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# The American Piano-Supply Industry in the Nineteenth Century, with Particular Attention to the Career and Manufacturing Methods of Joseph P. Hale\*

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## Part 2

No study of American piano-parts manufacturers and dealers in the nineteenth century would be complete without an examination of the career and manufacturing methods of the most well-known client of the piano-supply industry of his time, the legendary Joseph P. Hale of New York (October 24, 1819–October 15, 1883),<sup>1</sup> shown in his mature years in an engraving presented here as fig. 1. He was born into a farming family in Bernardston, Franklin County, in northwest Massachusetts. The death of his father in 1823 placed considerable hardships on his

\* Many of the citations and acknowledgments listed in the first footnote of Part 1 of this article—this JOURNAL, vol. 43 (2017)—apply also to the present Part 2. I regret my misspelling of William Shull’s name in that footnote and in footnote 94, p. 82. Part 1 also contains typographical errors (again of my doing) that need correcting. “Coutade” (p. 73, line 4) should read “Courtade,” and “manufactures” (p. 103, line 9) should read “manufacturers”; I wish to thank Dr. Barry Wiener, New York, for pointing these out to me. In addition, in footnote 304, p. 153, “thirt-eight” should read “thirty-eight.” Also, the spelling of the surname of the first editor of *MTR2* in Appendix 1 of Part 1 has been corrected in the shorter Appendix 1 of the present article. Finally, a belated reference is due to an article that contains a summary of the items produced by the piano-supply industry in Britain: Francesca Carnevali and Lucy Newton, “Pianos for the People: From Producer to Consumer in Britain, 1851–1914,” *Enterprise & Society* 14, no. 1 (March 2013): 37–70.

Edwin M. Good, in his *Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos: A Technological History from Cristofori to the Modern Concert Grand*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), briefly summarizes the accomplishments of Joseph P. Hale (footnote, pp. 241–42) and posits the challenge “Someone should do a full study of Hale.” In gratitude for Dr. Good’s personal encouragement of my work on this subject, I wish to dedicate the present essay to his memory.

1. The most reliable biographical summaries of Hale’s life and career, especially his early years, are “Excitement in the Piano Trade (From the Cincinnati Daily Times),” *New York Times* (Jan. 23, 1876): 7 [see Appendix 2B]; “Joseph P. Hale,” *MTRI* 11, no. 12 (July 19, 1879): 19 [see Appendix 1 for identification of periodical sigla]; and “The Late Joseph P. Hale,” *AJ* 39, no. 26 (October 20, 1883): 513.



*J. P. Hale*

FIGURE 1. Engraving of Joseph P. Hale (New York: Virtue & Yorston, 1875). Possession of the author.

mother and had a negative effect on his education. At the age of fourteen Hale took a job delivering mail and a local newspaper, riding on horseback seventy-five miles twice a week. On October 12, 1841, he married Lucy Ann Fiske, born on May 7, 1819.<sup>2</sup> Shortly thereafter, he moved

2. Ellery Bicknell Crane, ed., *Historic Homes and Institutions and Genealogical and Personal Memoirs of Worcester County Massachusetts with a History of Worcester Society of Antiquity*, vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1907), 356. Joseph P. Hale and Lucy Ann Hale (died Dec. 23, 1906), along with an infant daughter of four months (1845), are buried in the Center Cemetery, Bernardston, MA. See findagrave.com (accessed Dec. 12, 2015).

to the larger city of Worcester, some forty-five miles away, where he purchased a carpentry and painting business and proceeded to erect a number of buildings, learning how to accomplish this with speed, economy, and profit. In Worcester he was also active in various retail endeavors, selling shoes, cutlery, household furnishings, and crockery.<sup>3</sup>

A sign of the social position that Hale attained in Worcester is a printed invitation, dated January 18, 1859, to a "Social Citizens Ball" at Mechanics Hall, with music provided by Messrs. Arbuckle & Patz's Full Quadrille Band. Hale's name appears among those of other Worcester businessmen in a list of the organizers.<sup>4</sup> By this time Hale had amassed a capital of some \$30,000 and had decided to apply his knowledge of business by investing his money in a growing industry that offered the promise of considerable wealth. He clearly reasoned that the best place to realize his dreams of success was New York City, already the largest manufacturing center on the East Coast. He moved there with his family<sup>5</sup> in 1860. He began by making packing boxes,<sup>6</sup> but soon chose the career path that would gain him both wealth and fame: manufacturing pianos.

\* \* \* \*

New York City in 1860 contained at least eighty-five active piano makers,<sup>7</sup> all of whom could have served in some way as models for Hale's enterprise; among them were Robert Nunns (and Nunns & Clark), Frederick Mathushek, George Steck, Steinway & Sons, and Albert Weber.

3. Worcester Society of Antiquity, *Collections of the Worcester Society of Antiquity*, vol. 6 (Worcester, MA: The Society, 1885), 123.

4. "Citizens Ball. In Compliance with the Desire of a Great Number of the Residents of Worcester and Vicinity," *American Broadsides and Ephemera*, no. 16338 (Boston Public Library Online).

5. (Bernardston, MA) Nov. 14, 1849–Aug. 26, 1886. See [whipple.org](http://whipple.org) (accessed Dec. 12, 2015), which cites J. Gardner Bartlett, *Simon Stone Genealogy* (Boston: Stone Family Association, 1926), 494.

6. "Commercial. Pianos. . . .," 1876. See Appendix 2A.

7. The given number is a conservative estimate drawn from the listings in Nancy Groce, *Musical Instrument Makers of New York: A Directory of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Urban Craftsmen*, Annotated Reference Tools in Music, no. 4 (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1991). A more precise number is hard to determine, as some of the names are listed more than once in various combinations, reflecting partnerships and resulting name-changes; in such cases I have counted such multiple listings for the year 1860 at the same address as representing essentially the same firm. I have also included firms listed for years immediately preceding and following 1860, although that date may be absent. Some of the names may also be those of dealers, not makers, as both kinds of businesses were commonly listed together without distinction in city directories.

In that same year, Steinway opened up a new factory on Fourth Avenue (later Park Avenue) described as “immense” in the press.<sup>8</sup> Hale was practically unique as a piano maker, however, in that he had had no prior experience in that field, or even as a cabinet maker;<sup>9</sup> but he was guided in his chosen work by certain general principles, which were later described in a leading music trade journal:

His experience as a carpenter taught him something of the cost of both materials and labor. The delicate mechanism of the piano was soon understood by the man who had been so successful as a mechanic in Worcester, and he had a farseeing eye. He not only saw that some of the old manufacturers were either extravagant workmen or loved extravagant profits, but clearly perceived that their system was stifling the trade in its birth. He saw that, beyond the wealthy class who did not care what was paid for a piano provided it bore a fashionable name, there existed a large and constantly increasing body of our fellow citizens who cared more for what a thing was than what it professed to be; he saw that every day music was more the subject of general attention and was becoming a part of common school education, and that a certain fortune awaited the enterprising man who first offered to the middle and industrial classes a good instrument at a cheap rate. He determined on a democratic revolution, which would make a piano as easily procured as a cooking-stove or a sewing machine. . . . He resolved to make pianos to rival the best at one half the cost. His previous life enabled him to supervise all the details of the business; he knew where to buy, and he bought for cash; he knew all the new improvements and employed them; he knew what good work and a fair day's work was, and could therefore trust men to work by the piece. His old faculty for organization enabled him personally to conduct his vast business, and he never spared his own labor. He made his own contracts, paid his workmen, superintended the manufacture and kept his accounts. Finally he determined to do away with the drain of high commissions, discard the elaborate system of agencies, have no costly show rooms, and not seek to gain an artificial reputation by subsidizing an army of professors—in fact, to deal directly with the public.<sup>10</sup>

In the more succinct words of Alfred Dolge, the important manufacturer of piano felt and hammers from 1871 to 1898, Hale “inaugurated a sys-

8. “Opening of a Pianoforte Manufactory,” *New-York Daily Tribune* (August 31, 1860): 8. See also “Opening of Steinway & Sons’ New Piano-Forte Manufactory,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* (Sept. 22, 1860): 281–82, and (Sept. 29, 1860): 297–98.

9. An apprenticeship in cabinet making was commonly the early professional training for piano makers, as illustrated by the careers of Jonas Chickering and—in a less formal manner—Heinrich Engelhard Steinweg. See Gary J. Kornblith, “The Craftsman as Industrialist: Jonas Chickering and the Transformation of American Piano Making,” *Business History Review* 59, no. 3 (1985): 350; and Richard K. Lieberman, *Steinway & Sons* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 10.

10. “Joseph P. Hale,” *MTRI*.

tem of manufacturing and merchandising heretofore unknown to the American piano trade. . . . Unhampered by tradition or prejudice of any kind, he manufactured pianos as he would have manufactured bedsteads.”<sup>11</sup>

Hale first teamed up with James H. Grovesteen, who had been manufacturing pianos in lower Manhattan with several other partners in succession since 1846. Their company (“Grovesteen & Hale, pianos”) is listed at 211 Hudson Street in the New York City directory covering the year 1861, and at 478 Broadway, also in lower Manhattan, in the directories for 1862–1863. Grovesteen soon withdrew, and Hale (“Joseph P. Hale and Company, pianos”) remained on Broadway, where he is listed in the directories covering the years 1864–1865.<sup>12</sup> An account published in 1881 describes one of ways in which he personally engaged in his enterprise at this location:

When Mr. Joseph P. Hale was laying the foundation of his now extensive business he oftentimes was seen to take hold and do some part of the hard manual labor necessary to make success and profit from its product. In one instance we see him with a bag under his arm, going through the streets; a boy by his side similarly equipped. They would stop at [a] furniture factory, where Mr. Hale then bought his leg pins. After having the bags filled with pins, one hundred and fifty in each, Mr. Hale taking one and the boy the other, they would go through Hester street to Baxter, and thence to the factory.<sup>13</sup>

In 1862, Hale ran an advertisement in the *American Agriculturist*, beginning:

\$150. BEST PIANOS. \$150. / J. P. HALE & CO. having removed to their new ware / rooms / No. 478 BROADWAY, / are now prepared to offer the public a magnificent NEW / SCALE, full / 7 OCTAVE / ROSEWOOD PIANO, / containing all improvements known in this country or Eu- / rope. Over Strung Bass, French Grand Action, Harp pedal, / Full Iron Frame for / \$150 CASH. / Warranted for Five Years. / Rich moulding cases / \$175 to \$200.<sup>14</sup>

Soon Hale’s expanding business necessitated larger quarters, and in December, 1865, he purchased five lots at the northeast corner of Tenth

11. Alfred Dolge, *Pianos and Their Makers*, vol. 1 (Colvina, CA: Covina Publishing Co., 1911; reprint ed., New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972), 179–80.

12. Directory listings for Grovesteen, Grovesteen & Hale, and Hale are reported by Groce, *Musical Instrument Makers*, 65–66 and 69.

13. *AAJ* 34, no. 15 (Feb. 5, 1881): 292.

14. *American Agriculturist*, 21 (1862): 351.

Avenue and West 36th Street,<sup>15</sup> a location some two and three-quarters miles north of his previous factory and convenient to transportation on the Hudson River and Hudson River Railroad. This uptown area was mostly undeveloped, and on the eastern-most lot (no. 5), he built a brick factory of five stories, with a width of 25 feet, extending back 100 feet to the north, bearing the address of 453 West 36th Street.<sup>16</sup> He is listed at this address (or, alternatively, at the corner of Tenth Avenue and West 36th Street) in the city directories covering 1866–1868; beginning at the last date, he is identified as “agent Great Union Piano Forte Co.” He evidently left his remaining lots (nos. 1–4) vacant, although he may have used this space for storage of materials. He testified in 1870 that this factory “was burned down, and all of the timbers were burnt out, and we used the old walls intact for rebuilding.”<sup>17</sup> No other information regarding this event has come to light, but it probably took place soon after the construction of the building. In assigning numbers, in the present article, to the factories that Hale built, this one (plus its rebuilt version) will bear the designation “factory no. 1.” Another account of Hale’s testimony in 1870 presents a basic description of this building: “the first factory is 26 X 200 feet, has five stories, and is about sixty feet high.” If it

15. These were lots 1–5 in block 734, ward 20. Lots 1–4, numbered from south to north, measure nominally 25 by 100 feet, the former dimension fronting on the eastern side of Tenth Avenue and the latter dimension being the eastward extension; accordingly, these four lots cover an area of 100 by 100 feet, whose northern boundary is the division between the southern (36th Street) and the northern (37th Street) halves of the block. Lot 5, also nominally 25 by 100 feet, is directly adjacent to this area to the east, fronting on the northern side of 36th Street. All such information on real-estate transactions reported in this section of the present article is found in documents at the Manhattan Business Center, New York City Register’s Office, as well as in maps that will be cited.

16. In the absence of any record of this building’s design and date of construction in the pertinent archives of New York City, this information must be gleaned from other sources. The factory is shown on the *Plan of New York City, from the Battery to Spuyten Duyvil Creek* (New York: Matthew Dripps, 1867), marked “Pianos Fact.” The building seems to cover the entire area of the lot. The material of construction and the number of stories are indicated in the *Insurance Maps of the City of New York* (New York: Perris & Browne, 1871), vol. 5. Another building of exactly the same size, adjoining the north end of Hale’s factory and fronting on West 37th Street to the north, is marked “Billiard Fact.” in the *Plan of New York City*. This factory, situated on lot 65 of block 734, was owned by the firm of Phelan & Collender, which had purchased lots 65–69 (in block 734 at the southeast corner of Tenth Avenue and West 37th Street, representing a mirror image of the property owned by Hale to the south) on August 4, 1866. Phelan & Collender manufactured “Standard American” billiard tables and accessories, according to advertisements in the New York City directories.

17. *New York Times* (Dec. 29, 1870): 6.

had actually extended to 200 feet in depth, the additional 100 feet to the north would have been on land he did not own, and in the absence of further information, this statement must remain a mystery.<sup>18</sup> At any rate, Hale owned this property on 36th Street for little more than thirteen months, selling it on February 15, 1867.<sup>19</sup>

On July 31, 1867, Hale purchased two adjacent lots fronting on the west side of Tenth Avenue, beginning some fifty feet south of the corner with West 37th Street and extending further south for fifty feet; the east-to-west depth is 100 feet.<sup>20</sup> His new land, across the avenue and a bit to the north of his previous property, measured 5,000 square feet—considerably smaller than his earlier property, at 12,500 square feet.<sup>21</sup> Here he erected a brick building (his factory no. 2), one lot wide (25 feet) and 100 feet deep, bearing the address of 479 Tenth Avenue.<sup>22</sup> Still as “agent

18. The land in question was owned by Phelan & Collender, as shown above. The possibility that Hale rented their building seems to be negated by its identification as “Billiard Fact.” in the *Plan of New York City*, and also by the fact that the building’s address, 456 West 37th Street, is given as one of the locations of Phelan & Collender’s business in the city directory covering the year 1867. It is possible, however, that Hale rented one or more floors (but not all) of the building, in which case his principal address would still have been on 36th Street.

19. The purchaser was Phelan & Collender, which thus doubled its factory space in this location. The 1871 *Insurance Maps of the City of New York*, vol. 5, shows the two buildings, extending a total of 200 feet from 453 West 36th Street to 456 West 37th Street (perhaps their common wall was opened up to allow the two buildings to communicate at their juncture)—with a small one-story, brick addition to the northern end, containing a steam boiler—all marked “Billiard Table Factory.” An inscription in ink written above this marking in the copy of this document owned by the New-York Historical Society, scribbled in a foreign hand, can be deciphered as “Phelan.”

20. The lots are nos. 35 and 36 (numbering from south to north) in block 708, ward 20.

21. Why Hale chose not to remain permanently at his previous location, gaining needed manufacturing space by extending his factory onto his four additional lots on this block (1–4), must remain a mystery. Documents at the Manhattan Business Center, City Register’s Office, give some indication that he made money on the real-estate deal, although the fact that his lot no. 5 now included a building would account for at least a portion of the higher amount he received in the sale of that property.

22. Hale described this factory later in the *New York Times* (Dec. 29, 1870): 6. It is shown in the 1871 *Insurance Maps of the City of New York*, vol. 5, placed on his northernmost lot (no. 36), with an adjoining wooden frame structure to the south. Five stories are indicated in this latter source, while Hale’s testimony, recorded in the former source, indicates six stories (perhaps he included a basement in the numbering). As with his earlier factory, documentary information about this building is lacking in the archives of New York City, and it cannot be known exactly when it was built. He may have remained temporarily at his previous building on 36th Street, renting it from the new owners, until his new building was completed.



