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Musical-Instrument Makers in New Jersey

1796-1860

CHARLES H. KAUFMAN

ALTHOUGH numerous instrument builders followed their trade in New Jersey during the nineteenth century, little information pertinent to their lives and work has come to light, and few of their products have survived to the present day. Some New Jersey builders achieved their reputations after leaving the state; some never gained more than a local following; others surfaced briefly and then disappeared, leaving only a few advertisements or a line in a directory to mark their activities. A complete list of New Jersey builders will be found in Table III, at the end of this article, with each name accompanied by all available personal data. In the following pages, however, somewhat more attention is paid to a number of craftsmen about whom a greater quantity of material has been discovered.

The United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, has published compendia of certain census data that provide industrial statistics by state for the years 1810, 1840, 1850, and 1860. Table I presents a summary of their contents pertinent to musical-instrument making in New Jersey.¹ The figures are in-

1. All sources of statistics come from the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1810: *A Statement of the Arts and Manufactures of the United States for the Year 1810*, "Various Manufactures," 34; 1840: *Compendium of the Sixth Census*, "Aggregate of the Statistics of the United States on the 1st of June, 1840, taken by the Marshalls, in pursuance of an Act of Congress passed the 3rd March 1839," 91; 1850: *Seventh Census of Manufactures of the United States, 1850, Embracing a Statistical View of Each of the States and Territories*, "New Jersey, Table X.—Professions, Occupations, and Trades of the Male Population," 146; 1860: *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Manufactures*, "State of New Jersey. Table No. 3.—Manufactures, totals of, 1860," 351.

accurate and the data reflect neither the scope nor the variety of the craft as practiced in New Jersey during the first six decades of the nineteenth century. A more accurate presentation will be found in Table II.

Between 1830 and 1860 117 instrument makers were active in New Jersey. The greatest number of them (68) were active during the '50's, and most of these (45) worked in the heavily settled counties of Bergen and Essex. The predominantly rural character of most of the remaining counties explains the paucity of makers present there. Of the makers active during the '50's, sixty-three of them produced keyboard instruments, reflecting the growing popularity of parlor organs, pianos, and melodeons during this decade.

James Sylvanus McLean

On 10 April 1790 President Washington signed into law the first United States Patent bill.² Under its terms, the earliest known American patent concerning a piano was granted on 27 May 1796 to James Sylvanus McLean of New Jersey for "improvement in piano-fortes." But a fire completely destroyed the Patent Office on 15 December 1836, after which the Congress, by an act passed 3 March 1837, appropriated \$100,000 for the purpose of restoring the immolated patent records. The McLean patent was not among those on the reconstituted list; indeed, we would not know of its existence were it not for a compendium of patents (1790-1804) that was submitted to the Speaker of the House by Secretary of State James Madison (18 February 1805) in which this patent is listed. Between 1790 and 1800 an inventor was required to apply for a patent in Philadelphia instead of Washington, but no record of McLean's "improvement" has been unearthed in either city.

At this point one must digress briefly in order to consider the work of a possible associate of McLean's, John Isaac Hawkins, who received two patent grants: 12 February 1800, Pianoforte, and

2. I am grateful to Mr. Robert Collins of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Patent Office, for his cheerful patience and assistance during our conversations, and for his unflinching and thorough answers to my numerous inquiries.

TABLE I

Category	Year			
	1810	1840	1850	1860
Musical Instruments Value in Dollars	0	0	*	*
Musical Instruments, Value Produced	*	*	*	*
Number of Men (Hands) Employed	*	0	*	*
Capital Invested	*	0	*	*
Number of Organ Builders	*	*	6	*
Number of Pianoforte Makers	*	*	23	*
Number of Musical Instrument Makers	*	*	3	*
Musical Instruments—Melodeons	*	*	*	*

(1860)

Number of establishments: 3 makers

Capital invested: \$14,000

Cost of material: \$5,725

Number of hands employed: 18

Annual cost of labor: \$6,456

Annual value of products: \$21,000

TABLE IIA†

Number of Makers Active in New Jersey,
by Decades

<i>pre-1830</i>	1830-1840	1841-1850	1851-1860
3	10	36	68

TABLE IIB†

Number of Makers Active in New Jersey,
by Specialty and Decade ‡

	<i>pre-1830</i>	1830-1840	1841-1850	1851-1860
Organ			5	13
Piano	2	9	25	41
Melodeon			2	9
Flute	1	3	5	2
Miscell.		1	3	6

* No data in compendia.

† The statistics presented in these charts were drawn from New Jersey Population Census records (1850, 1860); newspaper advertisements; city directories; business directories.

‡ The total number of makers on each of these charts will not equal one another, owing to the fact that some makers were active in more than one specialty and worked in more than one location in each decade.

24 October 1800, Musical Instruments, both of which, since they were issued to Hawkins when he was living in Philadelphia, are outside the scope of this study. Daniel Spillane, in his *History of the American Pianoforte* (1890), provides considerable information about Hawkins, some incorrect, some conjectural, none verifiable; and it is Spillane who suggests that a connection existed between Hawkins and McLean, holder of the now-lost first American piano patent, and places both of them in New Jersey. In précis, Spillane states:

It has long been known that pianos were made in Bordentown, N.J., during the latter part of the last [eighteenth] century, in a small way, and incidentally it has been asserted that it was in this village that Hawkins made his experiments in "uprights" in 1799, but this cannot be verified. Hipkins also stated in his earlier writings [unlocated] in connection with Hawkins that the latter lived in Bordentown, N.J., originally, when he produced his "portable upright grand," but how the London historian discovered this information cannot be learned. This is, however, not true to the extent that Hawkins lived in Philadelphia in 1799-1800, and several succeeding years. . . . McLean probably is the piano maker that lived in the former place [Bordentown]; although his name cannot be traced in local annals or records of any kind. There was an expert cabinetmaker, amateur painter, and musician, however, [who] lived in Elizabethtown, N.J., in 1790 or thereabouts, whose name corresponds partially with the inventor under reference who may have been the real person sought after in regard to the 1st pianoforte patent. . . . McLean's patent was for "alterations in the scope and make of the pianoforte. . . ."³

