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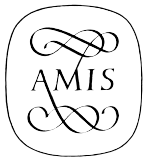

The 1799 Organized Upright Grand Piano in Williamsburg: A Preliminary Report*

John R. Watson

A 1799 combination six-stop pipe organ and upright grand piano, apparently with a history of ownership by some of Virginia's best-known families, joined the collection of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in 2012. The present article is a preliminary report on the instrument's re-discovery, its technical specification, provenance and historical context, and plans for its restorative conservation.[1]

On May 27, 1799, Williamsburg cabinet maker Benjamin Bucktrout unpacked and set up a remarkable keyboard instrument at the home of Judge St. George Tucker, one of Williamsburg's most prominent citizens. Bucktrout's receipt for payment, which survives in the voluminous papers of the Tucker family, named the instrument an "organized harpsichord" (fig. 1). Soon after the re-discovery of this receipt, an 1806 probate inventory from Shirley, a historic plantation on the James River in Virginia, came to my attention. It too referred to an "organized harpsichord" in the estate of Charles Carter who had died in that year. The likelihood that even a single organized harpsichord would have been in Virginia at the turn of the nineteenth century seemed unlikely at best, and the possibility that two had been here seemed impossibly remote.[2] Then in 2012, a long-rumored combination upright grand *piano* and pipe organ (fig. 2) resurfaced in a storage warehouse in Richmond, Virginia. Said to have come from Castle Hill plantation near Jefferson's Monticello in Albemarle County, the instrument was being offered for sale, and was acquired by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

*I thank Lou Dolive for his inventory and evaluation of the pipework and for reconstructing the stoplist. Tom Strange read an early draft and offered useful observations and encouragement. Laurence Libin was the first to notify me of the instrument's reappearance, and William Van Pelt facilitated its transfer to Colonial Williamsburg.

1. A brief report and photo were published in William T. Van Pelt, "Organ Update," *The Tracker: Journal of the Organ Historical Society* 28, no. 4 (1984): 8. The instrument then dropped from view for the next thirty-some years.

2. Organized harpsichords were exceedingly rare but not entirely unheard of in America. One was advertised in the *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser* published in Philadelphia on December 8, 1787.

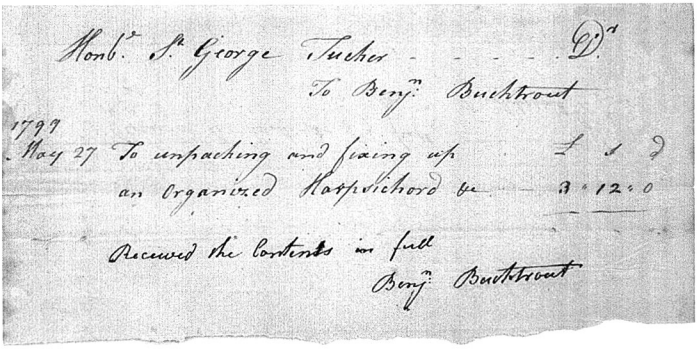
Hon^b^. S^t^. George Tucker - - - - - D^r^
To Benj^a^. Bucktrout
1799
May 27 To unpacking and fixing up £ s d
an Organized Harpsichord &c — 3 : 12 : 0
Recieved the Contents in full
Benj^a^. Bucktrout

FIGURE 1. A receipt for payment received by Benjamin Bucktrout from St. George Tucker for "unpacking and fixing up an Organized Harpsichord" dated May 27, 1799. Tucker-Coleman Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary. Photo courtesy of College of William and Mary.

Being the world's only known surviving organized upright grand piano, the newly-rediscovered instrument prompted a re-appraisal of the organized harpsichords recorded in the Tucker and Carter family archives. How could the fledgling economy of Virginia play host to so many truly exceptional keyboard instruments, any of which would have seemed more at home in the treasure houses of England? The most plausible hypothesis was that the surviving organized piano purportedly from Castle Hill was one and the same with the two so-called organized harpsichords in the Tucker and Carter houses. Subsequent research has offered compelling evidence in support of that hypothesis. The genesis of the theory is the likelihood that the two organized harpsichords in archival records were more likely misidentified organized grand pianos. Square pianos outnumbered grand pianos by nearly fifty to one in late eighteenth century America's London-dominated keyboard landscape.[3] A wing-shaped keyboard instrument could have been called a harpsichord according to its familiar outline rather than according to the finer

3. See a discussion of the relative popularity of square pianos in England by Michael Cole, "Transition from Harpsichord to Pianoforte—the important role of women" in *Geschichte und Bauweise des Tafelklaviers: 23. Musikinstrumentenbau-Symposium, Michaelstein, 11. bis 13. October 2002* (Augsburg: Wissner, 2002): 34.