Great Union Piano Forte Co.," Hale is listed at this address in the city directory covering 1869, and without this affiliation (listed simply as "pianos") at this address in the directories for 1870–1873.

Already in 1869, Hale advertised that he was turning out "some 2,000 pianos for the trade" (presumably per year).<sup>23</sup> In that same year, his firm attained the seventh-highest position among the twenty-five highest-ranking piano manufacturers in the United States in terms of the dollar amounts of gross sales for the year, as reported in the *New York Daily Tribune*.<sup>24</sup> Although Hale's receipts of \$207,355 in 1869 amounted to only four percent of the total of \$5,248,577 for all twenty-five companies, the six companies ahead of his in the list received a total of \$3,152,650 (sixty percent), and his method of combining high volume with low prices yielded a result in which the numbers did not indicate the extent of his production, in comparison with the other six companies. For example, Steinway & Sons received \$1,205,563 during the year in question,

23. Advertisements were placed, for example, in the *New York Daily Tribune* during March 1869.

24. The article containing this information has proved to be most elusive. It is cited by Nancy Groce in "Musical Instrument Making in New York City during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1982, pp. 69–70 and 75, and a number of times in her *Musical Instrument Makers of New York City* as appearing in the issue of the *New York Tribune* for March 15, 1869. In fact, it was published, with the title "The Growth of the American Piano Trade," in the *New York Daily Tribune* on March 15, 1870 (p. 5). Hale is identified here by his own name and not "The Great Union Piano-Forte Co." The same newspaper followed this on March 19, 1870 (p. 7), with a short article with the same title in which the percentages of growth of ten of these manufacturers (not including Hale) from 1866 to 1869 are given. Both articles were reprinted with minor alterations and incomplete source citations in *The Trade Circular Annual for 1871* (New York: Office of the Trade Circular and Literary Bulletin, 1871), 150. The complete list of companies and their annual earnings for 1869 is reproduced in the dissertation cited above, but this source may not be readily available, and therefore it is reproduced here, as follows (starting with the highest dollar amount): Steinway & Sons, New York, \$1,205,463; Chickering & Sons, Boston, \$822,402; Wm. Knabe & Co., Baltimore, \$383,511; Haines Brothers, New York, \$287,051; Wm. P. Emerson, Boston, \$232,779; Albert Weber, New York, \$221,444; Joseph P. Hale, New York, \$207,355; Hallet, Davis & Co., Boston, \$178,049; C. F. Lighte & Co., New York, \$151,000; Ernest Gabler, New York, \$149,484; H. F. Miller, Boston, \$148,359; George Steck & Co., New York, \$145,500; Hallet & Cumston, Boston, \$131,908; J. W. Vose, Boston, \$118,413; Decker Brothers, New York, \$118,000; Hazelton Brothers, New York, \$104,661; Grovesteen, Fuller & Co., New York, \$96,825; Steiff Brothers, Baltimore, \$87,470; Marshall & Mittauer, New York, \$80,172; J. & C. Fischer, New York, \$69,308; Lindemann & Sons, New York, \$62,980; Raven, Bacon & Co., New York, \$57,387; Gaehle & Co., Baltimore, \$44,903; Central Piano Company, New York, \$44,000; and Kranich, Bach & Co., New York, \$42,622.

and their output was about 2,000 pianos, while Chickering & Sons received \$822,402 with an output of about 1,500;<sup>25</sup> simple arithmetic yields an average price of \$603 per piano for the former brand and \$548 for the latter. On the other hand, Joseph P. Hale's statistics indicate that he sold his instruments at an average price of \$104 each. One historical study of the American piano has referred to Hale's business as the "seventh largest" in the country, presumably on the basis of the information presented in the article cited above.<sup>26</sup> In this context, however, a reference to the size of a company might normally be taken as describing the amount of its production, as opposed to the amount of money it received. In this sense, at 2,000 pianos each, Hale was tied with Steinway for the position of "first largest."

Once becoming established at 479 Tenth Avenue, Hale began to purchase lots in the adjacent block to the south, relatively undeveloped, west of Tenth Avenue and bounded by West 35th and West 36th Streets.<sup>27</sup> He first bought two contiguous lots on Tenth Avenue at the northwest corner of 35th Street in 1868,<sup>28</sup> but he sold them off in 1869, and during the next decade he acquired land a bit farther west, closer to the center of the block (here the lots measure 25 feet wide by 98.9 feet deep). On this space he built three factories in succession, the second of which was extended twice (they are designated here as factories nos. 3; 4A, B, and C; and 5). By the end of 1879, his land holdings covered a contiguous width of 250 feet on 35th Street, starting 225 feet west of Tenth Avenue,<sup>29</sup> as well as a width of 275 feet on 36th Street starting 175 feet west of Tenth Avenue (not entirely contiguous on this side, since he could not acquire two lots along that span).<sup>30</sup> This land comprised nineteen lots and measured 47,500 square feet—certainly large enough for his last, largest factory (no. 5, built in 1878), plus additional open space for storage.

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25. Good, *Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos*, 240.

26. D. W. Fostle, *The Steinway Saga: An American Dynasty* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 210.

27. This is block 707 in ward 20. All information given here about Hale's real-estate transactions at this time is found in documents held at the New York City Municipal Archives, Department of Records, and the Manhattan Business Center, City Register's Office.

28. These are lots 31 and 32, numbered consecutively from south to north.

29. He owned lots 16–25, numbered consecutively from west to east.

30. He owned lots 45–49, 51–52, and 54–55, numbered consecutively from east to west.

Hale's factory no. 3 had a very brief and inauspicious existence. The architect's plans were submitted to the City Department of Buildings on October 8, 1870.<sup>31</sup> They call for an eight-story brick building with no basement, measuring 26 ft. wide (at the streets), 195 ft. deep (from street to street), and a towering 80 feet high, with walls 16 inches thick at the bottom, graduating to 12 inches at the top. This building was fitted onto an area consisting of four contiguous lots, measuring a total of fifty feet wide at the streets and 197.8 feet deep,<sup>32</sup> which Hale acquired two days later, on October 10. Construction began on November 14 and progressed rapidly, but before the walls were more than half completed, the builder advised Hale that they would be too weak to stand once they had reached their full height of 80 feet. Hale replied that the specifications had been approved by the city's Superintendent of Buildings, and he would authorize no change in them. This decision was soon proved wrong. On the morning of December 15, the long east and west walls of the structure collapsed in a high wind coming off the Hudson, leaving only the small northern and southern portions still standing.<sup>33</sup> Workmen finishing the construction on the roof had felt the building swaying in the wind and had escaped just before the walls gave way. Several residents of adjacent tenements, however, were horribly killed in the collapse. Hale was severely criticized in the press for his economy and negligence. One newspaper (*The Sun*) even made the wild claim that the bricklayers had used mud instead of mortar. Hale commented that recent rain may have compromised the mortar. The Superintendent of Buildings, after examining the rubble, testified that the construction ma-

31. All information given here about physical properties of Hale's buildings is found in documents held by the New York City Department of Buildings. Building plans cited here give only basic information, including dimensions that builders may not have followed exactly; they are not accompanied by architectural drawings. This plan is no. 1067 in the Docket Book for 1870.

32. These were lots 23-24 on 35th Street and 48-49 on 36th Street.

33. The dramatic collapse of Hale's factory and its immediate aftermath received fairly extensive coverage in the New York newspapers, the most important of which are the following reports. *Daily Tribune*: "Terrible Disaster" (Dec. 16, 1870): 8; "The Thirty-fifth Street Disaster" (Dec. 17, 1870): 2. *Evening Post*: "The Disaster in West Thirty-fifth Street" (Dec. 15, 1870): 4; "The Thirty-fifth Street Disaster" (Dec. 16, 1870): 3. *Sun*: "Death Riding the Wind" (Dec. 16, 1870): 3. *Times*: "Crushed to Death" (Dec. 16, 1870): 1; "Unsafe Buildings" (Dec. 17, 1870): 4; "The Factory Disaster" (Dec. 23, 1870): 2; "Hale's 'Man-Trap'" (Dec. 27, 1870): 3; "The Fallen Factory" (Dec. 28, 1870): 3; "Everybody Whitewashed" (Dec. 30, 1870): 4. *World*: "Collapse of a Man-Trap" (Dec. 16, 1870): 1; "Reckless Buildings" (Dec. 16, 1870): 4; "The Thirty-sixth Street Disaster" (Dec. 17, 1870): 11.

terials and methods had been sound, but that inner bracing walls should have been added, and the outer walls should have been thicker by four inches—neither provisions being required by the city's building laws.

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Hale lost little time in replacing his collapsed factory. A plan for factory no. 4A, a duplicate of factory no. 3 except for thicker walls at the base, was submitted to the Department of Buildings on February 1, 1871.<sup>34</sup> With an eye toward the future, Hale placed an advertisement in June of that year in the *New York Times*: "Wanted—for my new piano-forte factory, 200 first-class piano-workmen; steady work guaranteed."<sup>35</sup> Hale gave his address as 479 Tenth Avenue, his factory no. 2. Later in the same year, this very building fell victim to the destructive force that so often struck piano factories, with their open flames and abundant stores of inflammable liquids and combustible materials. On the morning of November 8, 1871, fire broke out on the third floor of this six-story brick building, which was now rented out to Dielmann & Funk, the piano-case manufacturer. The flames quickly reached the roof, which fell in, toppling one of the walls. The interior of the building was gutted completely. Fortunately, no lives were lost, although a number of workmen, firemen, and residents of the area were injured. Stoves provided the only source of heat in the building, and it was determined that someone's carelessness in tending them was the cause of the disaster.<sup>36</sup>

In 1875, Hale's factory no. 4A was extended to the west along 35th Street by an eight-story addition measuring 86 feet wide and 41 feet deep (factory no. 4B), for which a plan was filed with the city Department of Buildings on March 25 of that year.<sup>37</sup> A few months later, evidently emboldened by this enlargement to his factory, Hale again advertised in the *New York Times*, boasting: "J. P. HALE IS MAKING 50,000 SPLENDID piano-fortes at less than half price. Dealers, buy your pianos direct from factory, 35th st. and 10th av. and save half your money."<sup>38</sup> A plan for a further

34. This is Plan 167 for that year. This building, labeled "Pianoforte Factory," appears in the *Insurance Maps of the City of New York*, 1871, vol. 5.

35. *New York Times* (June 20, 1871): 6.

36. *New York Times* (Nov. 9, 1871): 5; and (Nov. 12, 1871): 6. Dielmann & Funk is listed at this address in the city directories covering the years 1870–78. Little more than a year later, Hale's rebuilt factory at 479 Tenth Avenue again suffered a fire, but it was much less severe. See the *New York Times* (Jan. 14, 1873): 8.

37. Plan 275 for that year, Alteration Docket. Hale acquired lots 19–22, accommodating this addition, on April 6, 1875.

38. *New York Times* (July 8, 1875): 3, and subsequent issues.

eight-story extension of his factory (no. 4C) to the west along 35th Street, measuring 60 feet wide with depths measuring 65 feet and 98 feet (specific widths of these two depths not indicated) was submitted on November 20, 1875.<sup>39</sup> Construction of the addition was begun on December 4 of that year and completed on July 1, 1876. Hale's entire factory (no. 4A, B, and C) then comprised a total floor space (over eight stories) that can be estimated (using outside dimensions) as 107,888 square feet.<sup>40</sup> A contemporary engraving of this building is shown here in fig. 2.<sup>41</sup> It illustrates the elevation on 35th Street as a wall with twenty-eight closely spaced windows on the second through eighth floors. Thus, the receding wall at the right in the engraving, with nineteen windows on these same seven floors, represents the east wall; but unless a great deal of foreshortening is employed here, it would appear to indicate only one-half of its total length of 195 feet—unless the unexpected short "L" (with four windows) at the far right, at a right angle to the east wall, blocks the reader's view of the continuation of that east wall to 36th Street.<sup>42</sup> The answer to the dilemma may be that the drawing in question is an inaccurate "artist's conception."

39. Plan 1035 for that year, Alteration Docket. Lots 17–19, on which this section stood, were part of Hale's acquisition of April 6, 1875.

40. This total is arrived at by estimating that half of the width of factory no 4c (30 feet) extended to a depth of 65 feet and the other half (30 feet) extended to the full lot depth of 98 feet. Since outside dimensions of the building are used in the calculation, the actual floor space would, of course, have been smaller than the figure given here, and a more exact figure could be arrived at by estimating the thickness of the wall at each story, based on the information given in the submitted building plans. The given total figure (all three parts, one story, 13,486 square feet; all three parts, eight stories, 107,888 square feet) is useful, however, in comparing Hale's factory no. 4A, B, and C to his final factory, no. 5.

41. Although the exemplar that serves as the model for this figure is a separate copy in my possession, the same engraving is included in "Joseph P. Hale, the Great Piano Manufacturer: Advance Sheets from Mathew Hale Smith's New Book on 'Successful People and How They Win' (copyright Matthew Hale Smith, 1877)," (New York Public Library: AGZ p.v. 28, no. 6). This engraving faces p. 9, while a second one, facing p. 3, is a portrait of Hale identical to the copy (also in my possession) presented here as fig. 1. The publication referred to is Matthew Hale Smith, *Successful Folks. How They Win. Illustrated in the Career of Eight Hundred Eminent Men* (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Company, 1878), which contains only the portrait engraving (facing p. 368). Joseph P. Hale is treated in Chapter 127 (pp. 368–78) in text that differs only slightly from the version presented in the "Advance Sheets" (see Appendix 4).

42. Another possible interpretation of this engraving is that it shows only factories nos. 4B and C, and that they were connected to factory no. 4A only by the projecting "L." However, the records at the Department of Buildings (although they are limited)

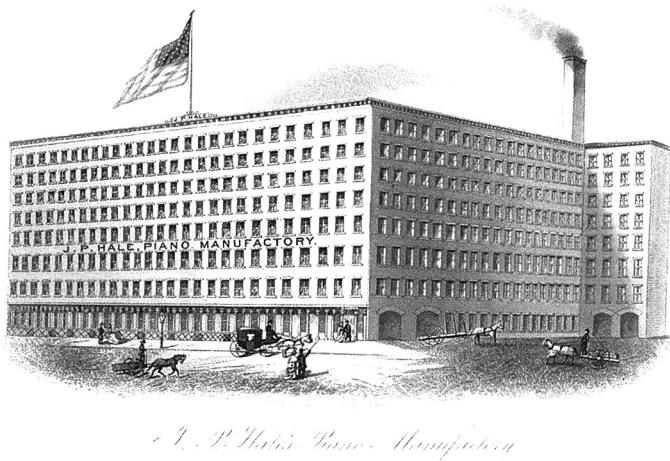


FIGURE 2. Engraving of Joseph P. Hale's Factory no. 4A, B, and C. Matthew Hale Smith, *Successful Folks: How They Win* (Hartford: American Publishing Co., 1878). Possession of the author.

After having experienced more trials and tribulations with his factories in a single decade than most industrialists had in an entire career, Hale might have thought that the time had come when he could pursue his manufacturing activities in peace, without distraction. He did not anticipate, however, the power of the press.

\* \* \* \*

American periodicals designed to serve the increasing number of professionals and amateurs devoted to the art of music began to appear about the middle of the nineteenth century. Among those that survived for decades were the *Message Bird* (New York, 1849, edited from 1852 by Richard Storrs Willis; it later became the *Musical World*) and *Dwight's*

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give no evidence that factory 4B was not simply added on to the southernmost 41 feet of existing west wall of factory 4A at 35th Street.

*Journal of Music* (Boston, 1852, edited by John Sullivan Dwight). The next decade brought *Watson's Weekly Art Journal* (New York, 1864, edited by Henry C. Watson; in 1876 it became the *American Art Journal*, edited by William M. Thoms; see Appendix 1).<sup>43</sup> Although these journals all presented information about musical works, composers, and performers, both of the New York publications mentioned above also began to go beyond the musical art to cover also the business of music (including publishers and manufacturers of musical instruments), and thus the genre of the music-trade journal was established. This was a lucrative market that attracted a London-born journalist who had recently come to New York, John Christian Freund (1848–1925). The first issue of Freund's semi-monthly *Music Trade Review: Devoted to the Interests of Musicians and Dealers in Music and Musical Instruments* (New York) appeared on November 3, 1875, offering a variety of feature articles and shorter items of news. Freund quickly realized that the circulation of his journal might benefit from sensational exposés of controversial aspects of the piano trade. He decided to begin by going after Joseph P. Hale.<sup>44</sup>

Freund's initial approach was subtle. His third issue (December 3, 1875) contained a lengthy piece entitled "Frauds in the Piano Trade," in which he charged that "unscrupulous persons" had damaged the reputations of several well-known and respected manufacturers by placing their names "either directly or in some mutilated shape . . . upon instruments which never saw light in their factories, but have been turned out wholesale, like so much sausage-meat."<sup>45</sup> Freund did not cite any "mutilated" names, but he singled out two "Decker" firms (Decker & Barnes and Decker & Brothers), which, he claimed, had been unfairly trading on

43. Basic information on all such American journals is found in William J. Weichlein, *A Checklist of American Musical Periodicals 1850–1900*, Detroit Studies in Music Bibliography, no. 16 (Detroit: Information Coordinators, Inc, 1970). It is supplemented here by information derived from my own examination of surviving copies.