If it were accurate, Spillane's opening statement would be quite helpful, but there is more and better documentation available about life in sixteenth-century Florence, Italy than there is about life in eighteenth-century Bordentown, New Jersey. Spillane's statement that "it has long been known that pianos were made in Bordentown . . ." verges on the ridiculous; virtually nothing is known about commerce and craftsmanship in the community during the eighteenth century. Philadelphia directories for the years 1796-1800 and 1803-1804 do not carry Hawkins' name. Therefore, he

3. Spillane, pp. 111f.

might well have lived elsewhere; indeed, as will be shown, Hipkins may have known what we did not—that Hawkins might have been in Bordentown prior to 1800. The only public record of Hawkins' Philadelphia residency is in the city directory for the year 1802, at which time he occupied rooms at numbers 15 and 9 South Fifth,

TABLE IIC*
Number of Makers Active in New Jersey,
by Location and Decade

	<i>pre-1830</i>	<i>1830-1840</i>	<i>1841-1850</i>	<i>1851-1860</i>
Bloomfield	1	2	3	2
Bordentown	2			
Camden		1	3	2
Fort Lee		1	3	1
Hackensack		2	6	12
Hanover (Morris Cty.)			1	
Hoboken			1	2
Jersey City		1	2	8
Lodi				3
Middletown (Monmouth Cty.)			1	
Newark		4	13	25
New Brunswick				3
North Bergen				2
North Orange			2	
Paterson		1		2
Phillipsburg				1
Rahway				2
Springfield (Essex Cty.)			1	
Trenton				1
Washington (Warren Cty.)				3
Woodbridge			2	

* The statistics presented in these charts were drawn from New Jersey Population Census records (1850, 1860); newspaper advertisements; city directories; business directories.

and was listed as a "patent piano-fort maker."⁴ There is no immediate confirmation of McLean's residence. No extant eighteenth-century documents pertaining to either Union County or to Elizabethtown contain any record of a McLean, much less of an individual who corresponds to Spillane's talented cabinetmaker. Finally, Spillane's citation of the McLean patent does not correspond to the description in James Madison's list of 1805.

But investigation of the proposition that McLean and Hawkins may have lived and worked in Bordentown has brought to light some provocative, positive evidence. During the late eighteenth century, Bordentown was part of Chesterfield Township, Burlington County. Tax ratable lists for Bordentown carry the name "John Hawkins single man" during the years 1795 and 1796. No records of the years 1797 through 1801 have survived, and Hawkins' name does not appear in subsequent tallies. The same archives preserve the name "Dr. McLean at the Bordentown Academy, single," in 1795 and 1796. His name too is missing when the ratables continue in 1802. The *State Gazette* (Trenton), on 12 July 1796, published a list of letters remaining in the Trenton Post Office, among which was one for Dr. James McLean, Bordentown.⁵ The only late-eighteenth-century McLean in New Jersey is Dr. John McLean (1771-1814), a Glasgow-born physician who achieved considerable prominence in New Jersey after his arrival in 1795. But Dr. McLean settled in Princeton where he served as a practicing physician and Professor of Chemistry at the College of New Jersey. No connection between him and either Bordentown or the Bordentown Academy has been discovered. It is unlikely that Dr. McLean of Princeton and Dr. McLean of Bordentown are the same.⁶ While circumstantial evidence seems to indicate that McLean was indeed a New

4. *Philadelphia Directory, City and County Register, for 1802* (Philadelphia, 1802), p. 113.

5. Chesterfield Township Ratables, 1795, 1796, 1802, in the New Jersey State Library, Trenton. *State Gazette* (Trenton), 12 July 1796.

6. Stephen Wiches, A.M., M.D., *History of Medicine in New Jersey and of its Medical Men from the Settlement of the Provinces to A.D. 1800* (Newark, 1879), pp. 41-44.

Jerseyan who worked in Bordentown, the issue of the first American piano patent must remain unresolved.

It is possible, but hardly probable, that John Hawkins and James McLean would be coincidentally juxtaposed on a ratable list. In all probability these individuals were the ones responsible for significant early contributions to American piano building, and assuming this to be so, it is unlikely that they were unknown to one another. A craftsman practicing an exotic trade in a small village could hardly have been unaware of a colleague's presence. Collaboration between them is not unthinkable. Unfortunately, further illumination of their life and work and confirmation of their relationship must await the discovery of more conclusive facts.

Henry Pilcher

Henry Pilcher first made himself known in the *Newark Daily Advertiser* on 18 June 1833 (see Figure 1). From his advertisement, one learns that he had "commenced a Manufactory" where he produced organs and pianofortes utilizing "his experience under the most proficient masters in London." Pilcher also offered his services as a repairman and a tuner of "Musical Instruments of every description," and he advertised a "choice collection of Musical Instruments constantly on hand," including flutes, flageolets, violins, and guitars. At that time he served as Newark's first and only musical supply house—he also sold "a choice selection of new English Songs." This advertisement appeared frequently until the summer of 1835, at which time he ceased referring to himself as an instrument maker. When the first Newark directory was published in 1835, Pilcher's "shop" address appeared as "Front near Fulton," indicating that he had given up his first factory on Broad Street and apparently was restricting his activities to repairing and tuning. In 1836 he moved to Centre Street, and some time during that year he left Newark.

During at least part of 1837 Pilcher was in New York City where one of his children was born, a fact that is confirmed in the New Jersey Census (1850). Sometime in 1837 he moved to New Haven and opened a place of business at 18 State Street for the manufac-



FIGURE 1. Henry Pilcher (1798–1880). Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society, New York City.

ture of organs.⁷ By 1840 his name was no longer carried in New Haven directories. His name reappeared, however, in the Newark directory for 1844/1845, and his occupation was given as organ builder, occupying premises on Centre Street. He then moved back to New York City where he lived until 1847, after which his name was again listed in the 1848/1849 Newark directory as an organ builder.

There is, however, some confusion in documentation pertinent to Pilcher's residence between 1850 and 1858. Margaret E. Lippencott, writing in the *New-York Historical Society Bulletin* (1943) claimed that Pilcher moved to St. Louis in 1851.⁸ Yet Newark di-

7. New Jersey population census, 1850; *Patten's New Haven Directory for the Year 1839* [pp. 40–43]. Pilcher's name does not appear in New York City directories, 1831–1843. Henry Pilcher was the proprietor of Henry Pilcher's Sons, established 1820 in Dover, England. In 1832 members of this firm came to New York where they were employed by the piano maker Henry Erben. Eventually they concentrated their efforts in the South and Southwest. See William H. Barnes and Edward B. Gammons, *Two Centuries of American Organ Building* (Glen Rock, N.J., 1970), p. 141. This source should be used with caution, owing to inconsistencies in the text. Also see Margaret E. Lippencott, "Henry Pilcher, Organ Builder," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin*, xxvii (1943), 87–93.