FIGURE 2. The 1799 organized upright grand piano shown with its casework temporarily assembled before restorative conservation. Two more doors with cloth screens for covering the piano soundboard and shelves exist but are not shown. The organ pipes occupy the area behind the piano and extending on both sides. Museum purchase. Photo courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. See color photo p. 219.

points of the mechanism inside, especially in Williamsburg at the end of the century when square pianos were the norm. It should be noted that there were some rare references to what could have been organized (presumably horizontal) grand pianos at least in England, such as a 1792 advertisement by William Southwell for "one of his much admired Grand Organized Piano Fortes."[4] This, however, would not have been an organized upright grand, as that piano form was not patented until 1795.

The piano bears the nameboard inscription of Longman, Clementi & Co. (fig. 3), one of two enterprises that rose from the ashes of London's bankrupt Longman & Broderip firm. Existing only in 1799 plus a few months on either side of it, the Longman, Clementi & Co. partnership became the better-known firm of Muzio Clementi & Co. after John Longman left the company in June 1800.[5] As dealers, Longman & Broderip sold and numbered instruments made by various outside contractors, some of whom occasionally added their own numbering system.[6] It appears likely that the short-lived Longman, Clementi, & Co. was transitional between being dealers only—as Longman & Broderip had been—to being actual keyboard manufacturers—as Clementi & Co. would become.

Did Longman, Clementi & Co actually make this instrument, and if not, who did? The answer comes at least partly from a penned inscription on a batten attached to the organ that becomes visible when the piano portion is removed: "Davis musicall instrument maker north Street fitchroy [*sic* Fitzroy] Sqr. London / 1799." One should not jump to the conclusion that this refers to David Davis (1768–1822), who had once built organs with his brother James and later worked for Longman & Broderip. Although David Davis went on to become one of the partners in Longman, Clementi & Co., his mark as a maker is not known to have been inscribed in any other instrument. It seems more probable that the signature is that of David's brother, James Davis (1762–1827), an organ

4. *The Freeman's Journal* (Ireland), May 1792. I thank Margaret Debenham and Tom Strange for bringing this reference to my attention.

5. George S. Bozarth and Margaret Debenham, "Piano Wars: the Legal Machinations of London Pianoforte Makers 1795–1806," *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* Vol. 42 (2009): 63–65.

6. For a description of Longman & Broderip's various business arrangements with such piano makers as John Geib, Christopher Ganer, and Thomas Culliford, see Thomas Strange and Jenny Nex, "John Geib: Beyond the Footnote," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 7 issue 1 (2010): 81–103. See also Jenny Nex, "Culliford and Company: Keyboard Instrument Makers in Georgian London," *Early Keyboard Journal* 22 (2004): 22–23.

FIGURE 3. The enameled copper inscription cartouche bearing the name of Longman, Clementi, & Co. The brass bezel molding that framed the cartouche is missing. Photo courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. See color photo p. 220.

builder to whom twenty-three other organs can be attributed.[7] The address most often given for James Davis is 14 Frances Street, Bedford Square, just around the corner and a few doors down from the Tottenham Court location of Longman, Clementi & Co. The address marked in the organized upright grand piano—North Street near Fitzroy Square—is a short walking distance from 14 Frances Street, being situated just on the other side of the Longman, Clementi & Co. facility and Whitfield's Chapel. It was in this immediate area that some of Longman & Broderip's contract keyboard makers worked, including John Geib and Thomas Culliford.

7. See Michael Sayer, "Some James Davis Designs," *The Organ* 52 issue 208 (1978): 170–174. Also by the same author, "James Davis and the Lancashire Organ Builders," *The Musical Times,* 111 no. 1528 (June, 1970): 645–647, 649.

Assuming organ builder James Davis made the organ, the question remains as to whether someone else collaborated to make the integral upright grand piano. There seems to be no suggestion in the literature that the James Davis who earlier patented a combination grand piano and harpsichord in 1792 is also the person otherwise known only as an organ builder.[8] Only two known pianos can be attributed to a James Davis, albeit both tentatively. One is a square piano signed unconventionally on the nameboard "Davis / London" and owned by Steve Barrell in Durham, North Carolina. The only detail matching between that instrument and the organized piano is inconclusive: a particular design of composite string inlay decorating the nameboards.[9] The other is a combination grand piano and harpsichord with a spurious Stodart inscription, owned by the Smithsonian Institution (acc. no. 315,759). Michael Latcham, who examined that instrument and has published the drawings from the 1792 Davis patent along with his own analysis of both, believes the Smithsonian instrument was made by the patentee James Davis.[10] His attribution is based on significant agreement between the patent drawings and the Smithsonian instrument. Some of the more distinctive details of design in the organized piano in Williamsburg, including a slightly eccentric layout of the divided bridge and nut, fail to support common parentage between it and the Smithsonian instrument. Nevertheless, a preponderance of other circumstantial evidence argues for the two James Davises being the same person: Besides sharing the same name, both were contemporaneous keyboard makers in London having an apparent fascination with complex combination instruments. Both were unafraid of tackling large projects and relatively unconstrained by convention.