44. In this decision he was followed by Marc A. Blumenberg's merciless attacks, in his *Musical Courier*, on the minor piano manufacturer and dealer John J. Swick from 1883 to 1896, in the course of which, in December 1891, the maligned Swick burst into Blumenberg's office brandishing a revolver and demanding retraction of the damaging articles. Another noteworthy example is the campaign that John Freund's younger brother, Harry Edward Freund, waged in the pages of his own *Musical Age*, in 1903–04, against the presumed deficiencies of—not a person, but an entire genre of American piano manufacturing. On the latter, see my "Harry Edward Freund's Great Square-Piano Bonfire: A Tale Told in the Press," this JOURNAL 30 (2004): 57–97, and "The Bonfire Still Smolders," this JOURNAL 36 (2010): 183–84.

45. *MTRI* 1, no. 3 (Dec. 3, 1875): 26.

the good reputation established by the earliest “Decker” firm, Decker Brothers of 33 Union Square. Later in the same issue, in a section headed “Trade Chat,” there appears a seemingly innocuous item: “Mr. Joseph Hale makes as many pianos as ever. He is reputed to have the largest collection of ‘stencils’ in the country.”<sup>46</sup> Here, the word “stencil,” referring simply to the device used to paint the manufacturer’s name on a piano’s nameboard (in square pianos) or fallboard (in grands and uprights), is presented for the first time in print within in the context—indirect though it may be—of unscrupulous counterfeiting of the names of reputable manufacturers. It is possible that Freund’s placement of quotation marks around the word signifies an intention to coin a new meaning of that word. Although the term “stencil piano” would soon come to be used to refer to the counterfeit itself (see below), Freund employed a different term for this phenomenon in his next issue, dated December 18, where, continuing the topic of “Frauds in the Piano Trade,”<sup>47</sup> he pounds out the word “bogus” twenty-three times to refer to instruments falsely bearing the name “Decker.” He ends his tirade with a proclamation that the “MUSIC TRADE REVIEW *is on the War-path* against all the manufacturers and dealers of bogus pianos,” employing an Indian image that makes an unmistakable reference to the chief object of his scorn, identified elsewhere in the same issue, along with another, well-established piano manufacturer:

We publicly call upon Joseph P. Hale, Hugh Hardman, and others, to discontinue selling pianos to any person or persons engaged in putting on these pianos the names of Stanley & Sons, Shumway & Sons, Decker & Brothers, Becker Bros., Webber, Pickering & Sons, Haynes Bros., Baines Bros., with intent to deceive the public that these said pianos have been manufactured by the well-known firms of Steinway & Sons, Decker Bros., Albert Weber, Chickering & Sons, and Haines Bros. If Joseph P. Hale, Hugh Hardman, and others do not regard our well-meant advice, their scalps will ere long dangle at the belt of “The Music Trade Review.”<sup>48</sup>

46. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

47. *MTRI* 1, no. 4 (Dec. 18, 1875): 42.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 41. Born in England in 1815, Hugh Hardman began the manufacture of pianos in New York in the early 1840s. His firm was one of the first to make commercial upright pianos, and at this writing, it was still called Hardman & Co. See Dolge, *Pianos and Their Makers*, vol. 1, p. 290; and Groce, *Musical Instrument Makers of New York*, p. 72. Hardman responded to Freund’s gibe with a well-phrased letter emphatically denying having any part in the infractions of which he had been accused by Freund, and defying his slanderers “to come out plain and above-board, without any dodging or innuendos.” Freund published this in *MTRI* 1, no. 5 (Jan. 3, 1876): 60.



Here we see the first recorded recitation of “mutilated” names marked on counterfeit pianos. Subsequent writers added more and more such names to the list in succeeding years, and the number of supposed examples has increased even to the present day.<sup>49</sup> In fact, many of these cited illegitimate names are probably fictitious, dreamed up by imaginative authors merely for effect and not based on actual observation.

Freund continued his journalistic offensive against Hale with items that are not downright negative, but fail to be positive. The following examples include the first published reference to Hale’s activity as a money lender and a comment on the source of some of his reported wealth:

It is not true that all the leading piano-makers are pecuniarily indebted to Mr. Joseph P. Hale. Some of them might be, if his rate of interest were not so high.<sup>50</sup>

Joseph P. Hale is said to be worth over three millions. We don’t believe it. If he really is, “the largest collection of stencils” is accounted for.<sup>51</sup>

At about the same time, Hale acted on his own behalf by having an article, complimentary to himself and his business, published in December, 1875, in the *Cincinnati Daily Times*,<sup>52</sup> where it might have been noticed by his many actual and potential customers in the Midwest (see Appendix 2A). The rambling essay enthusiastically praises Hale as a benefactor of mankind on the level of Franklin and Fulton by allowing the “social destiny of the piano” to be fulfilled, thus supplying a “national necessity.” On the practical side, it indicates that Hale will soon be manu-

49. In addition to the names cited above, the following examples—indeed, some meant to be humorous—have been recorded (sources are too numerous to cite here). For “Bechstein”: Brechstein. For “Bradbury”: Bradford. For “Chickering & Sons”: Chichering, Chickening, Chickring, Chicory, Pickring, Sickening. For “Decker Bros.”: Becker & Bros., Decker & Brother, Decker & Co., Dekr Bros. For “Hardman”: Hartman. For “Hazelton”: Hazelman, Hazeltine. For “Knabe”: Knaby. For “Mason & Hamlin”: Nason & Hammin. For “Geo. Steck & Co.”: George Stack & Co., Geo. Stick & Co., George Strack & Co., Stack & Co. For “Steinway & Sons”: Stannay, Stanney, Steinbay, Steinbeck, Steinberg & Bro., Steinberg & Sons, Steinburg, Steindell, Steinicke, Steinlay, Steinman, Steinmay, Steinmetz, Steinvey, Steinway & Soas, Steinwebb, Steinweg (the original name of the family, of course, but manufactured by a company not associated with the Steinways), Stinway. For the “Weber Piano Co.”: Webar, Webber, Weber & Bros., Weber & Sons, Webor. In addition, the *Pierce Piano Atlas*, 8th ed. (Long Beach, CA: Bob Pierce, 1982) identifies 1,000 names (some listed above) as examples of “stencils” reported to have been applied to pianos prior to World War I.

50. *MTRI* 1, no. 4 (Dec. 18, 1875): 52.

51. *Ibid.*

52. “Commercial. Pianos. . . .” *Cincinnati Daily Times* (Dec. 17, 1875): 3.

facturing an upright piano (in addition to the square piano) as well as a full agraffe square grand; moreover, he will “entirely relinquish” his use of other trademarks (i.e., stencils), and henceforth all his pianos will bear his own name. An abridged version of the article was published in early January 1876 in Freund’s *Music Trade Review*,<sup>53</sup> where it would have attracted the attention of the music trade (see also Appendix 2A), and slightly later, in a considerably more altered version—lacking the specific reference to Hale’s abandonment of the use of stencils—in two New York newspapers (see Appendix 2B).<sup>54</sup> Freund’s reprinting bears the heading “MANIFESTO! PRONUNCIAMIENTO!! ULTIMATIM!!! of Joseph P. Hale, Piano-Maker and Pioneer Spirit!!!” and forms the major part of an article by Freund headed “VICTORY! Joseph P. Hale forced by ‘The Music Trade Review’ to issue a Manifesto,” followed by the subheading “He floods the West with his Announcements—He swears he’ll promise to make no more Stencil Pianos.” Here John C. Freund is established as the first writer to use the term “stencil piano,” with a negative connotation, in print.<sup>55</sup> Freund introduces his version of the article with allusions and metaphors that hark back unmistakably to his “Indian image”:

Joseph P. Hale . . . has girded up his loins, put on his war-paint, arranged his scalp-lock, selected his war-cry, polished his tomahawk, and has stepped out into the “open” to do battle for the public and kill that hideous monster, the high-toned and high-priced piano.

Following his presentation of the essay, Freund concludes with the statement “Was there anything ever more ludicrous than this affected, bombastic rhodomontade?” (which must have sent many readers to their dictionaries, even in those days of higher literary standards of education). Freund also refers to the document on an earlier page of the same issue:

53. *MTRI* 1, no. 5 (Jan. 3, 1876): 60–61.

54. *New York Times* (Jan. 23, 1876): 7, the *New York Evening Post* (Feb. 2, 1876): 2. The abbreviation “*Adv.*” (Advertisement) is appended to the latter reprint, reflecting the status first indicated in the original article, headed “Commercial.”

55. A notice in the issue of the Chicago trade journal *Presto* for Sept. 12, 1925 (p. 8), under the heading “20 Years Ago this Week” (referring to the issue for Sept. 14, 1905), states “The first characterization of the so-called stenciled pianos was ‘bogus pianos.’ The first application of the word ‘stencil’ was made by the *New York Tribune* in 1875.” The first part of this third-hand notice is correct, as shown above, but the second is probably meant to refer to the article in the *New York Tribune*, “Piano Frauds Exposed,” which appeared in that newspaper on July 7, 1876; of course, the first such application did appear in 1875, but in Freund’s *Music Trade Review* six months earlier, as shown above.

Mr. Joseph P. Hale claims, in an article which we have published, that his pianos, which he is trying to sell at a very low rate, have been stamped by the Trade, Profession, and Public as being fully as good as those much more costly instruments made by the leading manufacturers in the trade, whom he charges with humbug and fraud. As we cannot endorse Mr. Joseph P. Hale's claims, we solicit correspondence on this subject, in order that we may show what the trade and profession really do think of the Hale pianos.<sup>56</sup>

Following up on this solicitation, Freund continued, in successive issues, to publish a number of letters supposedly submitted by correspondents. Among several seemingly pro-Hale contributions is one that is so obviously a fabrication that the person (Freund?) who concocted it to discredit Hale and dismiss his champions as illiterate should have been ashamed of himself:

260 FRANKLIN ST., CINCINNATI

EDITOR MUSIC TRADE REVIEW:

I have a J. P. Hale x groveSteen piano no money will bey it off me I use it all ready 9 years I had all other notes makes they was all no count along side off it I command all peoples too buy these kind off pianos I sees one off you bookes how your want know off Owners off *Hales* pianos what they knows about them you Sees now, So hes very good pianos.

I am very Truly yours

HENRY SEYFERT, Teacher of Musik.<sup>57</sup>

An anti-Hale article in the subsequent issue likewise bears a prominent heading, "BUSTED!" followed by "Mr. Hale's Bastard Thalberg Piano in Trouble" and "Another Victory for 'The Music Trade Review.'" This article reports the business failure of Leslie, Skirow & Smith, agents for Hale in Toronto, who sold pianos stenciled "Thalberg"—the name clearly meant to evoke the fame of Sigismond Thalberg (1812–1871), the virtuoso pianist who had performed in America—allegedly manufactured by Hale.<sup>58</sup> Apparently neither the deceased Thalberg nor his heirs could protect their good name, at least in North America.

56. *MTRI* 1, no. 5 (Jan. 3, 1876): 57.

57. *MTRI* 1, no. 6 (Jan. 18, 1876): 81. If this is in fact the work of Freund, it is remarkable that its contents, surely meant to parody a German barely able to write English, discredit his own heritage. His father, Dr. Jonas Charles Hermann Freund, was born in Bohemia, earned his medical degree in Vienna, and settled in London, where he founded the German Hospital. His mother, Amelia Louisa (Rudiger) Freund, born in Germany, wrote under the *nom de plume* of Amelia Lewis in London and, later, in New York. Both parents were still alive in 1876. See my article "Harry Edward Freund's Great Square-Piano Bonfire," pp. 68–70.

58. *MTRI* 1, no. 6 (Jan. 18, 1876): 81.

Hale was indeed accused of using many stencils to mark his pianos. William W. Fields of New York carried on a business of making stencils for American piano manufacturers (see Part 1 of this article); most of these were surely legitimate, but he admitted suspecting that many were "bogus." He reported in 1877 that he had supplied Joseph P. Hale with "a great many stencils."<sup>59</sup> Hale officially registered the trade marks "word-symbol: Star," "Stanley," "Mozart," "Wagner," and "R. Bradbury" on September 12, 1876, and "United States" on January 16, 1877.<sup>60</sup> The mark "Stanley" belongs to the list of stencils presumably designed to falsify the brand of Steinway & Sons, but Hale countered that he had paid royalties to a Mr. Stanley and his two sons, all in his employ, for the right to use their name.<sup>61</sup> Hale's "R. Bradbury" trade name brought objections from Freeborn Garrettson Smith, who had served as William B. Bradbury's superintendent in Brooklyn, NY, since 1861 and had bought the company upon the latter's retirement in 1867. Smith lost little time in applying for the trade name "Bradbury," which he received for pianos on December 5, 1876, and for organs on March 13, 1877.<sup>62</sup> He also went one step further, paying Hale \$1,000 for the "sole right to manufacture 'Bradbury' pianos," which Hale accepted.<sup>63</sup> In addition to the names mentioned above, Hale is reported in various sources during these years to have employed the following stencils without benefit of sanction from the United States Government: "Philip Phillips," "Dekr Bros.," "Haden," "Raven," "Chambers," "A. Sumner & Co.," "Parlor Gem," "Parlor Favorite," "Southern Gem," "Conservatory," "C. J. Whitney & Co.," and "Arion." The last-named stencil brought strong objection from J. B. Simpson, of Simpson & Co., New York, makers of the "Patent Arion" piano.<sup>64</sup>

Amid this hullabaloo, Freund found another justification for attacking Hale. In Freund's fourth issue, he had already praised the efforts of Frank Chickering to organize a society to "consider the vast and important interests involved in the trade," and he looked forward to the

59. *Sun* (Sept. 6, 1877): 4.

60. *Lists of Trade Marks Found at End of Volumes of General Index of the Official Gazette and Monthly Volumes of the Patents of the United States Patent Office* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877 and 1878). These registrations are corroborated in the *MTRI* 2, no. 11 (Oct. 3, 1876): 194, and 3, no. 7 (Feb. 3, 1877): 120.

61. *Sun* (Sept. 6, 1877): 4.

62. *MTRI* 3, no. 5 (Jan. 3, 1877): 86, and 3, no. 11 (Apr. 3, 1877): 196.

63. *MTRI* 3, no. 11 (Apr. 3, 1877): 185.

64. *Sun* (Sept. 6, 1877): 4.

meeting of piano manufacturers and others scheduled in New York for the following week. Among the issues that the society was expected to address was that of “bogus pianos.”<sup>65</sup> An article that Freund published some seven weeks later,<sup>66</sup> bearing the title “BUSTED” (certainly a reference to the earlier article with the same title), reported that at a second meeting of the association in question, Hale was voted in as president of the group, having been elected by “a crowd of men, more or less unknown,” the charge being that these were shills who had been paid to cast pre-printed ballots. In the conflict that ensued, as reported by Freund, the “reputable” firms (including Chickering & Sons, Steinway & Sons, Mason & Hamlin Organ Co., Decker Bros., Haines Bros., Hazelton Bros., Geo. Steck & Co., and many others) withdrew to form their own “genuine” association, while the original, “bogus” society remained, incorporated as the “Piano, Organ, and Music Trade Association of New York,” with Hale as president, Albert Weber as secretary, and a membership consisting mostly of minor representatives of the trade. As it turned out, the entire episode did not amount to much, but it provided sufficient anti-Hale grist for Freund’s journalistic mill until mid-April 1876. An example is the characterization of Albert Weber as an unwilling colleague of Hale, forced by the latter,

by means of certain influences [Hale] held over him, to make the fight on behalf of the bogus manufacturers and dealers. The desperate character of Mr. Weber’s position can well be imagined. Pretending as he does to make his own instruments, claiming for them a reputation second to none, he was compelled, we feel sure against his will, to take up a hostile and antagonistic position to the most respectable men in the trade in their efforts to protect themselves from fraud.<sup>67</sup>

Freund renewed his attacks on Hale for making pianos with “Stanley & Sons” and other misleading stencils. He even stooped so low as to concoct “An Intercepted Letter: Uncle Joseph to a Friend,” demeaning Hale with familiarity and illiterate language derisively alluding to his known lack of education:

65. *MTRI* 1, no. 4 (Dec. 18, 1875): 41, 43.