8. Lippencott, p. 91.

rectories carried his name from 1850 through 1853/1854 and gave his business address as 117 River Street, his home address as 72 Plane. Confirmation of his presence in Newark, at least during 1850 and 1852, exists in Pilcher's manuscript receipt book (New-York Historical Society), in which Pilcher's landlord recorded rent payments for the River Street premises during these years. The Newark directory for 1854/1855 lists his address as "enquire 17 Fulton," and in the *Newark Daily Advertiser* on 10 February 1854 Pilcher gave notice of a change of his address to North Orange. For the years 1855-1858 his directory address was given as "North Orange," reinforcing the validity of his notice of 10 February 1854. But in his receipt book there are entries that record payment for rentals in St. Louis during 1855, 1856, and 1857, thus bringing into question Pilcher's actual location. It is unlikely that compilers of the Newark directory would have committed the same error in three successive volumes, yet there is the evidence of the St. Louis entries in his receipt books for the three years in question. Verification of his residence must await discovery of further evidence.

In the 1850 New Jersey population census Pilcher was recorded as fifty-two years old, English-born, and the father of six children, whose ages and birthplaces confirm their father's presence in New York City (1837) and in New Haven (1839). The oldest child, William (age twenty), was listed as an organ maker. Neither Henry nor William was included in the 1859 Newark directory or in the 1860 population census.

Newark newspapers carried little advertising by Pilcher during his career in that city. On 10 October 1848 he revealed in a notice in the *Newark Daily Advertiser* that he then manufactured church and parlor organs, repaired and tuned pianos, organs, and accordions, but he did not mention piano making. On 9 December 1851 the same newspaper gave notice that he had recommenced building pianos and was again selling music. His final advertisement (10 February 1854) told of his move to North Orange.

Repetitions of Pilcher's public notices were rare and he apparently achieved a modest success. During the year 1850, the only period for which his financial statistics are available in census records, he had \$5,000 invested in his business, which was manned

by eight male employees averaging \$300 per month in collective wages. His manufacturing process consumed:⁹

Mahogany in the value of	\$300
Other wood in the value of	700
Tin, Lead, Zinc in the value of	450*
Hardware in the value of	200
Gold leaf in the value of	200
Coal	4 tons
<hr/>	
Total raw material	\$1,850 (excluding cost of coal)
Rent (117 River St.)	250†
Yearly labor (300 × 12 months)	3,600‡
<hr/>	
Total expense	\$5,700

* This datum appeared in the "Products of Industry; Newark" section of the 1850 population census, but was absent from the 1850 Industrial Census.

† From Pilcher's receipt book, New-York Historical Society.

‡ It is not known whether this figure includes proprietor's income.

Pilcher's total production for the year comprised thirteen organs with a value of \$9,000. This number unquestionably represents retail value; Pilcher used no middlemen but sold directly to the customer. His factory, therefore, earned \$3,300, probably not including the proprietor's income—an excellent performance. The average price of Pilcher's instruments—nearly \$700—indicates either that he had inflated his earnings or that he specialized in large, institutional organs. The latter conclusion could account for his limited retail advertising. The *Newark Daily Advertiser* of 26 December 1850 provided a description of one institutional instrument in a review of a concert given in Newark's First Presbyterian Church on 25 December:

. . . the new organ which was opened on the occasion of the concert . . . appeared to equal the highest expectations and reflects credit on Mr. Pilcher, the builder. The case is a beautiful design, ornamented in the French style, with white and gold. Its height is 20 feet, width of front 15 feet. The whole organ comprises 22 stops of which 2 are pedals, and 7 in the swell, extending the full compass of the organ. The number of pipes is 1,081. The largest diapason pipe is 16 feet—extending to triple C—and the largest metal pipe, 11 feet in length.

9. New Jersey Industrial Census, 1850; New Jersey Population Census, 1850.

Alexander and James Pirsson

Between 1830 and 1846 Alexander T. and James Pirsson followed musical professions in New York City.¹⁰ Alexander was, at various times, an organist, music teacher, and Professor of Music (1830–1839; 1844–1846); James manufactured pianos (1830–1846) and eventually became the principal of an important company bearing his name. During Alexander's absence from New York (1840–1844) he unsuccessfully attempted to organize a piano manufactory in Newark at 204 Broad Street. In the Newark directory (1840/1841) he entered a display advertisement with the following copy: A. T. Pirsson Piano Forte Manufacturer, and Teacher of the Piano and Organ, 204 Broad Street. Keeps constantly on hand very superior pianos of different prices, which he warrants to purchasers, and will keep them in tune one year gratis. House 16 Commerce St.

The same notice appeared in the 1843/1844 directory, but with Pirsson's new address, 6 New Street. In 1850 Theodore LaFoy, Newark musical instrument dealer, advertised two of Pirsson's pianos: a seven-octave instrument at a cost of \$275, and a six and one-half octave instrument at a cost of \$250.¹¹ Alexander was not to make a significant contribution to American piano building, as did his brother. Although he advertised aggressively in Newark newspapers his major effort focused on the sale of pianos and music and at building a student following. Notices in which he described himself as a piano builder did not appear with any consistency, and he probably met with little success in this field.

Chabrier Peloubet

According to the Reverend Francis Peloubet, family chronicler, Guy Chabrier (fl. 1298), Chevalier of the King, Seneschal of Perigord and Quercy, founded the line from which Louis Michel François de Chabrier de Peloubet descended.¹² Louis Michel's father,

10. Longworth's American Almanac, *New York Register, and City Directory for the [—] Year of American Independence.*

11. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, 23 April 1850.