The serial number (174) is stamped on the yoke of the piano's tuning pin block. Serial number schemes used by the Longman, Clementi & Co., partly continuing from Longman & Broderip and subsequently followed by Clementi & Co., have been analyzed by Leif Sahlqvist. He thinks the number can, with some rationalization, fit within his reconstruction of those numbering systems, but he is skeptical that the firm

8. *Patents for Inventions. Abridgments of Specifications Related to Music and Musical Instruments. A.D. 1694–1866,* 2nd ed. (London, 1871; facsimile, London: Tony Bingham, 1984): 27. Patent no. 1887 dated June 6, 1792.

9. I thank Tom Strange for noticing this similarity.

10. See Michael Latcham, "Pianos and harpsichords for Their Majesties," *Early Music* 36, no. 3 (May 2008): 365–366, and private email on Dec. 2, 2013.

made grand pianos before 1801.[11] The number could have equally well indicated the production of an outside supplier.

The organ portion of the instrument stands nearly 9′ tall, 7′ wide and 18″ deep, with sufficient height to avoid any mitering of pipes. The piano, which is set into the center front of the organ, stands 42″ wide and 18″ deep, making a total depth of the combined instrument just over 3′.[12] The exterior casework is lightly figured mahogany with frame-and-panel sections covering the bellows and wind-chest areas in the lower third, and above, two doors with cloth screens cover the piano soundboard and shelves, and two flanking doors cover the organ pipework. Fragments of original cloth found under the keys reveal the cloth to have been blue-green silk with a twill weave structure. The nameboard is veneered in curly maple surrounded by a band of string inlay and dark banding that may be purpleheart. The white-enameled copper cartouche is inscribed, "New Patent / LONGMAN, CLEMENTI & COMPY. / CHEAPSIDE / London." A music rack with brass book stays and two sliding candle shelves are incorporated into the keywell lid. The mahogany stand under the keyboard is finely carved with a central urn flanked by a leafy vine with berries and square corner flowerets, below which hang carved ribbons and vines (fig. 4).

The organ and piano sections are supported together by a separate overall plinth with heavy non-swiveling iron casters designed to facilitate pulling the instrument away from the wall. This raises the whole instrument five inches (included in the measurements above), and necessitates the use of a tall chair or bench for the player. The presence of two pedals relating to the piano and two for the organ means playing from a standing position is not possible. Repairing a broken hammer or making adjustments in this or any upright grand piano requires withdrawing the action out the back of the instrument. Since the wind-chest and pipework of the organ prohibit such access, it would have been necessary to remove the piano from the organ casework entirely before withdrawing the action. The organ pipes can be accessed for tuning through the two front doors flanking the piano.

11. Private communication with Leif Sahlqvist (Nov. 19, 2013) and his article "Clementi & Co 1798–1830: Pianoforte Manufacture in London" (as updated 2013-07-12), published online at SquarePianoTech.com.

12. Precise overall dimensions of the instrument in millimeters: 2133 (W), 940 (D), 2705 (H).

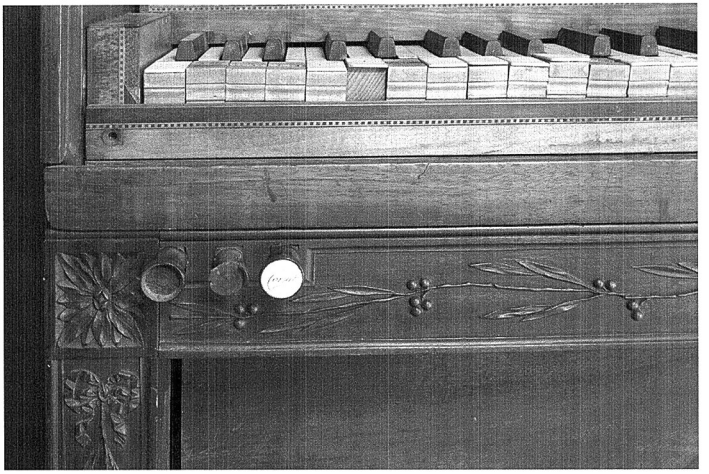

FIGURE 4. Detail showing the stand carving, left stop knobs, keys, and endblock. Photo courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. See color photo p. 221.

The five and a half-octave compass FF-c$''''$ is typical of British pianos at the end of the eighteenth century, but extends several notes deeper on the bass end than do organs of the period, yet the organ utilizes this full 68-note compass. A set of stickers at the distal end of the key levers engage with backfalls to open the organ pallets. A knob-ended shaft inside the treble key cheek presumably disengaged the piano so the organ could be played separately. The piano could be played alone simply by turning off all the organ stops. The six draw knobs for the organ are arranged in the order shown in table 1.[13] The only surviving label is for the Cornet (fig 4). There is an opening for another pedal with an associated trundle that must have been intended for a shifting movement, otherwise called a machine stop or echo pedal. This presumably would have turned off the Fifteenth and the Cornet and possibly the 4′. Aside from the pedal opening and the associated trundle, there is no further evidence of a shifting movement. Only one layer of sliders ever existed,

13. Lou Dolive has been invaluable for his inventory of the pipework, preparation of a stoplist, and assisting with the initial conservation.