66. *MTRI* 1, no. 7 (Feb. 3, 1876): 97. See also *MTRI* 1, no. 10 (Mar. 18, 1876): 149–50.

67. *MTRI* 1, no. 8 (Feb. 18, 1876): 116. Weber’s antagonism to William Steinway, however, as illustrated in the competition of the two piano manufacturers during the events of the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia (see Part 1 of this article) suggests another reason why Weber may have joined Hale against Steinway.

DEER FREND: I received yure commoneykashun, but musst say thet the securty aint good enuf I will lend you ten thousand dollars on stok fixturs at 2 1-4 per sent per munts. I didn't want to lend you nuthin becos you suport that derty *Review* which is always ertackln me and my busines and tryen to ruen my karakter. Sum day I shall git sqare with that edditer and their will be a funerall. . . . the pianner bisness is dull and I think I shall sune go bak to sellen crokery wich is more profetabbe and yure life aint werried out of you. I ken sell poor goods at a good profet without haven enny edditer raisen hell all the time. Hopen that my proppersishen will meet your ideers I remane Your frend,  
JOSEPH.<sup>68</sup>

The issue of Freund's journal in which this last attempt at humor appears sports a title page that presents a satirical cartoon of "Uncle Joseph, Piano Maker," entitled with the pun "Hail to the Chief" (fig. 3). A good likeness of Hale (cf. fig. 1) is shown as a carnival barker, stepping down from his platform, perhaps about to lure his audience into buying his wares with his panpipes in the manner of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. He beats a traditional rope-tensioned tenor drum, an image probably invoking the use of the term "drummer" to refer to a traveling salesman. The mortgages and bonds stuffed into the pocket of his coat indicate his alternate career as a money lender. A speaking trumpet, used by American fire fighters, stands on the stage, perhaps representing fires that had damaged his factories nos. 1 and 2. He is surrounded by signs containing slogans. "Buy my fine bogus pianos warranted not to last six years" includes a drawing of a grand piano, which he had indicated in 1875 that he would soon be making. Is the fact that it is pictured backwards a hint of its "bogusness"? Another sign announces "Stencils by the ton." Closer to the figure is a sign bearing the slogan "Money loaned at 10 per cent per month on crokery, real estate, or music halls, followed by "Joseph X his mark," branding him as illiterate. To the right of the figure we see "Nothing but the cheapest materials & workmanship," followed by a drawing of a standard square grand piano, and then "Characters blackened at the shortest notice." All in all, this is not a flattering combination of images.

Freund kept up his attacks in 1877, but they were averted by an essay very favorable to Hale that was presented in a book by Matthew Hale Smith (no relation to the piano manufacturer known). It was released in that same year in "advance sheets," provisionally entitled *Successful People*

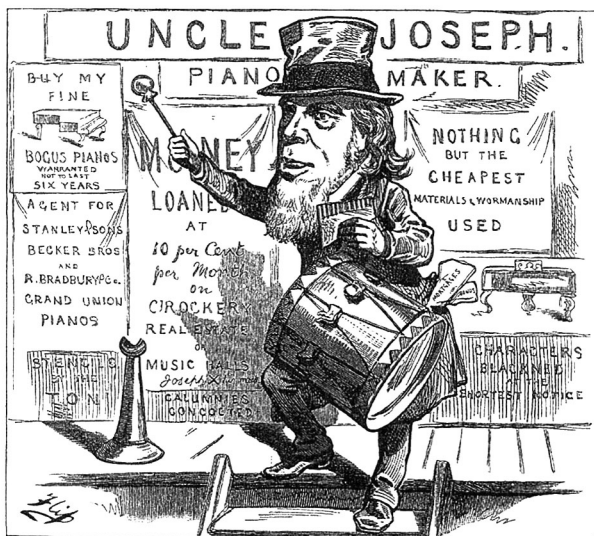
68. *MTRI* 3, no. 2 (Nov. 18, 1876): 20.



Vol. III.—No. 2.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 18, 1876.

Whole No. 28.



"Hail to the Chief!"

FIGURE 3. "Uncle Joseph, Piano Maker," *Music Trade Review* 3, no. 2 (Nov. 18, 1876): 1. Courtesy of the New York Public Library.

and *How They Win* and including the portrait shown here in fig. 1, as well as the engraving of the factory shown here in fig. 2.<sup>69</sup> The book itself, with an altered and extended title, was published a year later with a

69. Copyright 1877 by Matthew Hale Smith.

slightly modified text of the Hale article (see Appendix 3), including only the portrait.<sup>70</sup> Among the 800 “eminent men” treated in the book, in addition to Hale, are Daniel Webster, Cornelius Vanderbilt, John Quincy Adams, Sam Colt, U. S. Grant, Napoleon III, Henry Ward Beecher, and Ole Bull. The Hale article begins with elevated words about the piano manufacturer, going on to describe his business in glowing terms and to reveal his admirable personal traits. Descriptions of his present factory<sup>71</sup> and a “new and immense” factory to be built on West 146th Street at the Hudson River<sup>72</sup> are given, both with exaggerated statistics.

\* \* \* \*

Early on September 3, 1877, Hale’s enterprise suffered a terrible catastrophe. His complete factory no. 4A, B, and C was destroyed in one of the most disastrous fires in the history of New York City up to that time, engulfing adjacent buildings and seriously damaging neighboring structures.<sup>73</sup> Although the conflagration was tragic, attended with loss of life,

70. Matthew Hale Smith, *Successful Folks. How They Win*, chapter 127, pp. 368–78; portrait of Hale facing p. 368.

71. This factory is indicated as having a frontage on 35th Street of 450 feet, which is to be augmented by an addition of 60 by 100 feet. Several comments are in order about this statement: (1) the factory itself is Hale’s no. 4A and B, and the addition is no. 4C; (2) factory 4A and B had a combined measurement of only 111 feet, which makes the number 450 (present in both versions of the article) a great exaggeration; (3) the addition coincides nominally with factory no 4C, bringing the total frontage on 35th Street up to 171 feet; and (4) since the addition is mentioned as “being made,” the article must have been written sometime before its completion on July 1, 1876 .

72. This proposed factory is described as being eight stories high, occupying two blocks, and having a frontage of 800 feet and a depth of 50 feet. In fact, Hale purchased two lots in the block west of Eleventh Avenue (also known as “The Boulevard” and today bearing the name “Broadway”), between West 146th Street and West 147th Street, with a combined frontage of nominally 200 feet on the roadway of the Hudson River Railroad Company, on December 23 and December 28, 1876, according to records at the Manhattan Business Center, City Register’s Office (no other purchases of land in this area, Ward 12, by Joseph P. Hale are on record). With a combined area of only 9560 square feet, this property is not even one-quarter of the amount of land required for the proposed factory, and thus another exaggeration is evident. Of course, the destruction of Hale’s factory no. 4A, B, and C on September 3, 1877, and his subsequent decision to rebuild, creating factory no. 5, may have caused him to abandon his plans for 146th Street.

73. Exhaustive coverage of the fire in the Hale factory and its aftermath appeared as articles in New York newspapers, the most important of which are the following. *Daily Tribune*: “The West-Side Fire” (Sept. 6, 1877): 8; “Three Days after the Fire” (Sept. 7, 1877): 5; “The Thirty-fifth St. Fire” (Sept. 14, 1877): 2; “Mr. Hale Censured” (Sept. 15, 1877): 3; “The Burned Piano Factory” (Sept. 18, 1877): 8. *Evening Post*: “A



its extensive press coverage at least had the compensatory effect for posterity of providing a sizeable amount of information about the locations of various industrial activities within the large factory building.

On the morning of the fire, Hale's factory was under the supervision of Charles H. Stone, Hale's son-in-law,<sup>74</sup> who regularly took charge when Hale was not present. Hale had left just four days earlier for Montreal and was expected to continue his travels out to the West for a week or two. Stone (characterized as "a very stupid young man" by the *Sun*) stated that Hale's travel was for the purpose of seeking relief from his rheumatism in the western climate; but he may also have intended to include business activities along the way. As he left no itinerary with his family and colleagues, there was no quick way of notifying him of the calamity. Hale was later reported to have been somewhere between Salt Lake City and San Francisco when he heard of the fire, although reports also indicated that he had telegraphed Stone from Iowa on September 6, stating that he would return as quickly as possible. He arrived back in New York on September 17.

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Terrible Fire" (Sept. 3, 1877): 3; "The Great Fire: Additional Details" (Sept. 3, 1877): 4; "The Great Fire: Later Particulars" (Sept. 3, 1877): 4; "The Morning's News" (Sept. 4, 1877): 1; "Yesterday's Fire" (Sept. 4, 1877): 2; "The Great Fire" (Sept. 4, 1877): 3; "The Great Fire" (Sept. 5, 1877): 3; "The Great Fire" (Sept. 6, 1877): 3; "The Great Fire" (Sept. 7, 1877): 3; "The Great Fire" (Sept. 8, 1877): 3. *Sun*: "Yesterday's Calamity" (Sept. 4, 1877): 1; "The Great Conflagration" (Sept. 5, 1877): 1; "Ruins Still Smouldering" (Sept. 6, 1877): 1; "Buried in the Ruins Yet" (Sept. 7, 1877): 1; "Searching for the Bodies" (Sept. 8, 1877): 1; "What Is Left of Their Bodies: The Slow Gathering of the Remains of the Burned Pianoforte Makers" (Sept. 11, 1877): 3; "Hale's Burned Factory" (Sept. 14, 1877): 3. *Times*: "Eighty Buildings Burned" (Sept. 4, 1877): 1; "The Piano Factory Fire" (Sept. 5, 1877): 5; "The Great Fire of Monday" (Sept. 6, 1877): 2; "The Piano Factory Fire" (Sept. 7, 1877): 8; "The Piano Factory Fire" (Sept. 9, 1877): 2; "Portions of the Fifth Body Found" (Sept. 11, 1877): 8; "The Burning of Hale's Factory" (Sept. 13, 1877): 8; "The Burning of Hale's Factory" (Sept. 14, 1877): 8; "The Destruction of Hale's Factory" (Sept. 20, 1877): 2; "The Verdict on the Factory Fire" (Sept. 21, 1877): 3. *World*: "Yesterday's Great Fire" (Sept. 4, 1877): 1; "The Fire in Thirty-sixth Street" (Sept. 4, 1877): 4; "The Calamity of Monday" (Sept. 5, 1877): 1; "The Great Factory Fire" (Sept. 6, 1877): 1; "Not Prepared for Fire" (Sept. 7, 1877): 2; "The Thirty-fifth Street Ruins" (Sept. 9, 1877): 2; "What the Ruins Reveal" (Sept. 10, 1877): 8. A comprehensive summary with two addenda appeared in *MTRI* two weeks later: "Joseph P. Hale Burned Out," "The Fire Marshal's Investigation," "Searching the Ruins," "Incidents of the Fire," "The History of Hale's Factory," "What the Press Thinks of the Fire at Hale's Factory," "The Lesson Taught by the Fire at Hale's Factory," "Hale Censured by a Jury," vol. 4, no. 10 (Sept. 18, 1877): 161-64, 166-69, 170-71, 177.

74. Born on December 4, 1846, Stone married Augusta Wellington Hale on September 16, 1872. See [whipple.org/85632](http://whipple.org/85632) (accessed Dec. 12, 2015), which cites J. Gardner Bartlett, *Simon Stone Genealogy* (Boston: Stone Family Association, 1926), 494.

The fire started in the belling department, located on the fourth floor of the oldest portion of the factory (no. 4A). The newer portions (no. 4B and C), some areas as yet unfinished, were used mostly for storage of lumber and probably also of pianos in various stages of completion. "Belling" is the entire process of constructing and shaping sounding boards, attaching the bridge(s) on one side and the ribs on the other side of each board, fitting the prepared board into the case, and laying and securing the iron plate. The factory had no central boiler, and individual coal stoves provided the necessary heat for various purposes. On the morning in question, a little after 9:15, a sub-contractor responsible for making sounding boards and ribs, with six men in his employ, was busy gluing up wood for the boards, heating the glue on a round coal stove (set on a floor of bricks) next to the drying room, which was used for the seasoning of the boards and other wooden parts. This room, measuring 18 feet long and 6 feet wide, was partially lined with zinc sheets. That morning it contained pieces of maple wood on the floor and a number of spruce boards, meant for sounding boards, resting on wire racks at the top. Heat from the stove was supplied to the drying room by means of the stove pipe, which passed through the room at a spot dangerously close to the wire racks. Unfortunately, the most recent fire made in the stove was the work of an employee who had used wood shavings—very plentiful in a piano factory, but capable of producing sudden bursts of high heat unlike the more sustained heat from coal. The sub-contractor next heard the loud noise of a crackling fire, opened the door to the drying room, and saw a number of boards on fire, carelessly placed too near the stove pipe. He cried "Fire" and tried, along with his men, to remove the smoking boards, but to no avail. There were no fire extinguishers nearby, and whatever buckets of water could be found were insufficient to dampen the flames; furthermore, the inadequate plumbing system had not been able to produce any kind of flow higher than the third floor for some time. The men raced down the stairs and made their escape into the street. The belling foreman (i.e., contractor), who had been in Hale's employ for a number of years, joined in the attempt to extinguish the fire, but when that was unsuccessful, he supervised the evacuation of his floor and the ones below. He also witnessed some of the carvers (who also worked on the fourth floor and were estimated as numbering forty men) going up to the higher floors to notify the workers there. Another foreman, responsible for one of the fly-finishing rooms (where the final attachment of outer parts was accomplished) on the third floor, had climbed up to the fourth floor to get

a lyre (for the pedals of a square piano), whereupon he saw the fire and went down quickly to lead his men to safety. They were hampered by the thick walls of smoke coming from above and blocking some of the exits, but finally found a successful means of escape.

The highest four floors were given over to the varnishing and finishing of piano cases. This was a typical arrangement in piano factories (and no doubt in furniture factories as well), allowing wet varnish to dry where it was warm (at least when the weather was favorable) and—most important—where there was little chance that sawdust would be in the air. In the Hale factory, the space for drying recently varnished cases was augmented by a number of balconies or sheds (evidently made of wood) that were attached to the outside walls of the building, allowing access through the open windows. A varnishing foreman, whose twelve employees worked on the top floor and made use of these sheds, heard the sounds of commotion from below, looked out a window, and saw smoke billowing from windows on the fourth floor. He and his men ran toward the staircase, but this was filled with fire and smoke, so he led the way to an iron fire ladder on the side of the building. He stood at the top until his men (by this time only eight in number) had climbed down, and then he descended, although he had to scramble through two neighboring buildings to reach the street. He then looked up and saw at least eight men crying for help from the windows of the third floor of the factory, and three were his own men. When he related this account, he did not know their fate. Another varnishing foreman with eighty men in his employ was on the seventh floor when he heard the call of "Fire!" from below. He dashed down, hoping to help in extinguishing the fire. At the fourth floor, however, he encountered a whirlwind of flame surging toward him, and he ran back up to the top floor, shouting "Save yourselves! Run to the fire escapes!" By means of an iron-chain apparatus, he was able to descend to the ground, and at the time he counted at least fifty of his men who had similarly climbed down to safety by this means.

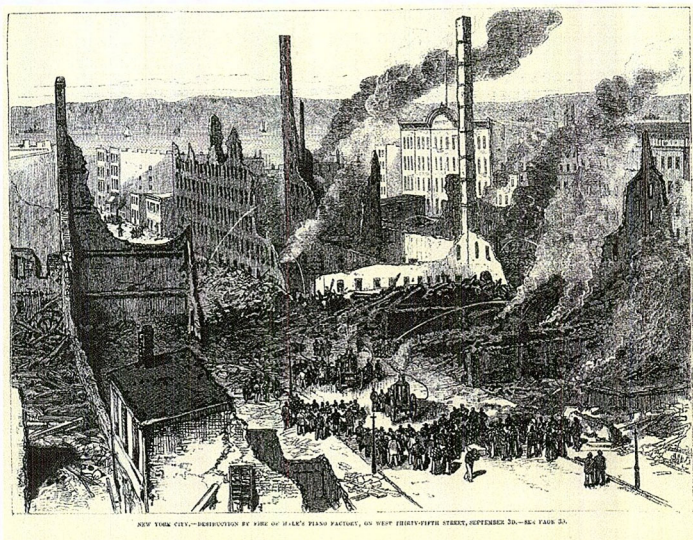
Two brothers, working that morning as porters on the first floor, were unpacking piano keys when they heard the first cries from the workmen above. Mr. Stone, standing by the office door, instructed one of them to run upstairs to see if the fire could be put out; he told the other brother to run outside and send the alarm to the fire department, giving him the key to the fire-box. Both brothers then took charge of getting the horses out of the stable, and as they were accomplishing this, Stone was able to gather important company papers and bring them out to safety. When

the firemen arrived and began to lay their hoses in the street, the flames had already reached the eighth floor. By a terrible combination of events, on the Friday or Saturday before the fire occurred, a group of workmen had turned off the Tenth Avenue water main, and after a few hours had turned it on again, but the pressure had been considerably weaker afterward and remained so during the height of the fire. An ample supply of water, however, was readily available not far away in the Hudson River. Two harbor steamers were dispatched and anchored at the foot of 35th Street, from which river water was pumped to the fire engines and thence to the raging fire. Full pressure in the water main was restored only on Monday afternoon, too late to serve any purpose other than cooling down the enormous heaps of smoldering rubble.