12. Anon., *Family Records of Joseph Alexander de Chabrier de Peloubet, the first of that name in the United States, with the funeral address of his eldest son,*

Louis Alexander, fought with the king's army during the French Revolution. He was tried and sentenced to death by a revolutionary tribunal, but he escaped from prison, with the aid of friends, and fled to Germany, where he learned to make flutes, fifes, and clarinets. In October 1803 Louis Alexander emigrated to New York City where he married in 1805. His son, Louis Michel François, later known as Chabrier, was born in Philadelphia, 22 February 1806. Louis' family moved through the Hudson Valley, residing in Athens, Hudson, and Catskill, New York, but by 1829 Chabrier had returned to New York City where he married in 1829 (see Figure 2). Although no documentation confirms it, he undoubtedly learned the woodwind-maker's trade from his father.

Chabrier continued his business in New York until 1836 when he transferred his family to Bloomfield, New Jersey.¹³ A Peloubet flute in the Smithsonian Institution carries the stamping "C. Peloubet / New York" on all three sections; and the additional "Factory at Bloomfield, N.J." on the foot. Peloubet, therefore, may have operated a factory in Bloomfield while maintaining a sales facility in New York. Peloubet's first plant, in "Pierson's Mill," 3 Myrtle Court, Bloomfield, served him until 1842 when he relocated at 86 Orange.¹⁴ After a fire destroyed this facility (1869), he built two new factory buildings on Orange Street.¹⁵

Louis Michel de Chabrier de Peloubet, who died November 28, 1885 (n.p., 1892). This volume, in the Bloomfield, New Jersey, Public Library, was prepared by Joseph Peloubet in 1889. The genealogical data contained in it were researched in Europe by the Reverend Francis Peloubet. Also see *Adventures of Joseph Alexandre de Chabrier de Peloubet At the Time of the French Revolution Together with some account of his Forebearers in France & the founding of the Peloubet family in America* (San Francisco, 1953). This is an anonymous translation of a manuscript by Joseph Alexandre, edited by Harold A. Small.

13. *Longworth's . . .*, 1829-1837.

14. "Genealogy and History of Some of the Old Families of Essex County, New Jersey, with their Industries. From the Writing of Mr. John E. Franzen," Vol. 2, "Historical Miscellany" (n.p., n.d.), transcript, DAR Library, New Jersey Historical Society.

15. In 1873 Peloubet entered into a partnership with a Mr. Pelton, about whom no information is currently available. The resultant Peloubet-Pelton Standard Organ Company functioned until 1880 when the partnership was dissolved and Peloubet retired. During his lifetime the Peloubet-Pelton Company operated one of

In 1840 Peloubet owned real estate valued at \$600.¹⁶ According to the 1850 Census, he had accrued \$3,000 capital in his "musical instrument factory," where he was using \$800 worth of wood, metal, and ivory per annum in order to produce instruments in the value of \$3,500; his average monthly labor expense for four male workers was \$144 (it is not known whether this sum includes the proprietor's income). Hence Peloubet's profit in 1850, before overhead, was only \$972.

Labor (144 × 12)	\$1,728*
Raw material	800
	<hr/>
Total expense (excluding overhead)	2,528

* It is not known if this sum includes the proprietor's income. Peloubet's profit, before overhead, was only \$972.

Authorities¹⁷ have credited the Estey Organ Company of Brattleboro, Vermont, with the introduction of the melodeon, or American organ, to this country in 1856. Yet apparently this distinction properly belongs to Peloubet. In 1849 the Peloubet firm began the manufacture of melodeons and reed organs and advertisements for them appeared in Newark newspapers during the 1850's and 1860's. For example, in the *Newark Daily Advertiser* on 4 April 1854 George Duncklee, Newark music merchant, advertised "C. Peloubet's melodeons with his late improvement [?] on Carhart's reeds which has overcome the unpleasant reedy tone so objectionable in this class of instrument." Mr. Duncklee, a prime outlet for Peloubet, sold an assortment of "Peloubet's melodeons, with the Improved Tone that everyone admires who hears them."¹⁸

New Jersey's large manufacturing facilities, employing approximately 300 persons who worked in three factory buildings.

16. Sources of these and subsequent financial data pertinent to Peloubet are: New Jersey Population Census, 1840 and 1850; New Jersey Industrial Census, 1850 and 1860.

17. Sibyl Marcuse, *Musical Instruments: A Comprehensive Dictionary* (New York, 1964); Curt Sachs, *Real-Lexikon der Musikinstrumente zugleich ein Polyglosar für das gesamte Instrumentengebiet* (Berlin, 1913).

18. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, 4 May 1854.

Peloubet himself invited "all to try single and double sets of reeds, two registers, \$50-200."¹⁹ Peloubet's instruments were available in New York City at the sales rooms of H. Warren, in the Chickering establishment; in Newark at Duncklee's store; in Boston through J. C. Bates, 129 Washington Street.

The firm grew appreciably during the years 1850-1860. Peloubet's son, Jarvis (b. 1823), joined him in the family business and by 1860 the elder Peloubet was worth \$5,000 in personal property, \$2,000 in real estate, and the capital in his company had grown to \$9,000 (New Jersey Census). His yearly profit too had increased after he began manufacturing melodeons. His expenses in 1860 were as follows:

Lumber consumed, 15,000 feet, in the value of	\$ 675
Other articles consumed in the value of	1,600
Labor (193 × 12)	2,316*
	<hr/>
	\$4,591

* This figure does not include proprietor's compensation.

During 1860 Peloubet produced ninety melodeons, the total value of which was \$8,000. His profit, therefore, before overhead and proprietor's income, was \$3,409. The average price of his instruments, \$88.88, reflects the manufacture of small instruments for home use, rather than that of large, institutional organs.²⁰

Despite his having manufactured melodeons and reed organs for thirty-one years, only three surviving Peloubet instruments have been located. Two are in the museum of the Bloomfield Historical Society (see Figure 3), and one is in private hands. An instrument, formerly in the Caldwell, New Jersey, home of President Grover Cleveland, has dropped from sight. The two Bloomfield instruments give evidence of careful workmanship and good intonation and tone. Peloubet's flutes have fared better. Twelve have survived: two in the Smithsonian Institution; six in the Dayton C. Miller

19. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, 24 July 1854.