TABLE 1. Organ draw knobs, left to right.

Left stop knobs		
Principal 4′	FF–c‴′ 68 notes (full compass)	FF–BB in wood; C–c‴′ metal
Fifteenth 2′	52 notes D–f‴′ Joins with Cornet c′–f‴′	Metal, D–f‴′, f♯‴′–c prepared for in chest and toe board, but never installed. Combines with the 12th and is called "Cornet" at c′.
Cornet (12th)	37 notes c′–c‴′ (treble)	Metal
Right stop knobs		
St. Diap. 8′ Treble	37 notes c′–c‴′	Metal, Chimney flutes
St. Diap. 8′ Bass	31 notes FF–b	Wooden, bass tubed off to both sides
Op. Diap. 8′ Treble	37 notes c′–c‴′	Metal

arguing against there being a shifting movement. The shifting movement might have taken the form used on the undated Davis organ at Moorlinch Parish Church, Somerset.[14] In that organ, the affected stop draw-knobs are held in the on (outwards) position by springs enabling the organist to press the pedal to turn them off and release the pedal to turn them back on, which is the normal behavior of a shifting movement pedal. In the Somerset organ, notches in the stop rods allowed the organist to hitch the rods in the off position for more extended periods, but no means of hitching has yet been found in the Williamsburg instrument.

The unfinished treble-most part of the 2′ was likely not an oversight, as these pipes could be shrill in a domestic setting. It is too soon to characterize the sound of the organ, but it is likely that it was voiced softly, yet able to make a bold statement with a principal chorus of Bass 8′, Open Diapason 8′, 4′, 2′, and Cornet.

The bellows consists of a single wedge feeder bellows with a double-rise reservoir situated in the central cavity under the piano and windchest. There is no sign of a bellows lever for an assistant, so the only means of supplying air is a metal foot lever for use by the player. Since the piano has the usual two pedals for dampers and keyboard shift, the lack of another pumping method may suggest the piano and organ were

14. Sayer, 172.

not meant to be played together, except perhaps for tuning: it would not be possible to operate the piano pedals while also supplying wind to the organ.

The upright grand piano is a form patented in 1795 by William Stodart, who called it an "An upright grand piano in the form of a bookcase."[15] This is presumably the "New Patent" touted in the nameboard inscription, though it must be said that the phrase was becoming an almost ubiquitous slogan in British pianos by this time. Three shelves are provided in the space to the right of the bentside. Measured through a split at the bass end of the bridge, the quartersawn spruce soundboard is 4.9 mm thick at the bridge near c″ and 5.5 mm at the bridge near FF. There were three strings per note throughout the compass. The length of c″ is 278 mm, and the longest (FF) and shortest (c⁗) strings are 1517 mm and 75 mm, respectively. Wire gauges are stamped in the nut. The left pedal shifts the keyboard for *una corda* or *due corde*, depending on the position of a lever in the right keyboard endblock. The ivory and ebony key tops and maple-molded key fronts are conventional in all respects except perhaps the single decorative scribe line on the naturals, which is unusually close (1.8 mm) to the head-tail seam.

The bridge and nut are divided at the cross-over from brass to iron stringing, but are the first of several design and workmanship details that are at least slightly eccentric. The separate bridge for the brass strings has an almost continuous curve, rather than the more usual "walking-cane" shape that is at least partly straight. Where the brass-iron crossover occurs in the nut, the piano maker neatly mitered the ends of the nut sections together. Normally, the piano maker would have a more noticeable jog in the nut at the crossover in order to avoid a sudden change in strike point caused by the scale adjustment at the bridge end. It should be noted that, considering the long history of stringed keyboard instruments, the idea of dividing the bridge for this purpose was still relatively new in 1799, having been first introduced in 1788. Nevertheless, it is interesting to consider that the diagram James Davis included with his 1792 patent for the combination piano and harpsichord followed the more normal conventions of bass bridge and divided nut layout, with the bass bridge being partially straight and a sudden change of strike point between the two nut sections.

15. *Patents for Inventions*, 29. Patent No. 2028 dated January 12, 1795.

Although the tuning pins are missing, it is clear from their holes that they were only 4.5 mm in diameter, nearly a millimeter smaller than the more typical 1790 Longman & Broderip (Culliford) grand piano in The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation collection. Moreover, every tuning pin and nut pin location is precisely determined by grids of scribe lines boldly struck on the pin block and hitch pin rail. So far, this combination of design and workmanship variables has failed to suggest a piano maker if it is not James Davis.