The aftermath of the fire is shown in an illustration published in *Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* on September 22, 1877 (fig. 4). The thoroughfare running diagonally from the lower right corner to a point somewhat below the upper left corner is 35th Street, and the direction is toward the west, with the Hudson River visible in the upper part of the picture. The upper central portion of the picture shows the remaining partial shell of the Hale-factory wall with the inside of the factory totally vanished. The street is partially blocked with rubble in front of the factory. One stream of water is being trained there on the interior of the factory, and the lower part of the picture also illustrates the application of water from a fire engine onto the rubble. At that point, groups of spectators are standing in the street in front of ruined buildings that were not part of the Hale factory. On the south side of the street (at the left in the picture) are similarly destroyed buildings. A smokestack still standing in the factory (right center) just behind the remnants of an inside corner allows a direct orientation with the illustration of the Hale factory published in 1876 (see fig. 2). Although the sources are difficult to interpret, this chimney was most likely left over, undamaged, from factory no. 3. In his testimony to a coroner's jury following the collapse of that building in 1870, Hale had mentioned that "there was a large chimney put in on the west wall, for steam power, if ever necessary; I did not expect to use steam myself, but might let it to others for that purpose."<sup>75</sup> The process of knocking down walls and other parts of the factory still standing began two days later, according to one report.<sup>76</sup> Large parts

75. *New York Times* (Dec. 29, 1870): 6.

76. *New York Daily Tribune* (Sept. 5, 1877): 8.



NEW YORK CITY.—DESTRUCTION BY FIRE OF HALE'S PIANO FACTORY, ON WEST FORTY-FIFTH STREET, SEPTEMBER 20.—SEE PAGE 25.

FIGURE 4. "New York City,—Destruction by Fire of Hale's Piano Factory," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (Sept. 22, 1877): 40. Possession of the author.

dislodged by explosives included a "tall chimney, which was part of the old building," said to be five feet square, over 100 feet high, and standing at the intersection of three sixteen-inch walls. A second tall chimney, located in the new part of the building, was then toppled. The drawing shown in fig. 4 therefore represents the scene directly after the fire, before the chimneys were demolished.

In his statements to the press, Charles H. Stone indicated that about 250 hands were employed in the Hale factory. Other witnesses gave the figure as about 150, and there is evidence that Hale had recently reduced production. Stone explained that he had no payroll list because work in the factory was done "by the piece"—that is, by the contract system. A certain amount of work was given out to each contractor (foreman), who would be responsible for its completion by his own workmen, whom he hired, supervised, and paid. A later evaluation of Hale's manufacturing method indicates that contractors paid Hale rent for the

rooms they occupied in his factory.<sup>77</sup> Early reports after the fire indicated that two persons were known to have perished: a child in an adjacent residence and a factory workman, fifteen years old, who had jumped from a high window and had later died from his injuries. At least nine additional workers were known to be missing and were presumed dead. They had all worked as varnishers or rubbers on the highest two floors of the factory. Many witnesses spoke of having seen workers jumping or calling for help from the windows, but no additional victims could be determined. Later close examination of the rubble—possible only after it had cooled off sufficiently, which took many days—yielded body parts, but no further identifications.

New York newspaper reports of the disaster appeared in great volume, as shown above. They were generally objective, although some were critical of Hale, as revealed in a few article headings: “The Piano Factory a Fire Trap”<sup>78</sup> and “Not Prepared for Fire; How Hale’s Eight-Story Piano Factory Was Almost Unprotected.”<sup>79</sup> The major journalistic onslaught against Hale came, as might be expected, in the pages of the *Music Trade Review*, with almost an entire issue devoted to articles about the fire, along with other anti-Hale statements.<sup>80</sup> Their tone may be gleaned from the article headings and subheadings; the following are several examples: “Joseph P. Hale Burned Out; The Factories of the Great Bogus Manufacturer Destroyed by Fire; The Buildings Owned by Hale Perfect Fire Traps.” “How Hale’s Eight-Story Factory was Almost Unprotected.”<sup>81</sup> “The Feeling against Hale.” “Hale’s Neglect to Get the Bodies Out of the Ruins—The Mayor Taking Action in the Matter—He Considers Hale’s Conduct ‘Inhuman.’ ” “The History of Hale’s Factory; A Record of Ruin; Hale Threatened with Lynching in 1870.” Freund also appended complete texts of articles from other papers, describing the fire and denouncing Hale on several accounts. This section begins with reprints of several articles recently published in the *Sun*.

Known as a paper with a flair for the sensational, the *Sun* had an inner masthead (on the second page of every issue) that incorporated a simple

77. *AAJ* 37, no. 3 (May 13, 1882): 51.

78. *Sun* (Sept. 4, 1877): 1.

79. *World* (Sept. 7, 1877): 2.

80. *MTRI* 4, no. 10 (Sept. 18, 1877): 161–171. Freund had some two weeks to prepare his major assault on Hale, as his journal was a semimonthly, published on the 3rd and 18th of every month.

81. Freund also had enough time to read other New York papers.

drawing of the solar heavenly body, appearing in the cleft of a distant mountain, reflecting in a nearer body of water and shining its rays upward and outward. Below this depiction appears the paper's motto: "It Shines for All." The *Sun* shone not, however, for Joseph P. Hale. The first portion of the first article criticizing Hale's business methods, published in this paper two days after the fire, is presented here in Appendix 4.<sup>82</sup> It consists mostly of a lengthy statement from "a leading pianoforte manufacturer" describing the many iniquities for which Hale was condemned; although most of these are discussed above, the article's presentation here is justified by the succinctness of the statement and the distinction of its author. The anonymous pianoforte manufacturer was, in fact, William Steinway, who was in a good position to observe Hale's business, although he admitted that he did not know the man intimately.<sup>83</sup>

The *Sun* went on to publish additional criticism of Hale and his business, assaulting his reputation with the usual claims of making "bogus" pianos stenciled with fictitious and duplicitous brand names, and casting blame also at the agents who duped customers all over the country. Hale's suppliers of cases, plates, keyboards, and actions are identified (see Part 1 of the present article), and John C. Freund is quoted, describing a "poor widow" who was swindled into paying \$600 for one of Hale's pianos, which "became worthless on her hands in four weeks." Finally, Hale is characterized as an uneducated man of "remarkable natural ability," the major part of whose business is not manufacturing pianofortes, but money lending. He is said to have sustained considerable financial setbacks due to unpaid loans and especially the recent destruction of his factory, the latter amounting to \$100,000 for the building and its machinery and \$150,000 for the loss of some 2,500 instruments either finished or in the process of construction.<sup>84</sup>

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82. *Sun* (Sept. 5, 1877): 1.

83. Steinway's entry in his diary for September 5, 1877, proves his identity: "Sun has an acct of Hale based upon my information, reflecting pretty badly upon his business." See the *William Steinway Diary, 1861-1896*, [americanhistory.si.edu/steinwaydiary/diary/](http://americanhistory.si.edu/steinwaydiary/diary/) (accessed Dec. 14, 2015).

84. *Sun* (Sept. 8, 1877): 4. According to John C. Freund, this and other "able exposures" of Hale published in the *Sun* "were written by Mr. Conly, one of the most brilliant journalists on the New York press." See *MTRI* 4, no. 10 (September 18, 1877): 178. Daniel Connolly [sic], appearing in the New York directories covering 1875-78 as an insurance agent or broker, and those covering 1878-80 as a journalist, is evidently the man referred to.

Hale did not respond immediately to his critics, as he was busy with making arrangements for raising his new factory (no. 5) out of the ashes of the old. On October 8, 1877, Hale's architect wrote to the superintendent of the New York City Department of Buildings to inform him that "Mr. Hale has employed us to take charge of his building from this date."<sup>85</sup> The plan for the factory was submitted on October 16, 1877.<sup>86</sup> A significant aspect of the building, as indicated in the plan, is that there were no "hot air, steam, or other furnaces."<sup>87</sup> Without a steam boiler, the

85. The documents concerning the building and design of Hale's factory no. 5 are found in the New York City Municipal Archives, Department of Records, under Docket Book plan 654, which also contains several letters from the architect requesting variances. Blueprints are not preserved.

86. It calls for a brick building of eight stories, 80 feet high, with a front of 150 feet on 35th Street, a front of 66 feet on 36th Street, and a depth of 197 feet 6 inches from street to street. According to the reported dimensions, the effective height of the individual stories would have been less than nine feet, and headroom under the girders would evidently have been even a foot lower. This would have been considered skimpy by the building standards of the time. The value of the building was set at \$35,000. The foundation walls, made of stones (in mortar) measuring 48 x 36 x 12 inches and incorporating parts of the old foundation, were 32 inches thick and supported walls of hard brick in sand-and-lime mortar graduating from 24 inches thick (first story) to 20 inches (second and third stories) to 16 inches at the higher stories. At the roof, parapet walls two feet high were coped with blue stone. A flat roof was spread with gravel. Skylights in the roof were made of iron and glass. Inside, all "floorbeams" (joists), made of spruce, measured 3 x 12 inches, supported by pine girders 10 x 12 inches, and by pine columns 12 x 12 inches under the second floor and 10 x 10 inches under all higher floors. The overall dimensions given above are not complete, as they account only for the easternmost section (66 feet by 197 feet 6 inches, extending from street to street), as well as the complete front on 35th Street, extending 150 feet. What is not mentioned are the additional dimensions of the building as built, as observed and measured approximately by me on site, and also as shown (and labeled "Hale piano manufactory") in the *Atlas of the Entire City of New York* (New York: Geo. W. Bromley & E. Robinson, 1879). The westernmost section, taking up 44 feet of the front on 35th Street, extends northward some 99 feet (the depth of one lot), and the middle section on 35th Street, measuring 40 feet, extends northward by 42 feet. Thus, considering outside dimensions only, each story would have contained 19,071 square feet of space, and therefore all eight stories would have produced 152,568 square feet. This figure may be compared to the figures of 13,486 square feet and 107,888 square feet, respectively, for the complete factory no. 4A, B, and C. Factory no. 5, therefore, was over forty-one percent larger than its predecessor.

87. I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Marco Merino, superintendent of the building, who kindly allowed me limited access to the basement of the factory (under the middle portion of the southern elevation on 35th Street) and the roof on two occasions in 2007. A large chimney was located just outside the basement, which contained a working boiler from the mid-twentieth century, but also an older boiler, clearly long out of service. Apparently unaltered and simply left in place, the latter was a combination of two tubular boilers ganged together and faced with a common cast-iron front,



factory had no steam engine(s) communicating power to smaller machinery by means of the familiar industrial system of pulleys and belts. The resulting limitation to hand tools, however, would have been suitable for the activities taking place in Hale's factory: mostly the assembly of ready-made parts, with cases, legs, and other visible parts of the furniture being hand-varnished and hand-rubbed. Hale's workmen in the belying department also fitted up soundboards, and this required heated glue. As the description of the cause of the fire in his previous factory indicates (see above), an individual stove provided this heat.<sup>88</sup>

Unlike its predecessors, Hale's last factory building had remarkable staying qualities, surviving for some 134 years (see figs. 5, 6, and 7). Long put to use for other purposes, it was demolished in stages during January and February, 2012, to make way for the new Hudson Park and Boulevard on the land bounded by Tenth and Eleventh Avenues from West 33rd to West 39th Streets, a project of the Hudson Yards Development Corporation of New York City with the goal of helping to "transform the area from a desolate industrial neighborhood to a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly mixed-use district."<sup>89</sup>

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which contained the name of the maker, "James Beggs & Co., 9 Dey St., NYC." With each boiler measuring approximately 40 inches in diameter, they would have been examples of size 8, the largest, shown in the firm's *Illustrated Catalogue: Machinery, Tools & Supplies* (New York: James Beggs & Co., 1885), 391. Both of them together would have produced a large supply of steam, but it was not steam for Joseph P. Hale. Although city directories show that James Beggs & Co. was in operation in New York from about 1871, the firm first began to be located at 9 Dey Street in 1883 and remained there through 1902. This seems to coincide directly with evidence in a document preserved on microfiche at the New York City Department of Buildings; dated May 27, 1902, it reports the erection of a one-story boiler house and a 110-foot-high chimney stack at the site. Therefore, the installation of the old boiler dates from that later time.

88. During my inspection of the roof of the factory, I discovered that several projections from the parapet walls, barely visible from below, were the boarded-up remnants of what must have been a whole line of chimneys. Those that remained were all located above walls between windows, which must still have contained flues leading to the stories below.

89. [hydc.org/html/project/hudson-park.shtml](http://hydc.org/html/project/hudson-park.shtml) (accessed Sept. 4, 2015). When it became evident that the Hale factory had been sold to the city and was slated for demolition, I had the thought that although the factory was not an outstanding example of handsome architecture (Hale would not have paid a penny more for decorative brickwork), nevertheless it was a substantial remnant of the fast-disappearing industrial fabric of New York City, and its passing should be commemorated in some way. Consequently, I communicated with a well-known architectural editor of a major New York newspaper, sending him information about the historical importance of the factory and the colorful career of its original owner, and suggesting that this might be a



FIGURE 5. Joseph P. Hale's Factory no. 5, east elevation. Photograph by the author, 2007.

\* \* \* \*

Hale countered his detractors in several acts during the clearing of the rubble of his destroyed building and the construction of his last factory. First, he caused a favorable piece entitled "Hale and His Pianos: The Man Who Can Neither Be Blown, Burnt, nor Slandered into Obscurity . . ." to be published in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on December 11, 1877; it was reprinted in the *New York Times* two days later (see Appendix 5). He also wrote a response to the *Sun* on December 17, 1877, that was published on December 27 and reprinted in the *Music Trade Review* on January 3, 1878. It is a powerful statement describing the extent of his enemies' attempt to defame him, and it even blames them for setting his factory on fire (see Appendix 6). Not long thereafter, Hale sued Freund's journal for libel on February 14, 1878, laying the damages at \$100,000 for offences over a period of more than two years. Although Freund was the accused party in this affair, his voracious appetite for sensational news evidently got the better of him, and he reprinted Hale's entire affidavit (listing every claimed offence in detail),

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suitable subject for the editor's regular column about interesting old New York buildings. He declined the offer quickly with the comment "There's no story in it."



FIGURE 6. Joseph P. Hale's Factory no. 5, south elevation. Photograph by the author, 2007.

covering some four pages' worth of densely packed text.<sup>90</sup> It is no surprise that Freund played the role of the courageous journalist in his introduction to this material:

For our own part, we promise to pursue the matter to the bitter end, to be as tireless as we have ever been in our denunciation of fraud, and never to rest

90. *MTRI* 5, no. 8 (Feb. 18, 1878): 144–48.



FIGURE 7. Joseph P. Hale's Factory no. 5, north elevation, showing chimney erected 1902. Photograph by the author, 2007.

till we have shown that our paper deserves to exist, because it has strengthened the hands of the honorable men in the trade, while it scourged with a lash of fire those who consider no arts too mean, no device too contemptible which can enable them to extract dollars from a gullible public.<sup>91</sup>

Freund was arrested, and bail was set at \$10,000.<sup>92</sup> William Steinway signed one bail bond of \$5,000 on February 13, 1878, and he persuaded his brother C. F. Theodore to pay the other half on February 14.<sup>93</sup> Freund stated with confidence that the lawsuit would finally bring the truth of Hale's iniquities out into the open. He even claimed that Hale's fire had been good for the trade:

Aside from all other considerations, the simple fact of the burning of Joseph P. Hale's factory has had a beneficial effect upon the business of other manufacturers, for it immediately stopped an enormous production of pianos, and turned buyers in other directions. Makers of cheaper grades of instruments have been most benefitted by the disaster, and we learn that in the case of one such firm business has grown to the extent of nearly two hundred a month.<sup>94</sup>

91. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

92. *New York Times* (Feb. 14, 1878): 3.

