. ■

William Edward Stieren was born in Salsgitter, Germany in 1836. When he was fourteen, his family immigrated to Philadelphia, and later moved to Baltimore. His early education and apprenticeships were in optometry, and while in Baltimore he learned how to make scientific instruments. Stieren moved to Pittsburgh in 1861, and in 1863 founded his firm "William E. Stieren, Optician and Scientific Instrument Manufacturer and Dealer" on 6th Street. Over the next decade he expanded the 6th Street building several times before finally purchasing a building on Smithfield Street. William E. Stieren was the first in Pittsburgh to grind the newly discovered cylinder lenses for correcting astigmatism. His firm became the largest optician shop in Pittsburgh, while also making and selling scientific instruments, binoculars and telescopes. Meanwhile Stieren became a community leader, serving as a director of the Fifth Avenue National Bank, participating in a local theatre, and belonging to several clubs. Married to Helene Schenck in 1861, their union produced two daughters and four sons. Of their children, it was William Morgan and Frederick G. who took over the business when their father died unexpectedly in 1884. Part of W. E. Stieren's estate included 3 lots along the old 6th Street business location, each 75' X 138' and valued at \$11,725 collectively.

Both William Morgan Stieren and Frederick G. Stieren had been raised within the optical shop, and had performed all the duties of apprentice and journeyman. Evidently they inherited their father's business acumen as well. In 1890, they built a two-storey brick addition to their Smithfield Street property.



SURVEYING COMPASSES



No. 5967.

5970.

The catalog illustration is circa 1903, and shows two compass styles offered by the Stieren company. [See the catalog online at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100224343>; the original resides at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.] The photographs show each compass type, both in private collections. The shield device on the trade label was always in use by the firm from its earliest days, and was often featured in period newspaper advertisements.

Technical Note: Robert Parrish, in his online "Tripod Thread Sizes of US Makers" lists a William E. Stieren tripod as 3.584 X 24 (size expressed in inches and decimals and by the number of threads per inch).