20. The low cost of wages (cf. Pilcher, 1850) probably does not reflect wages paid to Peloubet's son.

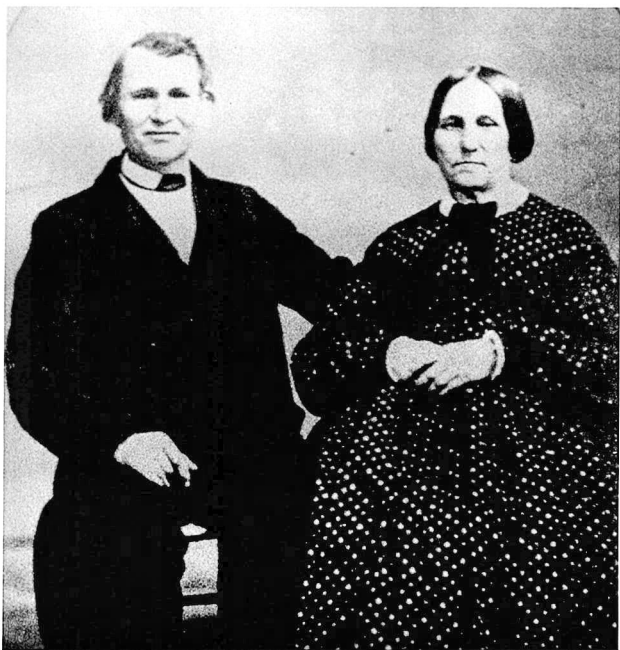


FIGURE 2. Mr. and Mrs. Chabrier Peloubet, date of photograph unknown. Courtesy of the Bloomfield Public Library, Bloomfield, New Jersey.

Flute Collection of the Library of Congress (see Figure 4); two in the Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan; one in the possession of Mrs. Nancy Swanborn, Brighton, Massachusetts; one in the possession of Mrs. Susan Farrell of New York City. They range in complexity from a boxwood, one-key, E-flat instrument with brass keys and ivory rings (Miller Collection Catalog no. 79) to an eight-key, cocus instrument in C with silver fittings and an ivory head (Miller Collection Catalog

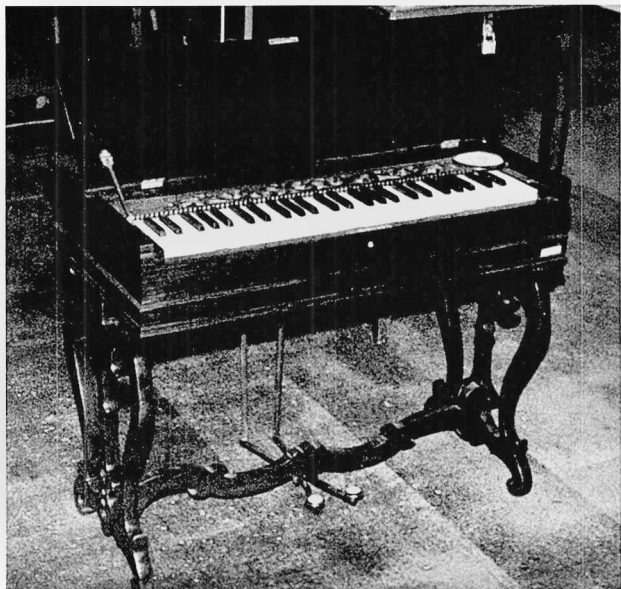


FIGURE 3. Melodeon by Chabrier Peloubet. Courtesy of the Bloomfield Historical Society, Bloomfield, New Jersey.

no. 1556).²¹ Peloubet entered three German flutes and one piccolo in the Fifth Exhibition of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association in Boston (1847). The award committee offered the following judgment of them:

These instruments were exceedingly well made, in good tune, and very easy to be filled, answering promptly and readily to the most rapid fingering. The tone was clear and fine, particularly on the lower notes.²²

21. Laura Gilliam and William Lichtenwanger, compilers, *The Dayton C. Miller Flute Collection: A Checklist of the Instruments* (Washington, D.C., 1961). I am indebted to Mrs. Farrell; Mrs. Swanborn; and to Dr. Robert E. Eliason, Curator of Musical Instruments at the Ford Museum, Dearborn, for calling to my attention the instruments in their respective holdings.

22. Anon., *The Fifth Exhibition of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic*

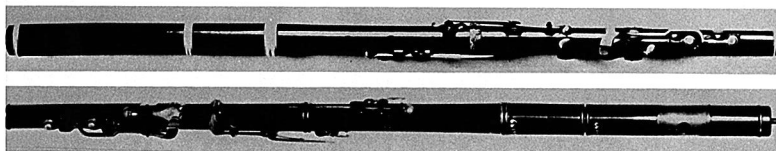


FIGURE 4. Flutes by Chabrier Peloubet. Upper: Flute in C; 8 keys, rosewood with silver keys and ivory rings; 668 mm.; No. 891, Dayton C. Miller Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Lower: Flute in C; 8 keys; grenadille with silver keys; 676 mm.; No. 56.199, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Joseph Peloubet, who prepared the *Family Records . . .*, tells us that Chabrier's reception in Bloomfield was cool, but during his years there he became one of the community's most respected and affluent citizens and a leader of the Bloomfield Presbyterian Church. His work in the field of temperance received much attention and he was an early advocate of the abolitionist movement. On 15 June 1844 he was cited by *The New Jersey Freeman*, an abolitionist newspaper, as an individual who helped "the cause of liberty by acting as an agent for this paper."

John Jardine

In 1832 the firm of Bridgeland and Jardine began manufacturing pianos in New York City at 451 Broadway. John Jardine, the company's piano maker, was the uncle of the Edward Jardine who later became the head of the well-known firm Jardine and Sons, organ builders. According to Daniel Spillane (1890) John, at the age of twenty-seven, was considered a master technician, and in 1833 he exhibited, for the first time in America, a "square piano having 'the bass strings crossing over the treble,'" two years before this technique was to be employed in a European instrument.²³ But after 1838 John disappeared from public trade notice, a sur-

Association, at Faneuil and Quincy Halls, in the City of Boston, September 1847 (Boston, 1848), p. 39.

23. This and the following quotation about Jardine are from Spillane, pp. 158f.

prising development in light of the successful start that his firm had made. Spillane, either unaware of the Jardine family history, or attempting to be kind, hedges on this issue, claiming that John “maintained a transient connection with piano making.” John’s brother, George, carried the family tradition forward and became a prominent piano maker in New York City. But where did the promising John Jardine finish the career that was truncated abruptly in New York, ca. 1838, and why did he leave his potential unfilled?