93. See the entries for Feb. 13 and 14, 1878, in the *William Steinway Diary* (accessed Dec. 15, 2015).

94. *MTRI* 5, no. 9 (March 8, 1878): 170.

In the meantime, an intermediary named Wardwell,<sup>95</sup> acting on Hale's behalf, had begun to call on William Steinway to attempt to enlist his aid in settling the affair. The visits took place in March 1878, and were recorded by Steinway in his diary. The following entries are representative:

Wardwell calls, has a long conversation with me, says Hale will be satisfied with a proper apology by Freund & desires to settle his suit against Freund[.] I tell Wardwell that I have no connection with Freund or the M. Tr. R. but will do my best to restore peace between the two.<sup>96</sup>

Wardwell calls, says that he has important communications to make from Jos. P. Hale, he does call in evening making propositions on the part of Hale to settle suit and to prevent Freund's answer from being published +c +c I saw Freund in afternoon who is very stubborn says he will rather rot in jail than to give in.<sup>97</sup>

Wardwell comes in tells me Hale wants to know what arrangements he can make with Freund. I tell him they better deal with Freund direct.<sup>98</sup>

Whatever was done behind the scenes to reconcile Hale and Freund was done quickly, for Freund announced in the very next issue of his journal that Hale had withdrawn his lawsuit and made a "statement to the public." In consequence of this action, Freund set aside his bluster and executed a sudden about-face, endorsing and publishing this statement, which is a clear expression of the manufacturer's credo (see Appendix 7; the address on West 34th Street was Hale's residence). Twenty substantial testimonial letters favorable to Hale, the majority sent from dealers, were appended. Freund's introduction to this material includes the following comments, deflecting all blame:

95. The individual cited was surely John H. Wardwell, who had served as the publisher of the *Musical World* beginning with the issue for May 7, 1859, and as its last editor from Jan. 14, 1860, to August 4, 1860, when the journal merged with another publication under a different editor. See pertinent issues of the *Musical World* and Weichlein, *A Checklist of American Music Periodicals 1880-1900*, 44. New York City directories corroborate these positions held by Wardwell during these years and list his occupation as "pianos" at various succeeding addresses (surely retail dealerships) from 1862/63 until 1879/80. As an associate of Joseph P. Hale, Wardwell was listed as a member of Hale's "Piano, Organ and Music Trade Association of New York" in *MTRI* 1, no. 10 (Mar. 18, 1876): 149-50.

96. *William Steinway Diary*, Mar. 6, 1878.

97. *Ibid*, Mar. 8, 1878.

98. *Ibid*, Mar. 15, 1878.

In his statement, Mr. Hale claims that he has for years been unjustly made the scapegoat of the Trade, and made to bear the burdens of every irresponsible maker and dealer. We must frankly confess that our own experience since the commencement of this suit for libel has taught us that this is in a great measure true, and that many dealers, in their efforts to screen themselves, have laid changes at Mr. Hale's door of which he was entirely innocent. . . . What we have published in this contest, which has waged with great bitterness for nearly three years, has been written solely in the belief that we were subserving a public purpose, and that in exposing the gigantic frauds in the piano and organ business we were protecting legitimate manufacturers and the public. We had no personal ends to gain, and no malice against Mr. Hale (whom we had only seen once in our lives) to gratify. If from the evidence Mr. Hale brings forward it should appear that we have in any way wronged him by articles based on information furnished by leading members of the Trade, we have strength and manliness enough to say we are sorry for it.<sup>99</sup>

Fifteen more testimonials on behalf of Hale from dealers, tuners, and other professionals appeared in the subsequent issue.<sup>100</sup> From this time forward, Freund's publication of material concerning Hale was generally positive. The completion of Hale's last and biggest factory (no. 5) in May, 1878, brought forth a description by Freund of his recent tour of the building, published in early June (see Appendix 8).<sup>101</sup> Freund continued to treat Hale fairly, printing a series of interviews of the great manufacturer in subsequent issues. In the first interview, Hale gave information about the fire that had destroyed his factory, the present state of his business, and his plans for the future:

The first question we asked Mr. Hale was, what figure he put upon his losses by the late fire.

*Mr. Hale.*—I lost on stock, fixtures, and buildings by the fire about \$300,000. Of this I recovered about \$50,000 from my insurance, all of which was paid, notwithstanding many false reports to the contrary. It would be below the mark if I estimate my losses from inability to supply my orders while my factory lay in ashes, at \$50,000. You may safely say that it was a catastrophe in which, unfortunately, some lost their lives and I lost \$300,000.

*Ourselves.*—Does this sum seriously affect your financial standing?

*Mr. Hale.*—Not in the slightest degree; that is far too well assured. Within eight months I have entirely rebuilt my factory, and hope before long to

99. *MTRI* 5, no. 11 (Apr. 3, 1878): 216.

100. *MTRI* 5, no. 12 (Apr. 18, 1878): 237–38.

101. *MTRI* 6, no. 3 (June 3, 1878): 58.

show the trade what I can do, by turning out two hundred pianos per week the year round. I shall then make \$100,000 a year from the piano business.

*Ourselves.*—Why, that would mean that you only make an average profit of \$10 an instrument.

*Mr. Hale.*—Just so. I mean to do my business on a very small margin for each. By this means I shall give employment to a very large number of persons, shall put my pianos within the reach of the most moderate incomes, and shall realize a handsome income for myself.

*Ourselves.*—Do you not think, by this means of procedure, you are cutting the throats of the trade, so that in the future it will prevent even you making sales?

*Mr. Hale.*—Decidedly not. I contend that the large number of pianos I have put upon the market has done more to develop a taste for music among the masses than anything else. Instead of being regarded by the high-priced makers as their worst enemy, I ought to be looked upon as their best friend. Many a Steinway piano has been sold to people who started out with a Hale. Furthermore, I have used my means largely to support various firms in the trade, who, to say the least, would not be where they are to-day but for my dollars. . . .

*Ourselves.*—Was there ever any foundation, Mr. Hale, for the reports which alleged that you had exercised cruelty to your work people?

*Mr. Hale.* (smiling complacently)—No sir; here you see my men; you can judge for yourself what a quiet, orderly set they are. All these stories which have got into the papers, your own included, are largely the result of the tongues of the idle population around here, who hate me because I would not allow a drop of liquor to be brought into my shop. Had my men squandered their hard earnings among the neighboring bar-rooms and large bier [sic; he uses the German spelling] saloons, I would have been the most popular man in the district, and probably have been put up for alderman or member of Assembly. By the bye, let me show you something now. Do you know what this is?

*Ourselves.*—That is a case of a grand piano in course of construction.

*Mr. Hale.*—That's just what I'm at. I mean to put on the market a solid, well-constructed, rich-toned instrument, warranted for five years, that the dealer can afford to sell for \$235 and make money on.

*Ourselves.*—You take away our breath.

*Mr. Hale.*—I mean to take away the breath of a good many others before I get through. The fact of it is, the trade is just coming down to a very plain issue. All the medium [i.e., middle] men have got to go by the board. The public want to buy either a piano with the very best reputation, like a Steinway, or they want to buy the best they can get for the money, and that's a

Hale. I've seen this coming for a long time, and mark my words, my prophesy will prove correct. Fictitious values must give place to real ones, the moment competition becomes lively, and the day when a poor piano could be sold for a big lot of money is over.<sup>102</sup>

The reason for Freund's change of mind regarding Hale most likely centered on his own situation at that time. Freund was living considerably beyond his means, relying on borrowed money to finance his residence in Tarrytown, NY, to which he was making lavish improvements, and his well-appointed office in New York City. He was also said to be attempting to force advertisers to submit payment well in advance of publication, suggesting that the alternative might be adverse editorial commentary. It all came to a head in January, 1880, when he could not cover several notes for large amounts; he fled the city to parts unknown, leaving his wife, colleagues, and creditors to pick up the pieces. The last-named group was large and included William Steinway and Joseph P. Hale, to each of whom Freund owed \$5,000. His *Music Trade Review* ceased publication abruptly as a result of these events.<sup>103</sup> It has been shown above that Hale wished to make a settlement with Freund on the matter of the lawsuit in 1878, and it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the manufacturer and money-lender encouraged the journalist's conversion with the forgiveness of his debt and perhaps, beyond this, a monetary loan or even a gift.

Freund appeared in New York again two years later, seemingly absolved of his former iniquities and functioning freely as editor of a new publication, initially called *Music: A Review*, subsequently *Music and Drama*, and then *Weekly Music and Drama*. In its first issue (January 7, 1882), Freund makes reference to his articles, in his former journal, about fraudulent practices in the piano trade, claiming that he had been

102. *MTRI* 6, no. 4 (June 18, 1878): 83. The retail price for Hale's planned grand piano is given as \$225 in this document, but it is corrected to the present figure in the subsequent issue, in which the editor also comments that the usual prices would have been \$425 for a grand and \$225 for a square; on the subject of Hale's prices, he adds "With such exceedingly low prices as these, we are not surprised at the large sales which Mr. Hale assures us he is constantly making, although they are yet far below what they would be if his supply equaled the demand." *Ibid.* vol. 6, no. 5 (July 3, 1878): 108. Further Hale interviews are found *Ibid.*, vol. 6, no. 12 (Oct. 18, 1878): 234-35; vol. 7, no. 13 (Jan 25, 1879): 15; vol. 8, no. 1 (Feb. 1, 1879): 14; and vol. 8, no. 2 (Feb. 8, 1879): 14. A substantial biography, culled from earlier writings (p. 19), along with a full-page copy of Hale's portrait (supplementary page) are found *Ibid.*, vol. 9, no. 12 (July 19, 1879).

103. "The Case of Jno. C. Freund," *Sun* (Jan. 18, 1880): 6.



drawn into the “maelstrom of a fight” by members of the trade with personal animosities that had not been his. Notwithstanding this attempt to distance himself from that battle (he does not specifically mention his attacks on Joseph P. Hale), he announces his intention to resume his fight against miscreants. Accordingly, he dredges up the old bugaboo of the “bogus” piano, defining it as “a piano bearing the name of a man or firm who did not make it, or who has no existence in fact.” This is followed by a list of “bona fide” piano manufacturers, those who can be recommended without question as abstaining completely from dishonest practices—and in addition to all the expected names, the list includes Joseph P. Hale.<sup>104</sup> This represents Freund’s final public act of contrition in his conversion. He went on in a subsequent issue to give his side of the story in the matter of Hale’s surprising election to the presidency of the piano-manufacturers’ association in 1876. As suggested above, the whole matter was influenced by the competition between William Steinway and Albert Weber, but Freund’s revelation in 1882 provides a new twist to the affair. According to Freund, Hale had been emboldened by Weber to run for the office, and it was intended that Frank Chickering be elected to the position as vice-president. After both had been elected, Hale was going to be persuaded to resign, so that Chickering, a long-standing competitor of Steinway, would accede to the presidency. This was calculated to be a great embarrassment to Steinway, as the election meeting was held on his own turf, Steinway Hall. Of course, things did not turn out according to plan. Freund commented: “Mr. Weber always used to say that it was one of the marvels to him how this part of the program, which to him was the most agreeable, had miscarried, but he always suspected that somehow or other Mr. Steinway had been too smart for him.”<sup>105</sup> On the personal side, Freund’s later recollection of the many pleasant hours spent with Hale in the latter’s “cosy little parlor” in his residence on 34th Street has the ring of sincerity.<sup>106</sup>

104. *Music and Drama* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 7, 1882): 13. This publication lasted only until the issue for Dec. 15, 1883. By that date, Freund had dropped out of its editorship in September of that year to found a new journal, *Freund’s Weekly*, on Nov. 10, 1883. Later known as *Freund’s Music and Drama*, this paper was published by John C. Freund’s brother, Harry Edward Freund, and was later also edited by their mother, Amelia Lewis. This publication should not be confused with Harry Freund’s own journal, begun on Jan. 7, 1893. Continuing the bewildering sequence of similar and same titles used by the Freunds, this paper started briefly as *Freund’s Weekly* and then changed to *Freund’s Musical Weekly*, before its final title—*The Musical Age*—was adopted.

105. *Music and Drama* 1, no. 2 (Jan. 14, 1882): 1.

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Hale built his factories in an industrial neighborhood. Later known as "Hell's Kitchen," the area was largely populated by Irish immigrants who had fled the Great Famine in their homeland and had settled in this West Side section of the city, where they eked out a living. Crime was rampant in the area, and roving gangs were a menace. Charles H. Stone ran afoul of one of these gangs in a sensational incident on August 3, 1878, when he was robbed in broad daylight by a group of thugs whose leader was later identified as Frank (Francis) McCoy, known as "Big Frank," a miscreant of some notoriety.<sup>107</sup> Stone was returning to the factory from the West Side Savings Bank on 34th Street and Eighth Avenue, where he had withdrawn \$2,950 in cash to pay Hale's contractors. As he approached the elevated railway at Ninth Avenue and 34th Street, he was attacked by three men who had jumped off a red butcher's wagon. As Stone struggled in the grip of the robbers, he noticed a telegraph messenger boy nearby, threw him the bag of money, and told him to run away as fast as he could. After striking Stone in the face, one of the men ran after the boy, knocked him down, grabbed the money bag, and joined his fellow robbers as they fled in their wagon. Stone was not to be outdone. In a feat worthy of modern action films, he commandeered an express wagon and began pursuit of the robbers. As he gained on the villains, however, one of them struck his horse with a sharp blow on the head, and they sped away with their loot. Reports indicate that the horse survived. McCoy, described as a "treacherous criminal," was arrested on August 12, but was later released because Stone was unable to identify him.<sup>108</sup>

\* \* \* \*

The foregoing story illustrates one of the unexpected impediments that Joseph P. Hale encountered in conducting his business. The following matter represents yet another. The Industrial Age could also be designated the Mechanical Age, so great was the power of machinery—both literal and symbolic—in the economy of the nineteenth century. Most manufacturers employed steam engines, which considerably facilitated the making of their products. The process of manufacturing was greatly

106. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 4 (Jan. 28, 1882): 1.

107. The event was reported in the *Sun* (Aug. 4, 1878): 1, and the *New York Daily Tribune* (Aug. 29, 1878): 8, with a full account given in *MTRI* 6, no. 8 (Aug. 18, 1878): 153.

108. Thomas Byrnes, *Professional Criminals of America* (New York: Cassel & Co., 1886), 161–62.

aided by the adoption of the “American System of Manufactures,” in which a large number of items for sale could be produced by an equally large number of workers, each accomplishing specific tasks in producing and assembling interchangeable parts. Manufacturers were proud of their modern factories, featuring the most up-to-date mechanical improvements, and were eager to let their outstanding features be known to the public.

The products of piano factories were also machines. In the chronicle of piano design and manufacturing, the invention of new mechanical devices and applications plays a significant role, marked by measures taken by manufacturers to protect their exclusive rights to the fruits of their ingenuity by securing official patents. Prominent among these manufacturers were Steinway & Sons, for which the inventive eldest son, C. F. Theodore, secured by far the greatest number of patents for his company. One of these patents—for a metal frame consisting of rails and hangers, by which the action of an upright piano would be attached to the wrestplank—was submitted on October 19, 1877.<sup>109</sup> William Steinway’s diary records the sequence of events of Steinway & Sons’ lawsuits against Joseph P. Hale (and Albert Weber to a lesser extent) on the grounds of infringement of this patent. The affair seems to have started in the summer of 1878, when Hale sent his emissary, Mr. Wardwell, to William Steinway with the message that he (Hale) was aware of his infringement and wanted to know how he could settle the matter. Steinway responded that he had to consult with his brother (C. F. Theodore is evidently meant) and “in the mean time Hale must know best what to do.”<sup>110</sup> The continuation and outcome of the story are sketched in twelve entries in Steinway’s diary recorded over a period of five months, from mid-March, 1879, through mid-August of the same year.<sup>111</sup> Following Hale’s original broaching of the subject, Steinway examined upright pianos by Hale (serial no. 10,433) and Weber (no. 13, 817) and found that both contained “glaring” infringements of the Steinway patent. Hale was accordingly served with a summons at his residence. Following his advice, his action maker, Francis W. Young, called on Steinway, who gave

109. The full text of the application, but not the accompanying diagrams, is reprinted in *MTRI* 9, no. 4 (May 24, 1879): 15–16.

110. *William Steinway Diary*, July 24, 1878.