It seems at first more than a little surprising that such a grand and complex musical instrument would appear in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1799. A brief review of the historical context offers some explanation. References to combining strings and pipes in a single keyboard instrument began in England half a millennium ago with four claviorgans that appeared in the palace inventories of Henry VIII of England.[16] As a form of trophy furniture, such instruments were at first to be found in the royal courts of Europe. Over the course of the eighteenth century, especially in England, more people of the middling and gentry classes could afford keyboard instruments as they gained wealth and as the scale of instrument manufacture grew, bringing prices within reach. Until their demise near the end of the eighteenth century, harpsichords increasingly bristled with swell mechanisms, pedals, plectrum alternatives, and machine stops, all in service to an ever-expanding palette of sonorities. Perhaps it was that constellation of developments that set the stage for a particular flowering of organized pianos during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

While the newly popular pianoforte had offered a new universe of expressive qualities, the trajectory inherited from the harpsichord was to continue looking for ways to add, figuratively and perhaps literally, more bells and whistles. It may have also contributed to the popularity of organized pianos that the square piano had introduced a physical layout that lent itself to the addition of organ pipes. John Zumpe and Gabriel Buntebart were among the first makers of square pianos and individually or in various other partnerships produced three of the fourteen known surviving British organized pianos including the oldest (1774).[17] The firm of Longman & Broderip is best represented, having produced five

16. Eleanor Smith, *The History and Use of the Claviorgan,* unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2013.

17. Clinkscale Online, CEP-4124, accessed Dec. 29, 2013, http://earlypianos.org.

(36%) of the surviving British examples.[18] Many of these could have been made for sale under the name of Longman & Broderip by John Geib, one of their most prolific suppliers, who upon his relocation to New York City, boasted of having made about 400 organized pianos.[19] Though best known as a piano maker, Geib was equally skilled as an organ builder, and chose to emphasize that specialty in a promotional broadside found on the dustboard of a Geib square piano made in 1809.[20]

Advertisements in period newspapers placed by piano makers and dealers frequently offered square and grand pianos, plain and organized. With its six stops, the instrument in Williamsburg was by far the most ambitious of the known examples in Britain or America, most of the other surviving examples having one or two ranks of pipes; three ranks in the case of an 1828 American example in Boston, about which more will be said later. It is not clear if and how many other organized pianos took this upright grand form. Of the many newspaper advertisements for organized pianos and for upright grand pianos in Federal-period American newspapers, none are identifiable as organized upright grands. It is not clear whether the newspaper advertisement for an "upright organized piano forte" that appeared in an 1815 advertisement in Charleston was referring to an upright grand piano, since the smaller "harmonic" pianos with strings reaching to floor had also begun to appear by that time.[21]

Several American keyboard makers were known to offer organized square pianos. Two such instruments by Pennsylvania makers include a William Rolfe square piano made in London but organized and signed by John Sellers of Germantown in 1803, recently added to the Colonial Williamsburg Collection.[22] Another is a ca. 1810 example by John Wind.[23] Two makers in Alexandria advertised organized pianofortes.

18. Ibid. For the examples associated with Zumpe or Buntebart, see CEP nos. 745, 4124 and 4125. The Longman & Broderip examples are CEP Nos. 2140, 2143, 2160, 2162, and 1563.

19. See, for example, Geib's advertisement in the *Mercantile Advertiser* (New York), March 14, 1800, p. 2 issue 2379. I thank Tom Strange for drawing my attention to this reference.

20. Clinkscale Online CEP-5812.

21. Advertisement in the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston), March 3, 1815, p. 4, vol. XXXV, issue 11231.

22. Clinkscale Online CEP-7908.

23. Raymond J. Brunner, *That Ingenious Business,* (Birdsboro, PA: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1990), 178–180.

Joseph Billing offered them in an 1803 advertisement.[24] The following year, John Sellers relocated to Alexandria from Philadelphia. It might have been there that he made the organized piano advertised by his widow, Susan Sellers in 1809.[25] Newspaper advertisements by makers such as Charles Taws in Philadelphia sometimes listed organized pianofortes, but did not specify whether they were of their own manufacture. John Speisseger of Charleston advertised in 1801 "A very elegant Organized PIANO FORTE, American manufacture."[26] Among the possible makers of that instrument is Thomas Western, a maker of pianos and organs who moved from London to New York to Alexandria, and finally, near that time, to Charleston.[27] In 1828, piano maker Alphaeus Babcock collaborated presumably with organ builder William Goodrich to produce an organized square piano now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.[28] In the 1830s and 40s, American production of organized pianos continued, though taking the form of square pianos combined with melodeons.