For about fourteen years the record of his activities is unclear. In 1850, however, his name was taken in the New Jersey census, and the records indicate that he had lived in Jersey City, with his wife, Harriet (b. 1813), and three children, for approximately fifteen years. At that time (1850) he was forty-six years old and was listed as insane. Apparently this affliction precluded his supporting Harriet and their children by his craft; his wife maintained a “fancy store” at the address given for the family. Although Jersey City directories carried Jardine’s name and trade from 1852 through 1857, in 1858 only his wife’s store was noted, and Jardine did not advertise in Newark or Jersey City between 1850 and 1860. Moreover, he does not appear in the 1860 Industrial Census. The possibility that the 1850 census taker made an error was eliminated in 1860 when the new tabulation contained Jardine’s name, age, trade, family, and birthplace—and again designated him as insane.

The Abbott Family

The first member of this distinguished family of piano builders to engage in the trade, John Abbott (b. London, 1815), learned his craft with the firm of R. and W. Nunns in New York City. In 1832 he opened his own factory (66 Walker Street) and in 1835 received a gold medal from the New York Mechanics’ Institute. The following year the Institute awarded one of his instruments a second prize. At that time John’s brother James was associated with him.²⁴ John had four brothers, all of whom were piano makers, but only he and James can be located ca. 1836. The name of a possible fifth

24. Spillane, p. 160.

brother, Nathaniel B., was carried in New York directories as a piano maker in 1839/1840, 1842/1843, and 1843/1844. In 1850, however, the directory gave his occupation as policeman. John Abbott's name did not appear in the New York directory for 1843, and Spillane claimed that he "went out of the trade in the course of a few years." But information in the New Jersey census of 1860 places him in that state ca. 1844, a plausible date in the light of his name's being absent in the New York directory of 1843. *Kirkbride's New Jersey Business Directory . . .* (1850) carried a display advertisement that locates the Abbott plant in Fort Lee and claims four first prizes for their instruments in as many years.²⁵ Besides conducting his business in Fort Lee, John Abbott owned a hotel in Hackensack where he lived with his brothers James (b. London, 1825) and William (b. England, 1816) and with four other piano makers, probably employees of the firm about 1850:

Joseph Perner	b. New York, 1828
John A. Whitfield	b. New York, 1817
Stephen Burdett	b. New Jersey, 1815
James Sigler	b. England, 1816

John Whitfield and John Abbott probably were good friends—Abbott named one of his children Whitfield. The two brothers whose whereabouts were unknown in 1836, Abiel and John M., operated a piano sales room at 297¹/₂ Broadway in New York City ca. 1850 and boarded at 100 York Avenue in Jersey City. It is tempting to speculate that these two acted as sales agents for their brother's factory in Fort Lee, but this connection has not been established. John M. Abbott had sufficient talent as a pianist to appear on the concert stage. On 14 May 1859 his name appeared in the *Newark Daily Advertiser* among a list of artists playing in a concert in Newark.

Some time before 1860 William Abbott, John Whitfield, Joseph Perner, and Stephen Burdett left the Abbott hotel in Hackensack.

25. *Kirkbride's New Jersey Business Directory, General Register, and Advertising Medium* (Trenton, 1850), p. 33. Subsequent data cited about the Abbotts are from Jersey City directories and from the New Jersey Population Census, 1850, 1860. The family name appears at times with two "t's" and at times with one.

But despite this loss John appears to have gathered about him a substantial enclave of piano makers, to judge from the 1860 census:

John W. Newson	b. New York, 1813
James Sigler	b. England, 1816
Charles Glosser	b. New York, 1840
George A. Mallory	b. New York, 1829
Christoff Ruff	b. Germany, 1818
Master Piano Maker	
William Bienmaster	b. Germany, 1835
Peter G. Fischer	b. Germany, 1798
William Ebel	b. Germany, 1818
Michael O'Mella	b. Ireland, [?]

Abbott had been quick to secure for himself the services of skilled German and Irish immigrant craftsmen who, with many of their countrymen, arrived in New Jersey during the '40's and '50's. At some time in the later nineteenth century, the Abbott factory was converted to the manufacture of piano actions, a business in which they engaged as late as 1890.

William Feyring

The *Pennsylvania Gazette* carried the following article in reference to an organ, recently installed in St. Paul's Church (23 December 1762):

It is of a new Construction, and made by Mr. Philip Feyring, Musical Instrument Maker, in this City, who may, with Justice, be said to be the best Hand at that ingenious Business on the Continent.

On 30 December 1762 the same newspaper described Feyring as . . . German by Birth, but [he] has for some years past, practic'd the making of Musical Instruments (particularly Spinets and Harpsichords) in this City, with great Repute.

In addition to building harpsichords, Feyring is known to have provided four churches in Philadelphia and one in Germantown with organs.²⁶

In October 1835 the Franklin Institute (Philadelphia) held its

26. William H. Armstrong, *Organs for America* (Philadelphia, 1967), pp. 28f.

Ninth Exhibition of American Manufacture. The "Report of the Committee of Premiums and Exhibitions," published in the *Journal of the Institute*, reported the award of an honorable mention "to Messrs. Conrad Meyers, C. F. L. Albrecht, E. N. Scherr, Groves and Whalen, William Feuring. . . ." ²⁷ William, a descendant of Philip Feyring, practiced his craft in Camden, New Jersey, having moved there from Philadelphia ca. 1840. He occupied premises formerly utilized as a candle factory. ²⁸ Unfortunately his career is poorly documented in public records. His name does not appear in any extant New Jersey census records, either of population or of industry. But the *Camden and Gloucester Directory* for 1850 confirms the presence in Camden of "William Feuring, Pianoforte Manufacturer; corner Market and 6th," and the *Camden City Directory* reported him working at 539 Market Street in 1864. Therefore, Feyring manufactured pianos as early as 1840 and as late as 1864. Regrettably, none of his instruments is known today, despite a productive career that spanned twenty-four years, and we are deprived of further knowledge concerning his work.

TABLE III

Musical Instrument Makers

The following alphabetical list of New Jersey instrument makers was prepared from city directories, business directories, and from a page-by-page reading of extant New Jersey census records.

Makers' birthplaces and dates were drawn from census records, but this information does not appear in all census tabulations. Census takers appear to have exercised considerable individuality when recording data. Locations and dates of activity other than those in New Jersey were deduced from the birthplaces and dates of the builders' children, as stated in census records. Makers' specialties are given as they appear in the sources.