111. *Ibid.*, Mar. 18, 1879; Apr. 20, 1879; May 6, 1879; May 21, 1879; May 22, 1879; May 24, 1879; May 26, 1879; June 17, 1879; July 23, 1879; July 25, 1879; Aug. 15, 1879; and Aug. 18, 1879.

him a copy of the patent and explained the infringement.<sup>112</sup> Subsequently, both Young and Hale made unsuccessful attempts to meet with Steinway at his residence. Hale and Steinway were finally able to meet, however, and they conversed for over three hours. The outcome was that Hale agreed to pay Steinway \$5,000 in damages and sign a statement that he would not infringe again. A few days later, Hale appeared at the Steinway store and paid his fine in cash, whereupon Steinway gave his visitor a tour of the showrooms, and the matter was closed amicably. Steinway issued a statement to the press that Hale had “acted in such a straightforward and honorable manner, that he [Steinway] became satisfied that the infringement was inadvertent, and it took but two personal interviews between the parties to come to an understanding and settlement of the suit.”<sup>113</sup> It is to be assumed that Hale also obtained monetary satisfaction from Young.

\* \* \* \*

Another problem that Hale experienced, along with all other manufacturers in New York, was organized labor. An early sign of unrest in the workforce of the piano industry in that city was the publication, in 1835, of a detailed list of suggested prices for almost 3,000 different tasks accomplished by workers in fabricating the myriad components of several models of square and upright pianos.<sup>114</sup> Produced by the Society of Journeymen Piano-forte Makers of New York, this was an attempt to establish a standard of earnings for the work of skilled laborers that would aid the latter in their individual salary negotiations with employers. Later in the century, laborers organized into unions that represented the interests of their members as a whole group, not individually. In the often physical confrontations that ensued when demands were not met, unions possessed the power of the strike, while manufacturers could resort to the lockout. Labor-union activity was especially prevalent among

112. Of course, it was Young's company that committed the infringement, but the reprint of the patent in *MTRI* 9, no. 4 (May 24, 1879): 15–16, includes also the following comment: “A curious fact in connection with such patent cases is this, that whoever purchases an article which is an infringement of a patent is liable for damages for having such article in his or her possession. To be sure, it seldom happens that the owner of a patent proceeds against the purchasers, but the fact remains that such purchaser is liable to have the article taken from him and destroyed, or can be held in damages.”

113. *MTRI* 10, no. 4 (Aug. 23, 1879): 21.

114. *The New-York Book of Prices, for Manufacturing Piano-fortes* (New York: Society of Journeymen Piano-forte Makers, 1835), facsimile edition with foreword by Henry Z. Steinway and introduction by Laurence Libin (Malden, MA: American Musical Instrument Society, 2009).

workers of German origin, and no New York piano company was more German in its workforce than Steinway & Sons. A violent strike that hit the entire piano industry of New York in 1872 threatened to do damage to William Steinway's factory in Manhattan, but he was able to protect it by arranging for a force of hundreds of policemen to beat back the mob. In the end, he gave in to some, but not all of his employees' demands, and work resumed. Even his new factory complex out in Astoria, Queens, would not be immune from union activity in the years to come.<sup>115</sup>

Labor unrest again threatened the piano industry of New York in June, 1879,<sup>116</sup> when the United Piano-makers launched the first round of their planned action against all the manufacturers by striking the firm of Kranich & Bach as a test case. Sixty union members held out there for thirteen weeks until early September, when the company finally offered the strikers a fifteen-percent increase in their wages. The Weber Piano Co. was struck next, with nearly 300 men walking out, but Albert Weber, Jr., maintained that they were already receiving the highest wages of all piano workers in the city, and he would not yield to their demand of a ten-percent increase at that time. His foremen remained at work, in addition to all of the varnishers, and the reduced workforce was able to turn out enough pianos to meet existing orders. In the end, union members were not successful in their action against Weber, but a flurry of strikes in rapid succession against Steinway & Sons, Decker Bros., Sohmer & Co., Hazelton Bros., Steck & Co., Lindemann & Sons, and a number of other companies all brought accessions to union demands from the manufacturers.

Union action also extended in September, 1879, to the firm of Joseph P. Hale, where 150 to 250 men (according to various estimates), mostly Germans, walked out. The regulators, finishers, and fly-finishers demanded an increase of fifteen percent and the varnishers twenty percent. They pointed out that their salaries had been cut by ten to thirty percent the previous January on the plea that business had been sluggish at that time. The press reported the unique situation at the Hale factory: that all work was done by contract, and that workers' pay came directly from the contractors. Hale told reporters that in the fall of 1878, he had entered into negotiations in the Midwest for the manufacture of 6,000

115. Lieberman, *Steinway & Sons*, 73–78.

116. The chronicle of this labor dispute in 1879 is found in the following sources: *New York Times*: (Sept. 18, 1879): 8; (Sept. 19, 1879): 3; (Sept. 21, 1879): 12; (Sept. 26, 1879): 3; *MTRI* 10, no. 8 (Sept. 20, 1879): 27–28; *Ibid.* 10, no. 9 (Sept. 27, 1879): 30–31.

pianos, and that the contract was to run from January, 1879, to January, 1880. Consequently, he had met with his contractors, who in turn had consulted their workmen, all of whom had consented to do the work at given prices. With these assurances, Hale had closed the contracts, and he described himself as powerless to meet the current demands of the striking workers, who represented only about one-quarter of the men in his factory. Although he said that the plate-makers, action-makers, and key-makers were still at work (he was referring to his outside suppliers, not to men working in his factory), the strike had caused his entire production to be ceased. Accordingly, he said he was willing to meet a committee of the strikers, but pointed out that it was not he but his contractors who would make the decisions. The final outcome, after several meetings, was that the workers were given increases ranging from five to fifteen percent, and they all returned to their jobs.

Union unrest stuck the piano industry again in March, 1880,<sup>117</sup> when Steinway's varnishers demanded an additional advance of eleven to eighteen percent. When this was denied, they walked out, along with 600 other Steinway employees, acting in solidarity. At this act, the Piano Manufacturers' Society (the group was also called Association and Union in various publications) resolved that the doors of all members' factories would henceforth be shut to all workers except for those whom the individual members needed in order to fill existing orders—in other words, a lockout. The action began on March 15. Participating manufacturers included Joseph P. Hale, who was also a member of a committee of three (with William Steinway and Albert Weber, Jr.) which issued a statement of their position the following day: they did not oppose the right of workmen to request higher wages in a peaceable manner; in the present situation they were not opposing these employees, but their trade union; they reserved the right to employ foremen of their own choice, not men imposed on them by the trade union; they understood the tactics of the union, which were to encourage certain workers to make arbitrary demands, and when these were not met, to force

117. Sources of information about this event include the following: *New York Daily Tribune* (March 16, 1880): 1–2, 4, (March 17, 1880): 1–2, (March 18, 1880): 8, (March 20, 1880): 8, (March 22, 1880): 8, (March 23, 1880): 8, (March 24, 1880): 8. *New York Times*: (March 17, 1880): 8, (March 18, 1880): 2, (March 19, 1880): 8, (March 25, 1880): 3. *Sun*: (March 14, 1880): 1, (March 15, 1880): 1. *World*: (March 16, 1880): 1, (March 18, 1880): 8. *AAJ*: 32, no. 21 (March 20, 1880): 330–32, *Ibid.* 32, no. 22 (March 27, 1880): 346–48.

all workers in the same factory to strike; they had recently given workers an increase of ten percent and more, which had caused manufacturers' prices to be raised, thus making them less competitive in national and international markets; and they would stand together to keep pianos affordable to all customers, even those of moderate means. Despite these strong words, the resolve of the manufacturers soon began to weaken. On March 24, it was reported that the lockout had virtually ended, the only holdouts being Steck & Co., Sohmer & Co., James & Holstrom, J. P. Hale, W. E. Wheelock, and Albert Weber. The number decreased in the succeeding days. Generally, organized labor won again, as the manufacturers were forced to make concessions. Consequently, Albert Weber resolved to quit the Manufacturers' Society; William Steinway made light of the matter, claiming that the lockout had not been favored by his company, nor did its cessation have any effect; and a representative of Sohmer & Co. stated that it had been a mistake to lock out non-union men.

Hale's factory remained closed. He posted a notice instructing employees to return to work on March 24, but they vowed to stay away until he had abolished the contract system, which they considered "the greatest evil connected with piano-forte manufacture, by its enriching the contractor by the employment of boys to do the work of mechanics, and forcing the latter to accept the wages of an apprentice." His workforce was reported at this time to number 250, of which one-third were boys.<sup>118</sup> The immediate result of this action was not reported. Hale's labor troubles were renewed in June of the same year when he laid off a number of his varnishers on the grounds of not having enough work for them. All of these men belonged to the Piano-Makers' Union, which sent Hale a letter informing him of their resolve not to "work under any contractors, or so-called foremen," demanding that he abolish the contract system and discharge the foremen. At a meeting on June 6, reported to have attracted some 500 piano workers and conducted in both English and German, several officials of the Piano Makers' Union pronounced their strike against J. P. Hale as "just," on the grounds that the contract system employed by him was

injurious and damnable, not only to the employes, but also to the employers and public at large, because the honest manufacturer cannot compete with the contract system, and workmen are not only obliged to work cheaper, in

118. *AAJ*32, no. 22 (March 27, 1880): 346-47.

order to enrich the contractors, but they never become competent workmen. Their work is inferior in quality, and a fraud on the public.<sup>119</sup>

The strike was still in effect on June 11, when the new journal *Musical Courier*, sympathetic to Hale, published the following report:

Joseph P. Hale, fighting the Piano Makers' Union single handed, is making good progress and seems to stand a fairer chance of victory than did all the pianoforte manufacturers together under the organization of their late society. The truth is that the society, by the weakness and folly of one or two of its members, threw away its victory at the very moment it was within its grasp. There is no danger, however, of Mr. Hale's doing this. He is well known to be a stubborn as well as skillful combatant, and a financial giant. The backbone of the strike seems to be already broken, and two or three weeks more of leisurely reflection on short rations will probably bring the strikers to their senses.<sup>120</sup>

Hale sent a letter to the *American Art Journal* on June 16, praising the action on the part of the police and judges to keep strikers off the streets and to punish those who interfere with men wishing to work in his factory, but warning that the union had resorted to the tactic of threatening those willing workers at their private homes, demanding that they either cease working or face the penalty of never being allowed to work in other factories again.<sup>121</sup> Hale confidently issued an advertisement proclaiming: "J. P. Hale, having secured a new set of workmen in place of the 'strikers,' has commenced another 50,000 pianofortes for the trade."<sup>122</sup>

The Piano-Makers' Union was not done with Hale. As a result of his action against the most recent strikers, he was troubled again in July of the same year, although this time only indirectly. The piano-case maker Charles F. Dielmann controlled two factories in New York City, one of which, at 479 Tenth Avenue, he rented from Hale (it was Hale's factory no. 2) and used almost exclusively for turning out the bulk of Hale's supply of cases. Incited by the union, and in sympathy with Hale's former workmen, Dielmann's employees walked out of both of the Dielmann

119. *New York Times* (June 7, 1880): 8. The report does not reveal whether the 500 were all employees of Hale. The meeting was also reported in *AAJ* 33, no. 7 (June 12, 1880): 106, which estimates the crowd at between 500 and 600 persons and refers to "many high-strung speeches, in which considerable invective was recklessly used by the various speakers."

120. *MC* 1, no. 19 (June 11, 1880): 268.

121. *AAJ* 33, no. 8 (June 19, 1880): 122.

122. *MC* 1, no. 20 (June 18, 1880): 289.



factories, refusing to take part in any activity that would benefit Hale. Dielmann offered to close only the Tenth Avenue factory and discharge the men working there, but the union would not have it, demanding that Dielmann not only cease providing cases to Hale, but also retain his men at both buildings. Without the Hale orders, Dielmann did not have enough work for all 200 of his men, and he had no choice but to close both factories. In a week's time, an official settlement had not yet been accomplished, but about three-quarters of Dielmann's men had returned to work, although those at the Tenth Avenue factory were making cases for other firms. A report of this event suggests that because of union activity in New York City, manufacturers there were showing a tendency to give their business to the growing piano-supply industry in Connecticut and Massachusetts, where the union had less power, and that Hale might well do likewise. There was some evidence that Dielmann had secured orders from Hardman, Dowling & Peck, but that was not certain at the time of the report.<sup>123</sup> In an interview published in yet another new trade journal, Hale stated that Dielmann had begun a lawsuit against the union and was expected to win. Although this was refuted by the union leader Salvador Lagrassa (or La Grassa),<sup>124</sup> a definite corroboration of the lawsuit was published two weeks later.<sup>125</sup> Hale seems not to have been set back by any of these events, and continued to do business with Dielmann.<sup>126</sup>

123. *AAJ* 33, no. 14 (July 31, 1880): 218. On the subject of Hale's obtaining cases from Dielmann, the *Sun* (Sept. 8, 1877): 4, had already reported that "Hale does not care whether Dielman makes cases for him or not, his principal object being to get rent for the Factory which Dielman occupies." No evidence has been found that Hardman, Dowling & Peck became a client of Dielmann & Co. (see Part 1, Appendix 3).

124. *MTR* 2 3, no. 3 (Sept. 5, 1880): 11. Lagrassa was already identified as "the reputed ringleader of the union on the west side" in *MC* 1, no. 17 (May 28, 1880): 235. As an employee of Hardman, Dowling & Peck and a long-standing opponent of Hale, it is possible that he influenced his employer to make an offer to Dielmann as a ruse to encourage the latter to discontinue his work for Hale.

125. *MTR* 2 3, no. 4 (Sept. 20, 1880): 13.

126. Dielmann & Co. apparently left the Tenth Avenue factory at about this time, according to listings in the city directories. The property was sold by Joseph P. and Lucy A. Hale on June 1, 1882 (records at the Manhattan Business Center, New York City Register's Office). At the time of the destruction of Dielmann's factory on 21st Street by fire in 1882, the firm was evidently still making cases for Hale, and there is no evidence that Hale ever did business with case factories in Connecticut or Massachusetts (see Part 1, Appendix 2). Of course, Hale may have done so on a temporary or even permanent basis without making this arrangement public. As Dielmann & Lincks, the piano-case company survived into the twentieth century (see Part 1, Appendix 2).

Thus, Joseph P. Hale, once described as “the man who can neither be blown, burned, nor slandered into obscurity,”<sup>127</sup> had again triumphed over adversity.

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Hale stated proudly in 1877 that he had “no palatial warerooms, no high salaried clerks, no expensive travellers, no retinue of professionals with their influence and commissions.”<sup>128</sup> He did, however, have a large network of dealers. Although he was quoted in 1878 as saying that all the middle men “have got to go by the board,”<sup>129</sup> he was probably referring to jobbers—wholesalers who receive products from manufacturers and sell them to dealers. A favorable essay on Hale and his business reported: “Once a year Mr. Hale makes his contracts with the principal dealers in the principal cities—in Chicago and St. Louis; in Baltimore and New York; in Boston and Philadelphia; and in all prominent cities West, North, and South.” According to Hale, although they had been “represented as the meanest knaves in the business,” they were “the wealthiest, most respectable, and influential dealers in the trade, and men who have steadily sold my pianos for the last fifteen years.”<sup>130</sup> In response to William Steinway’s accusation that Hale’s pianos were sold “through irresponsible dealers in Texas, Iowa, Nebraska, and other far Western States, almost entirely,”<sup>131</sup> the essay that appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* countered with the statement: “the most responsible agents in all large cities joined hands some years ago with Mr. Hale” in his noble mission of bringing affordable pianos to the people.<sup>132</sup> Looking back at the criticism that he had sold “bogus” pianos stenciled with fraudulent names, Hale confidently put the blame on rival manufacturers who had flooded the country with cheap pianos. He stated: “many of my dealers inform me that their own trade has been interfered with by these pianos, as the sellers of these worthless instruments, in order to get rid of them, represent them as the Hale piano.”<sup>133</sup>

Surviving sources yield the identities of at least thirty-nine of Hale’s dealers at various times during his lifetime. Among these, the locations of two are not given, but the remaining thirty-seven represent fifteen

127. See Appendix 4.

128. See Appendix 5.

129. *MTRI* 6, no. 4 (June 18, 1878): 83.

130. See Appendix 6.

131. See Appendix 3.

132. See Appendix 4.

133. See Appendix 7.

states (California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin) and two Canadian provinces (Ontario and Quebec). Hale's business dealings with several of these companies are worth examining.