Current work on the provenance of this organized upright grand piano bears further mention. Benjamin Bucktrout, the cabinet maker who had prepared the instrument for Tucker in 1799 (fig. 1) was no novice as a keyboard technician. Thirty-two years earlier, having just arrived in Williamsburg from England, Bucktrout advertised in the Virginia Gazette, "N.B. SPINETS and HARPSICHORDS made and repaired."[29] In 1786 and early 1787 James Juhan, a joiner and maker of harpsichords, spinets, pianos, and organs rented a house in Williamsburg. While there, Bucktrout was Juhan's closest confidant and possibly his employer.[30] In

24. *Alexandria Advertiser and Commercial Intelligencer* (Alexandria), July 12, 1803, p. [4], vol. III, issue 806.

25. *Alexandria Daily Gazette, Commercial & Political* (Alexandria), July 21, 1809, p. [1], vol. IX, issue 2545.

26. *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser,* (Charleston), August 6, 1801.

27. Thomas Western was in New York until 1801 and in Charleston by 1803 according to the Craftsmen Database maintained by MESDA, ref. nos. 43115 and 43116.

28. Clinkscale Online, CEP-0003. For a complete description, see Darcy Kuronen, "An Organized Piano by Alpheus Babcock" in John Watson, ed., *Organ Restoration Reconsidered: Proceedings of a Colloquium,* (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2005), 159–169.

29. *Virginia Gazette* (Williamsburg, Purdie & Dixon, eds.), January 8, 1767.

30. Most of what is known about Juhan's time in Williamsburg comes from a dispute between Juhan and his landlord. It was Bucktrout who Juhan relied on as a go-between after Juhan departed for Petersburg. It seems most likely that Juhan worked for Bucktrout as a joiner with skills also for keyboard instrument repairing. See letter 27 April 1787, James Juhan to James Southall in records of Southall vs. Juhan, Henrico County Judgments, BC 1118172, March 1793, Folder 7, Library of Virginia.

May 1792, Bucktrout issued receipts to St. George Tucker for "37 Spinet Tongues for Jacks."[31] An archaeological fragment of an oboe on the site of his workshop suggests he may have been involved in other types of musical instrument repair as well.

As are most musical instruments, this organized piano exists not only to satisfy artistic and musical needs but as a response to the swirling currents of social, technological, and economic circumstances. Virginia remained a strongly patriarchal and hierarchical society in the late eighteenth century. St. George Tucker (1752–1827) (fig. 5) headed one of Virginia's elite families that held great social, political, and economic influence in the region. Through his cultivation of business and political relationships, maintenance of loyal kinship bonds across his extended family, and through his two marriages to widows from other leading families, Tucker served as a virtual CEO of a far-reaching enterprise.[32] In a society in which gentility was defined as much by style and taste as by birthright, Tucker's house (fig. 6) and its furnishings were a carefully presented part of the Tucker brand. Nothing could better suit his situation than an organized grand piano of the most monumental proportions.

On a much less subliminal level, the instrument was simply for Tucker's daughter. Consistent with the important role keyboard instruments played in the training and social graces of English and American girls during the period, family letters make clear the organized piano was purchased for daughter Anne Frances Bland Tucker (1779–1813).[33]

31. Tucker-Coleman Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary. The dates of two receipts related to the transaction were May 26 and May 27, 1792.

32. St. George Tucker had witnessed the historic Battle of Yorktown as an officer in the American Revolutionary War, and became one of the guiding lights of the fledgling American system of law and government. He served as a professor of law at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, and was eventually appointed by President James Madison as a federal judge for Virginia. He published a five-volume Americanized edition of William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* and with his descendants, left a voluminous archive of letters, legal papers, and other documents now in Swem Library at the College of William and Mary. Several of his descendants became prominent legislators, ambassadors, newspaper editors, attorneys general, university deans, and law professors. For more about St. George Tucker and his family, see Phillip Hamilton, *The Making and Unmaking of a Revolutionary Family: The Tuckers of Virginia 1752–1830* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003).

33. See especially letters to St. George Tucker from Henry St. George Tucker on April 8, 1799 and from George Tucker on January 31, 1800. Tucker-Coleman Papers at Swem Library.

FIGURE 5. Miniature portraits of St. George Tucker and his wife Lelia Skipwith Carter Tucker painted by Pierre Henri (ca. 1760–1822). The likenesses are thought to have been made in 1799, the year the organized piano arrived in Williamsburg. Museum Purchase, The Friends of Colonial Williamsburg Collections Fund. Photo courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. See color photo p. 221.

FIGURE 6. The St. George Tucker House in Williamsburg. Photo courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. See color photo p. 222.

Fanny, as she was called in the letters, was twenty years old when the instrument arrived. Three years later, she married John Coalter (1768–1838), who a dozen years earlier had been a tutor for Fanny and her siblings. As part of the extended Tucker family, Coalter would go on to a distinguished career as a lawyer, a Commonwealth's Attorney, and a justice on Virginia's Supreme Court of Appeals.

