



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of American History*  
*Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the William Sawyer manuscript history of the Corliss steam-engine

NMAH.AC.1329

Holly Nelson

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	William Sawyer manuscript history of the Corliss steam-engine
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.1329
<b>Date:</b>	1988
<b>Extent:</b>	0.3 Cubic feet (1 box)
<b>Creator:</b>	Vogel, Robert M. Sawyer, William D.
<b>Language:</b>	English  Collection is in English.
<b>Summary:</b>	This collection contains a manuscript history of the Corliss Engine written by William Sawyer. The documents include text with written edits and illustrations.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated to the Archives Center by Robert Vogel, former curator in the Division of Engineering and Industry (now the Division of Work and Industry) in 2014. William Sawyer had given the materials to Vogel in 1988.

### Related Materials

#### **Materials in the Archives Center**

Chuse Engine and Manufacturing Company Records (AC1088)

Evolution of the Corliss Steam Engine Album (AC1016)

### Processing Information

Collection processed by Holly Nelson, intern, 2016.

### Preferred Citation

Corliss Steam Engine Reference Collection, 1988, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

### Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

## Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

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## Biographical / Historical

William Sawyer, the author of *Corliss, man and engine*, is an independent scholar of the history of the stationary steam engine. Sawyer's research was supported by materials from Brown University, the Smithsonian Institution, and other libraries and archives with holdings related to the topic.

The text was considered for publication by Lindsay Publications, Inc., a well-known publisher in the history of technology field, but was not published for "various reasons." The first twenty-one pages of this manuscript are in the typeset format used by Brown, with the rest unformatted. This particular copy dates to 1988, after it was typeset by Brown and before its eventual publication in *Stationary Power*, the Journal of the International Stationary Steam Engine Society in 1999.

This manuscript was donated to the Archives Center by Robert M. Vogel, Curator Emeritus of Mechanical and Civil Engineering at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution in 2014. He had been given a copy by the author for copy and content editing, but was unable to finish before his retirement. The hand-written edits on the manuscript belong to Vogel. Vogel also provided the illustrations credited to the Smithsonian Institution and the author.

According to Sawyer, a Corliss engine is a type of "stationary reciprocating steam engine, bolted down to a foundation, and used to provide power for factories and other users in which the machine(s) driven are fixed in one place" (Chapter 1, *Corliss—Man and Engine*). George Corliss received US Patent 6162 for his valve gear on March 10, 1849, a type of steam engine which ran more efficiently on less fuel. The patent covered the use of a wrist-plate to convey the valve motion from a single eccentric to the four valves of the engine, as well as the use of trip valves with variable cutoffs under governor control that were associated with Corliss Engines.

### Sources

Donor Foreword, Corliss Steam Engine Reference Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

*Corliss—Man and Engine*, Corliss Steam Engine Reface Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

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## Scope and Contents

The collection consists of a manuscript about George Corliss by William Sawyer, 1988, *Corliss--Man and Engine* with photocopies of drawings and illustrations.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged into one series.

Series 1: William Sawyer, History of the Corliss Engine Manuscript, 1988

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Corliss steam-engine  
Steam-engines

Types of Materials:

Drawings -- 1980-1990  
Manuscripts -- 20th century  
Photocopies  
Xerographic copies

Names:

Corliss, George H. (George Henry), 1817-1888

## Container Listing

### Series 1: William Sawyer, History of the Corliss Engine Manuscript, 1988

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|-----------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 1 | William Sawyer, History of the Corliss Engine Manuscript, Donor Foreword-Chapter 5, page 32, 1988   |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | William Sawyer, History of the Corliss Engine Manuscript, Chapter 5, page 33-Illustration 111, 1988 |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | William Sawyer, History of the Corliss Engine Manuscript, Illustration 112-Illustration 243, 1988   |

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