27. *Journal of the Franklin Institute* (Philadelphia), XXI, N.S. XVII (Philadelphia, 1836), 322.

28. G. R. Prowell, *History of Camden County, New Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1886), p. 447.

Two words of caution: first, not all makers were independent entrepreneurs. Certainly some of them served as factory hands, but in many cases it is impossible to make such a determination. The concentration of piano makers in Hackensack ca. 1850/1860 probably resulted from the presence there of a known proprietor, John Abbott, but the presence of one or two craftsmen in a town would appear to be a good indication of independence. Second, one must bear in mind that this survey terminates with the year 1860 and that some of these makers pursued their trade after this date.

Under the heading *Dates of Known Activity*: a single year indicates that this was the only time during which the builder was known to be active; two years separated by a slash, thus, "1836/1860," indicate that the maker was known to be active during the period encompassed by and including the two years; the designation "ca. 1835" indicates that the maker was known to be active during that year and for an indeterminate surrounding period; the designation "ca. 1835/1860" indicates that the maker was known to be active between 1835 and 1860, and probably for an indeterminate period before 1835.

<i>Name, Birthplace and Date</i>	<i>Specialty</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Dates of Known Activity</i>
Abbott, James (b. London, 1827)	piano maker	Hackensack	ca. 1839/ 1860
Abbott, John (b. London, 1815)	piano maker	Hackensack Fort Lee	ca. 1836/ 1860
Abbott, William (b. London, 1816)	piano maker	Hackensack	1850
Badger, Alfred G. (b. Conn., 1814)	flute maker	Newark 35 Beers 35 Cottage 35 Cottage & 181 B'way, N.Y.C.	1846/1847 1848/1849 1850/1860
—————	music store keeper	Newark	1850
Bailey, John (b. England, 1811)	piano maker	Camden	ca. 1860
Baldwin, Augustin[e?] (b. N.J., 1838; listed in census as "female")	melodeon maker	Newark	1860
Baldwin, William (b. England, 1830)	piano maker	Jersey City	1852/1860

<i>Name, Birthplace and Date</i>	<i>Specialty</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Dates of Known Activity</i>
Bauer, Julius	claimed to be a maker of pianos and melodeons, but no corroborative evidence has been discovered; his claims appear unlikely; see <i>Newark Daily Advertiser</i> , 15 April 1856, Newark Directory 1856-1859	Newark	1856/1859
Bellmer, Martin (b. Hanover, Germany, 1823)	piano maker	North Bergen	1860
Bienmaster, William (b. Germany, 1835)	piano maker	Hackensack	1860
Boyce, John	piano manufacturer	Jersey City York St.	1854
Boyner, John	piano manufacturer	Fort Lee	1850
Brager, Joseph (b. Germany, 1840)	organ builder	Newark	1860
Browning, John	piano manufacturer	Hoboken Meadow & 3rd	1850/1851
Burdett, Stephen (b. New Jersey, 1815)	piano maker	Hackensack	1850
Cahoon (Cahoone), George (b. Rhode Island, 1812)	organ builder & piano tuner	Newark 383 Washington Pa. N.Y.C.	1858/1860 ca. 1848 ca. 1856
Carr, Charles	piano manufacturer	Hoboken	1851/1856
Chafrey, Michael	organ maker	Newark 12 Freeman	1852/1855
Coyer, Bernhart (b. Prussia, 1826)	piano maker	North Bergen	ca. 1860

<i>Name, Birthplace and Date</i>	<i>Specialty</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Dates of Known Activity</i>
Davies, Edward J. (b. England, 1810)	piano maker	Woodbridge (Middlesex Cty.) Rahway	ca. 1850 ca. 1860
Davies, John E. (b. England, 1804)	piano maker	Woodbridge (Middlesex Cty.) Rahway	ca. 1850 ca. 1860
Douglass, William B. and Harvey W., & Sommer, [?]	(Carhart's melodeon manufacturers)	Newark 119 Market St.	1856/1860
Driggs, Spencer B. (b. Michigan, 1823)	piano manufacturer	New Brunswick	ca. 1860
Ebel, William (b. Germany, 1818)	piano maker	Hackensack	1860
Emerson, J. C.	flute maker Professor of Inst. Music, Newark Acad. of Music	Newark 284 Broad St.	ca. 1838
Feyring (Fearing, Feuring), William (b. 1801; d. Camden, 1883)	piano manufacturer	Camden Market & 6th	ca. 1840/ 1860 1850
Fischer, Peter G. (b. Germany, 1796)	piano maker	Hackensack	ca. 1860
Glasser, Charles (b. New York, 1840)	piano maker	Hackensack	1860
Graves, Nathaniel	musical instrument maker	Newark 120 Plane	1852/1853
Hartwick, Ernest (b. Germany, 1831)	organ builder melodeon manufacturer music-book and musical instrument dealer	Newark 28 Mill St. 69 State St. 19 Day St.	1850 1855 1856/1858 1859/1860
Hauch, William	piano maker	Newark 31 Hamburg Pl.	1859/1860

<i>Name, Birthplace and Date</i>	<i>Specialty</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Dates of Known Activity</i>
Hawes, George	flute manufacturer wood and ivory turner	Newark 15 Court	1843/1848 1848/1860
Hawes, George, Jr.	wood and ivory turner	Newark 15 Court	ca. 1850
Hawkins, John Isaac	patent piano maker holder of 1800 patent, probably for upright piano	Bordentown Philadelphia	ca. 1797 1800
Hingh, William	piano maker	Newark 41 Hamilton 39 Hamburg	1853/1854 1855/1856
Hubolzer, James E. (b. New Jersey)	melodeon maker	Phillipsburg	ca. 1860
Jardine, John (b. England, 1804)	piano maker	Jersey City 22 Newark Ave.	ca. 1835/ 1860
Joralemont, [?], and Fielding, [?]	piano lock makers	Newark 20 Mechanic	1850/1851
Kennedy, [?], and Vroom, Phillip (q.v.)	melodeon factory in 1859 this firm had \$2,000 capital; used \$950 worth of lumber; \$1,500 worth of other material; employed 5 male hands; paid \$195 per mo. in wages; produced instruments valued at a total of \$10,000	Washington (Warren Cty.)	ca. 1860
Killen, Thomas (b. Ireland, 1826)	piano maker	Hoboken	1860
Kisselstein, Julius	piano maker	Newark 159 Market St.	1840/1841
Lowell, Ebenezer	organ builder	Newark	1860
Lumen, August (b. Germany, 1820)	piano maker	Camden	1850