The organized piano presumably moved out of the house upon Fanny's marriage in 1802, for in the next year, St. George Tucker ordered a new, more conventional Broadwood & Son grand piano for his step-daughter, Mary Walker Carter Tucker (1785–1863), known as Polly. The details of the Broadwood order may shed light on the earlier purchase of the organized piano:

> Memorandum for a Grand Piano Forte for Miss M. W. Carter of Williamsburg in Virginia. To Cost One Hundred Guineas on board. A Grand Piano Forte with additional Keys full toned and easy touch the sides & lid of solid mahogany, strong, to stand an east Indian Climate, made by John Broadwood & Son Great Pulteney Street Golden Square London. NB Perfectly plain and without any inlaid work whatever. Brass Castors for the feet & neat Leather Cover. The above Instrument to be directed to the care of St. George Tucker in Williamsburg and to be shipped to Norfolk & from thence sent up to Williamsburg immediately. It is requested that it may be shipped by the earliest opportunity. July 5th 1803.[34]

The piano was received by Tucker in March, 1804. A document from the London Merchants Lamb & Younger itemizes the costs:

A Grand Piano forte addl. Keys	£	78	15	–
A Leather Cover	£	1.	15	–
A full sett of Strings	£	–.	18	–
A Tin Packing Case	£	3.	13	6
A Deal do	£	1.	13	–
	£	86	14	6

The decoration of the organized piano may seem, compared with some of the other examples from the period, surprisingly plain. On this point the order for Polly's Broadwood is illuminating, specifying that it be "Perfectly plain and without any inlaid work whatever." This almost word for word echoes the request made by Thomas Jefferson when he ordered a harpsichord for his daughter in 1786 and it seems very likely

34. The opposite side of the document shows the order was mailed to London merchants Lamb & Younger. It also records that the piano was shipped the following January 17 and received on March 22, 1804. Tucker-Coleman Papers at Swem Library.

the same had been requested by Tucker in the earlier order for the organized piano. There might have been a concern about the vulnerability of veneer in the American climate, characterized by Tucker as "east Indian," but more importantly, there was also a conscious aesthetic ideal involved. A distinct taste particularly popular among the gentry of America's Federal period is known as the "neat and plain style." Surviving furniture from the region often reflects this taste, which may have been a reaction to the excesses of Rococo style. The British-inspired ideals of the neat and plain style come through in a period dictionary definition of *neat:* "free from foul or extraneous matter; pure; unadulterated; free from tawdry appendages."[35]

The organized piano thus presumably left the Tucker household upon Fanny's marriage, prompting Tucker's order for a Broadwood grand piano when the organized piano was only four years old. The next stop for the organized piano is less certain. As already theorized, some circumstantial evidence suggests the instrument may have gone to Shirley, a major plantation on the James River. The inclusion of an "organized harpsichord" in an 1806 Shirley inventory is the principal evidence of an organized keyboard there. Assuming the Tucker instrument transferred to his daughter Fanny Tucker Coulter, and considering that Fanny may have chosen not to take responsibility for such a large and complex instrument to her husband's home in Staunton, Virginia, Shirley offers a plausible next stop. The owner of Shirley, Charles Carter, was the father of Lelia Skipwith Carter Tucker, Fanny's stepmother, so there is a family connection. The timing was also right for such a purchase at Shirley, since Charles Carter had two adolescent daughters, who would have been ages thirteen and sixteen when the instrument hypothetically became available in 1802.

A notation printed within the instrument itself documents a milepost in its history and may support a Shirley connection. The inscription says, "Repair'd by C. Veltenair Jany 1, 1805." The mark's location inside the feeder bellows indicates that the work involved re-leathering the bellows when the instrument was only six years old, suggesting the instrument had suffered serious damage, perhaps in its move from Williamsburg. Veltenair presented himself in an 1802 advertisement in Richmond, Virginia as a maker of grand and square pianos, chamber and barrel organs, and offered tuning, repairing, and supplying Venetian swells. He

35. *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary* (online 1828 ed.), accessed Dec. 29, 2013. http://websterdictionary1828.com/.

crossed paths with Thomas Jefferson in 1801 in his capacity also as an artist.[36] Usually traveling with relative John Veltenair who taught instrumental music and dancing, Christian Veltenair sought his fortune thereafter in Lynchburg, Baltimore, Raleigh, Lexington, Nashville, Louisville, and Toronto, Canada.[37] By 1840, Christian Veltenair had returned to Virginia where he repaired a clock for Charles Carter's son Hill Carter, who had inherited Shirley Plantation.