<i>Name, Birthplace and Date</i>	<i>Specialty</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Dates of Known Activity</i>
McLean, J. Sylvanus	holder of first American piano patent (1796)	Bordentown	ca. 1797
Mallory, George A. (b. New York, 1829)	piano maker	Hackensack	1860
Martin, Thomas	piano maker	Newark 42 Columbia	1852/1860
Maul, Henry	organ maker	Newark 15 Grand	1856/1859
Maul, Ludwig (in 1859 his widow's name was in the Newark Directory)	organ maker	Newark 15 Grand	1856/1858
Merk, P. H.	manufacturer and importer of piano fortes, organs, melodeons, accordions	Newark 108 Broad	1859
Miller, Robert M.	musical instrument maker	Paterson 31 N. West	1857
Miller, William B.	piano maker	Newark 314 Broad St.	1852/1853
Moore, Robert (b. England, 1832)	organ builder	Newark 35 Rector	1850 1855/1860
Muller, Emile	musical instrument maker	Jersey City 17 Bloomfield	1856
Mundy, W. N. and Co.	piano makers	Jersey City	1842
Newson, John W. (b. New York, 1813)	piano maker in 1859 he owned \$5,500 worth of real property	Hackensack	ca. 1860
Oakes, Joseph	piano maker, employee of Henry Pilcher	Newark	1835/1836
O'Mella, Michael (b. Ireland)	piano maker	Hackensack	1860

<i>Name, Birthplace and Date</i>	<i>Specialty</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Dates of Known Activity</i>
Peloubet, Jarvis (b. New York City, 1834)	associated with his father, Louis (q.v.)	Bloomfield	1850
Peloubet, Louis Michel François de Chabrier de (b. Philadelphia, 1806; d. Bloomfield, 1885)	clarinet, fife, and flute maker 1829 – ca. 1850; organ and melodeon maker ca. 1849 – ca. 1881	N.Y.C. Bloomfield 3 Myrtle St. Orange St.	1829/ ca. 1836 ca. 1837/ 1842 1843/ ca. 1881
Perner, Joseph (b. New York, 1828)	piano maker	Hackensack	1860
Pilcher, Henry (b. Kent, England, 1/27/1798; d. Newark, 11/1/1880)	organ and piano builder, tuner, repairman	London, England Dover, England Newark Front St. 13 Centre St. New York New Haven Newark 27 Centre St. New York Newark 117 River St. h. 72 Plane enquire 17 Fulton North Orange St. Louis (?) Chicago Newark 44 Clark St.	ca. 1813/ 1820 1820/1832 1834/1835 1835/1836 ca. 1837 ca. 1837/ 1839 1843/1845 1845/1847 1848/1853 1854 1855/1858 1851/1862 ca. 1862/ 1871 1871/1880
Pilcher, John (error in <i>Newark Daily Advertiser</i> , 6/18/1853; corrected in later editions to Henry Pilcher)			
Pilcher, William	organ builder	Newark	1850
Pirsson, Alexander T.	piano maker	Newark 204 Broad St.	1840/1844

<i>Name, Birthplace and Date</i>	<i>Specialty</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Dates of Known Activity</i>
Richards, James C. (b. New Jersey, 1831)	piano maker	Springfield (Essex Cty.)	1850
Ronnberg (Rohnberg), William (b. Germany, 1803)	flute maker	Bloomfield 12 Dodd St.	ca. 1815 ca. 1834 1850
Rowell, William L.	organ builder	Newark 16 Cherry	1852/1853
Ruff, Christoff (b. Germany, 1818)	master piano maker	Hackensack	ca. 1850/ 1860
Schmidt, Gustavus	piano maker	Jersey City 45 Washington 195 Washington	1854 1856
Shiple, Henry	piano maker	Newark 124 Academy	1842/1844
Sigler, James (b. England, 1816)	piano maker	Hackensack	ca. 1847/ 1860
Spickers, Jacob (b. Prussia, 1827)	piano maker	Lodi	1860
Spickers, John W. (b. Prussia, 1822)	piano maker	Lodi	1860
Spickers, John W. P. (b. Prussia, 1829)	piano maker	Lodi	1860
Spilner, Henry	piano manufacturer	Jersey City 26 Shippenville	1854
Stiddig, William	musical instrument maker	Newark 85 Orange	1852/1853
Stoddard, Adam	piano maker	Newark 38 S. Market St.	1850/1851
Thatcher, Samuel (b. New Jersey, 1826)	melodeon maker	Washington (Warren Cty.)	ca. 1860
Thompson, Charles F.	piano maker	Paterson 12 Church	ca. 1859

<i>Name, Birthplace and Date</i>	<i>Specialty</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Dates of Known Activity</i>
Veitch, William	piano maker	Jersey City	1854/1855
Vodgt (Vogt), George (b. Germany, 1814)	piano manufacturer	Camden	1850
Vroom, Phillip (b. New Jersey, 1836; partner in firm of Kennedy and Vroom)	melodeon manufacturer	Washington (Warren Cty.)	ca. 1860
Wagoner, C. S. van	piano manufactory	Paterson	1837
Wake, John P.	piano manufacturer	Fort Lee	1850
Ward, Charles	musical instrument maker flute maker	Orange Newark	1850 1860
Wheeler, Lewis B. (b. New Jersey, 1793)	piano maker	Hanover (Morris Cty.)	1850
Whitfield, John A. (b. New York, 1817)	piano maker	Hackensack	1850
Whiting, George A. (b. New Jersey, 1825)	piano maker in 1859 this maker had \$5,000 capital; used \$175 worth of wood and metal; employed one hand at a monthly salary of \$45; produced pianos in the value of \$600	Middletown (Monmouth Cty.)	1850
Whittlesey, O.	piano maker	Newark	1845
Winkle, John P. van	piano maker	Jersey City 23 Garden	1854
Winkle, Moses van (b. New Jersey, 1835)	piano maker	Bloomfield	1860
Worch, Charles (Christian) (b. Prussia, 1822)	piano maker	Trenton	1860

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