Veltenair's 1840 connection to Shirley came thirty-five years after his work on the organized piano, so it cannot be certain that the instrument was associated with Shirley, but taken as a group these circumstances are consistent with the hypothesis that the Tucker organized piano was the "organized harpsichord" in the Shirley inventory. A sale of furniture at Shirley in 1810 may have included the "organized harpsichord," leaving no further record of its presence there.[38]

The oral history surrounding the organized piano at the time of its brief re-emergence in the 1980s was that it had come from Castle Hill, another significant plantation in Virginia's Albemarle County, near Charlottesville. It might have gone there from Shirley following the 1810 furniture sale. Castle Hill was the home of the Walkers and the Cabells. The instrument could have been seen there during visits by Albemarle County neighbor Thomas Jefferson and a "Who's Who" of historic figures entertained at Castle Hill. Oral histories are subject to verification, and the evidence collected so far is encouraging. In 1815, a tax on luxury items was levied to pay for the War of 1812. Keyboard instruments were among the items taxed, and the tax records indeed list an organ at Castle Hill, one of only two in the county. Further research on the Castle Hill connection is pending.

Every indication is that the instrument has escaped major repairs and restoration since Veltenair's 1805 bellows repair, and in fact, it seems doubtful that the instrument has been played since the early or mid-nineteenth century. The cloth screens on the doors have been replaced, but the original exterior casework is otherwise surprisingly well pre-

36. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition,* ed. Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008), accessed July 25, 2013. http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/TSJN-03-03-02-0536.

37. Michael D. Friesen, "Christian and John Veltenair, Musical Instrument Makers," *Early Keyboard Journal* 27/28/29 (2012): 107–129.

38. Catherine M. Lynn, *Shirley Plantation: A History* (Master's thesis University of Delaware, June, 1967): 80, 87.

served without even later coatings. The wind-chest survives intact, though with some distortions and rodent damage, including a mouse nest in the pallet box. The wooden pipes survive in excellent condition with only two missing. Sixty-three metal pipes, however, are missing, and the larger ones that do survive are seriously damaged. There is no evidence of any changes to the voicing or pitch of the organ since it was made. The inner chassis that supports the bellows and wind-chest has some missing supports. The iron foot pedal survives, and the wooden components of the bellows are nearly complete, though without leather. Traces of leather survive on all perimeters of the bellows components, indicating details of the leathering method. The stop action is nearly complete, but only three of the six stop knobs and the engraved ivory label "Cornet" survive.

The upright grand piano retains the soundboard, pin block, and keyboard but is missing the hammer action, strings, and tuning pins. The piano sound box appears never to have been opened, so all interior barring and framing can be considered unaltered. It is possible that the piano ceased to function early on, so that the instrument served only as an organ. The difficulty of servicing the piano due to the surrounding organ might have contributed to such a scenario. The only repairs beyond those of Veltenair have to do with the removal of a pattern of hitch and nut pins that may have been a crude attempt to silence stray hammers hitting neighboring strings. This may be a clue that the piano had developed problems in the absence of a technician capable of dealing with the instrument's peculiar complexities.

Much discussion, often quite passionate, has been published on both the beneficial and the detrimental effects of restoration on the heritage of musical instruments, a subject this author has been outspoken about over the past twenty-five years.[39] The rule of thumb with regard to musical instrument restoration at Colonial Williamsburg is not to restore historic instruments unless the components that are normally replaced during restoration had already been lost in past restorations. By that measure, this organized piano would remain unrestored. However,

39. In reverse order, publications have included *Artifacts in Use: The Paradox of Restoration and the Conservation of Organs* (Richmond, VA: OHS Press 2010); *Organ Restoration Reconsidered: Proceedings of a Colloquium,* J. Watson, ed. (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press 2005), and an article in this JOURNAL, "Historical Musical Instruments: A Claim To Use, An Obligation To Preserve," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* XVII (1991): 69–82.

because the instrument is so large and in so many pieces that cannot be assembled into a whole, the unrestored collection of parts would be unexhibitable and would demand large amounts of space for long-term storage. Moreover, the lack of playable examples elsewhere insures little hope of understanding the musical characteristics of the instrument in its dismembered state.

It is, therefore, the intention of Colonial Williamsburg to restore the instrument using a restorative conservation approach: The physical evidence encoded on virtually every surface of every part is to be considered no less important than the hoped-for musical results. Every step of restoration will be planned to preserve evidence by using often nontraditional and always minimally-intrusive methods, retaining most signs of age, and documenting evidence that must be disturbed. The crushed metal pipes will require the most invasive treatments. A few of these might be left unrestored, but most will require considerable re-shaping and patching of cracks and holes caused by the gnawing of rodents. Particular effort will be given to protecting the original nicking, which is almost perfectly preserved and unaltered in spite of the crushed state of the larger pipes.

The only lost component of significance is the piano action. By happenstance, technical information from other surviving upright grand pianos required to reconstruct this component are already in hand. Since the majority of the wear and tear of playing such an instrument would occur in the mechanical piano action, substituting a reproduction action insures that the instrument will allow being played with minimal wear to the most vulnerable elements.

Restorative conservation of the Tucker organized piano is expected to be completed in time for the instrument to take its place as the centerpiece of a new musical instruments gallery in the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg. There, it will serve as a reminder of America's continuing dependence on London for musical instruments after the War of Independence but before the American musical instrument industry came of age.