The Toronto firm of Leslie, Skirrow & Smith is mentioned above; they failed in January, 1876, owing \$80,000 (creditors not identified).<sup>134</sup> The dealers Allcott & Throppe in Marshall, Texas, revealed in a letter written in March, 1876, that they had been handling Hale pianos for six years with the name "A. Sumner & Co." stenciled on them, which had "gained a large reputation in Mo., Tenn., Ala., Miss., and Ark., and are taking a good hold on the people of Texas, as the best medium piano in use." They indicated, however, that Mr. Hale had "decided not to let any of his pianos go out without his name on them."<sup>135</sup>

Several dealers were reputed to owe Hale money in 1877: Sherman & Hyde, San Francisco, CA (\$50,000); C. J. Whitney, Detroit, MI (over \$75,000); and W. W. Kimball, Chicago, IL (\$48,000 in 1876, \$96,000 by 1877). In the same year, other dealers who owed Hale money also failed: A. M. Benham, San Francisco, CA (\$8,000); John M. Hale, Pittsburg, PA (\$12,000); Henry J. Shaw, Montreal, Quebec, Canada (\$20,000); a Mr. Redfield, location not reported (\$25,000); a Mr. Stewart, Ottumwa, probably IA (\$30,000 or \$40,000);<sup>136</sup> and R. Von Minden, New York, NY, who supported Hale in the election to the presidency of the society of manufacturers and dealers in February 1876 (\$46,849.59).<sup>137</sup> In late 1879, M. H. Hirschberg of Toronto failed, owing Hale \$7,000. Hale traveled to Toronto with the purpose of jailing his debtor, but legal obstacles prevented that action.<sup>138</sup>

134. *MTRI* 1, no. 6 (Jan. 18, 1876): 81.

135. *MTRI* 1, no. 12 (Apr. 18, 1876): 184.

136. *MTRI* 4, no. 11 (Oct. 3, 1877): 190. The dollar amounts are most likely rounded off to the nearest thousand. Hale specifically denied Kimball's debt, saying that this report was false, as (like himself) Kimball always paid in cash. See *MTRI* 6, no. 4 (June 18, 1878): 83. Sherman & Hyde initiated a lawsuit against A. M. Benham in 1881, alleging that the latter had been in their employ in 1874 and 1875 when they had purchased 548 pianos from Joseph P. Hale. At the same time, however, Benham had secretly been an agent for Hale, receiving a commission from him of \$10 per piano. *MTR*25, no. 6 (Sept. 27, 1881): 74-75.

137. *MTRI* 4, no. 10 (Sept. 18, 1877): 175. This amount appears to be reported accurately to the last penny; it is rounded off to \$47,000 in *MTRI* 4, no. 11 (Oct. 3, 1877): 190.

138. *AAJ*32, no. 3 (Nov. 15, 1879): 45.

A later case belonging to the first category, above, was that of Charles D. Blake, Boston, MA, who owed Hale \$18,000 in late 1880. Active as a piano dealer since 1877, Blake was the first to introduce the Hale piano in Boston, did a large business with Hale, and made a considerable amount of money from it; but he was reported to have spent it liberally. Consequently, he was unable to cover his obligation to Hale when the note came due in early 1881, and the latter stepped in and took control of his business.<sup>139</sup> A composer of some local repute, Blake wrote a piece for piano four-hands entitled "The Piano King Grand March," dedicated to "Joseph P. Hale Esq NY," and published in Boston by White, Smith & Company (no date given). The cover of this eight-page edition bears a lithograph portrait, within an oval medallion, of Joseph P. Hale derived from the original shown here in fig. 1, to which a landscape has been added in the background. A facsimile signature is printed at the lower right of the page: "Yours Very Truly / J P Hale." A copy is found in the collection of the Boston Athenaeum, whose catalogue assigns a date of 1877 to this publication.<sup>140</sup> The music of this piece is competently written, although conventional in style. Perhaps Hale felt honored by this unique gift, for he allowed Blake to settle his debt for twenty cents on the dollar.<sup>141</sup> Except for manufacturing pianos, this was Hale's only known connection with the art of music. Blake continued in business as a piano dealer and music publisher for some time thereafter. He also remained active in his artistic pursuits and seems to have had a following. A performance in Boston of his new operetta, *The Light-Keeper's Daughter*, was reported in 1882.<sup>142</sup>

Hale normally conducted his business with his dealers in private and did not release information to the public, but when a contract involved a well-known business in one of the most important markets in the Midwest, it caught the attention of the press. So it was that Hale was reported in 1881 as having shipped seventy-five pianos to W. W. Kimball in Chicago (see above). Kimball's Mammoth Piano & Organ Warerooms (the original, retail part of the business) had been selling pianos since

139. *AAJ* 34, no. 15 (Feb. 5, 1881): 292.

140. Call no. A TS 1877. Pia. I am indebted to Ms. Catharina Slautterback, Curator of Prints and Photographs, The Boston Athenaeum, who identified the artist of this portrait—through his monogram at the right of the figure—as Joseph E. Baker (1837–1914), a Boston lithographer and cartoonist known as an illustrator of sheet music.

141. *MTR* 2 4, no. 3 (March 5, 1881): 54.

142. *MTR* 2 5, no. 22 (June 20, 1882): 14.

1857.<sup>143</sup> An advertisement of their wares in 1878 included pianos bearing their own name, as well as instruments by Hallet, Davis & Co., Wm. P. Emerson & Co., and J. P. Hale.<sup>144</sup> The “Kimball” pianos were very likely stencil instruments made by Hale; in fact, it was reported in December, 1878, that Kimball had abandoned plans to build a piano factory and had signed a contract with Hale for 1,500 pianos, to be delivered by the end of 1879.<sup>145</sup> A study of the company confirms this and also adds that Kimball produced organs with a variety of names, including his own. In 1887, Kimball erected a piano factory next to his organ factory in Chicago, which began to produce “actual” Kimball pianos in 1888 and reached an output of fifty pianos per week in the following year.<sup>146</sup> A similar case was D. F. Beatty, an organ manufacturer in Washington, NJ, who also claimed to make pianos—in fact, he did not do this, “knowing that he could not build these instruments any cheaper than those he had always bought of Joseph P. Hale, of New York City.”<sup>147</sup>

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In the heat of his self-interested battle with Hale in August, 1877, the yet-unconverted Freund, noting that the piano manufacturer had closed his factory, made the comment: “Hale uses his piano business simply as a veil to screen his money-lending transactions, and can afford to lose money on it.”<sup>148</sup> Although Freund certainly meant ill by this gibe, and missed the mark in attempting to ascribe illegality or immorality to monetary transactions, he was at least correct in pointing out Hale’s alternate source of income. The debt owed to Hale by C. J. Whitney in Detroit is cited above; in conjunction with that, Hale had also paid \$35,000 “to help build the Opera House in that city.”<sup>149</sup> This project would have

143. Dolge, *Pianos and Their Makers*, vol. 1, 339.

144. Advertisement in *Catalogue of the Northwestern University and the Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, Ill., 1877–78* (Chicago: J. J. Spalding & Co., 1878), vii.

145. *MTRI* 7, no. 7 (Dec. 14, 1878): 15.

146. Robert F. Gellerman, *The American Reed Organ and the Harmonium* (Vestal: The Vestal Press, 1996), 27. Kimball was following quickly on the footsteps of the Estey Organ Co., of Brattleboro, VT, which had entered the sister industry in New York City, building a factory (for the Estey Piano Co.) in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx in 1885.

147. *MTR2* 4, no. 1 (Feb. 5, 1881): 16; *Ibid.* 4, no. 7 (May 5, 1881): 113.

148. *MTRI* 4, no. 8 (Aug. 18, 1877): 135.

149. *MTRI* 4, no. 11 (Oct. 3, 1877): 190. The theater in question (built in 1869, according to [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit\\_Opera\\_House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit_Opera_House), accessed Jan. 11, 2016) was the first of two buildings in that city that have borne that name, a fact that seems to have caused a degree of confusion among the online sources on the subject.

been in keeping with Hale's later association with the New York, New England and Western Investment Company, whose president he became in 1881.<sup>150</sup> Its professed purpose was to furnish "money for improvements in Western cities."<sup>151</sup> Hale was also reported to have invested \$150,000 in the house of Chickering & Sons.<sup>152</sup> William Steinway recorded in 1878 having been told by the piano manufacturer Frederick Hazelton that Albert Weber had borrowed money from Hale and had paid as much as three percent a month in interest.<sup>153</sup> Steinway also reported testimony from a former Weber employee that when Weber had borrowed money from Hale, he had been forced to accept a number of Hale's pianos, which were "very rough" and had to be refinished.<sup>154</sup> Another account of a business relationship between Hale and Weber is a letter written to and published by John C. Freund in early 1876. Sent from two piano tuners named Wildman (one in Danbury and the other in Poughkeepsie), it mentions that they had tuned many Hale pianos and could easily recognize them. One of the Wildmans had recently tuned a lady's piano, which she claimed had been bought at the Weber showroom, and Mr. Weber himself had said it had been made in his factory. It bore the name "Philip Phillips" and was unmistakably a Hale. Freund reprinted this letter, although he expressed his doubts that "Mr. Weber would be so utterly reckless of his reputation."<sup>155</sup>

Hale was described as the chief promoter of the West Side Savings Bank in New York.<sup>156</sup> He was also invested in railroads in the Midwest. In an interview published in 1878, he acknowledged having built a railroad of forty-seven miles in Kansas at a cost of \$350,000.<sup>157</sup> At a meeting of stockholders of the Kansas City, Burlington & Santa Fe Railroad in 1880,

150. *American Railroad Journal*, 2nd quarto series, vol. 37, no 23 (June 4, 1881): 617. The company's offices were at 31 Pine Street in lower Manhattan. New York City directories covering the years 1881 and 1882 give this address for Hale (in addition to his factory address) and identify him as "pres."

151. *Sun* (Oct. 17, 1883): 1.

152. *MTRI* 4, no. 11 (Oct. 3, 1877): 190. Albert Weber is cited as the source of this information.

153. *William Steinway Diary*, February 15, 1878.

154. *Ibid.*, February 16, 1878. In an earlier entry, on January 28, 1878, Steinway recorded having been told by a supposed member of the staff at the *New York Tribune* that Hale had made pianos for Weber; a day later, however, Steinway reported that both Hale and Weber had denied this.

155. *MTRI* 1, no. 6 (Jan. 18, 1876): 80.

156. *AAJ* 39, no. 26 (Oct. 20, 1883): 513.

157. *MTRI* 6, no. 12 (Oct. 18, 1878): 235.

he was elected to the board of directors, along with his son-in-law, Charles H. Stone.<sup>158</sup> The Michigan railroad known initially as the Pontiac, Oxford and Port Austin was chartered in 1879 to bring harvested timber to market. Hale is said to have invested 1.5 million dollars in the venture, becoming its owner. A huge fire destroyed the lumber business there in 1881, but land was cleared for farming and settlement; subsequently—as the Pontiac, Oxford and Northern—the line was extended and converted to carrying passengers and farm produce, but it was never greatly profitable.<sup>159</sup> Hale stated, in addition, that he owned a railroad of twenty-six miles in Indiana.<sup>160</sup> He was alleged also to have had mining interests, although no particular evidence of this venture has come to light.<sup>161</sup>

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Hale's health had its ups and downs. At various times in 1876 and 1877, he was said to be seriously ill.<sup>162</sup> In June, 1881, he was indicated as "enjoying robust health, the result of a Western trip to try the effect of an electrified atmosphere. He is probably the most hale and hearty man of his age in the trade, and can stand an incredible amount of physical endurance."<sup>163</sup> In March, 1882, his health failed again, and he was "ordered by his physician to cease active business from henceforth."<sup>164</sup> In June of the same year, he was reported to have returned from another trip "much improved in health."<sup>165</sup> On October 15, 1883, however, Joseph P. Hale died at his residence in New York City, just a few days short of his sixty-fourth birthday. The cause was given variously as heart disease<sup>166</sup> and gout, the last report indicating that the malady had lasted for three years.<sup>167</sup> Hale's funeral, attended by members of the trade and a large number of his employees, was held at the Church of the Messiah,

158. *The Public: A Journal of Finance, Commercial Interests and Political Science* 17 (Jan. 1–June 30, 1880): 264.

159. [www.pollyannrailway.org/history-body.html](http://www.pollyannrailway.org/history-body.html) (accessed August 18, 2007). *Biographical Record . . . : Biographical Sketches of Leading Citizens of Oakland County, Michigan* (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Company, 1903), 193.

160. *MTRI* 6, no. 12 (Oct. 18, 1878): 235.

161. *AAJ* 39, no. 26 (Oct. 20, 1883): 513.

162. *MTRI* 2, no. 1 (May 3, 1876): 15; *Ibid.*, vol. 4, no. 5 (July 3, 1877): 96; *Ibid.*, vol. 4, no. 9 (Sept. 3, 1877): 157.

163. *AAJ* 35, no. 8 (June 18, 1881): 155.

164. *Musical Times* (March 20, 1882), quoted in "45 Years Ago in the Times," *Presto-Times* 2120 (March 19, 1927): 6.

165. *MTR2* 5, no. 21 (June 20, 1882): 346.

166. *Sun* (Oct. 17, 1883): 1.

167. *AAJ* 39, no. 26 (Oct. 20, 1883): 513.

a Unitarian congregation whose board of trustees he served as president.<sup>168</sup> Hale's will awarded all of his property associated with their residence to his wife, Lucy Ann Hale. A total of \$11,500 went to associates and distant relatives, and \$10,000 was awarded to the Unitarian Society of Bernardston, mostly for the upkeep of the family cemetery plot. The remainder of the estate was divided in equal thirds among Lucy Ann and their two daughters, Julia H. Demarest and Augusta Wellington Stone.<sup>169</sup> Estimates of the total value of the estate ranged from \$5,000,000 (as reported by Mr. Ludden, a friend of the deceased and member of Ludden & Bates, Hale dealers in Savannah, GA) to as high as \$10,000,000.<sup>170</sup> It may, however, have been as low as \$1,000,000, as shown below.

On June 1, 1882, Joseph P. and Lucy Ann Hale had sold the property at 479 Tenth Avenue,<sup>171</sup> but after Joseph's death his factory no. 5 and the adjoining land remained in the possession of the family. Charles H. Stone continued the activities of the J. P. Hale Piano Co., and at the end of the year 1883, he issued a circular to the trade announcing that henceforth all sales would be on a cash basis.<sup>172</sup> Soon thereafter, the business was turned into a stock company with a capital reported to be \$131,000 in \$100 shares.<sup>173</sup> The firm was successful for several years,<sup>174</sup> and its pianos were said to bear the names "J. P. Hale," "C. H. Stone," and the old Hale standby "Arion."<sup>175</sup> On August 26, 1886, the Hales' daughter Augusta died of malarial fever, survived by her mother, her husband, Charles H. Stone, and two sons, aged 9 and 14.<sup>176</sup> The status of the Hale factory in the mid-1890s is difficult to determine, owing to the confusion of two contradictory reports issued about a year apart. First came a notice in June, 1894, stating that Stone was ready to close the business because recently its profits had been unsatisfactory, and he

168. *Ibid.*, p. 515.

169. *AAJ* 40, no. 1 (Oct. 27, 1883): 13. The will, dated Aug. 25, 1876, is held in the Records Department of the New York County Surrogate's Court, along with a codicil (changing one of the executors), dated Nov. 8, 1882, and the probate petition, dated Oct. 19, 1883 (statements of the executors dated Oct. 20, 1883). There is no record of an inventory of the estate. I am grateful to Ms. Suzan Tell for her assistance in my search for these documents and my receipt of copies.

170. *MC* 7, no. 17 (Oct. 24, 1883): 238.

171. Records at the Manhattan Business Center, New York City Register's Office.

172. *AAJ* 40, no. 13 (Dec. 29, 1883): 173. This report suggests that the reason for this move was that Hale had sustained losses during his last year or two.

173. *AAJ* 40, no. 15 (Feb. 2, 1884): 253.

174. *New York Daily Tribune* (Aug. 23, 1899): 5.

175. *MC* 14, no. 16 (Apr. 20, 1887): 262.

176. *MC* 13, no. 9 (Sept. 1, 1886): 138.



thought he could “devote his talents in a better paying occupation.”<sup>177</sup> He may have closed it earlier; however, for a report published in May, 1895, stated that the factory had stood idle for several years, Stone despaired of ever finding a tenant, and it was generally thought that he would resume piano manufacture.<sup>178</sup> Whatever date marked the end of piano manufacturing in Hale’s factory, his heirs had already begun the process of divesting themselves of the property by selling off the five vacant lots surrounding the factory in 1884.<sup>179</sup> The remaining large parcel of land (fourteen lots including the factory) was sold as a unit in a puzzling sequence of conveyances in 1888, 1891, and 1897. The property passed out of family possession permanently in 1901.<sup>180</sup>

The final part of the story is bitter, but with a colorful twist. Following Joseph P. Hale’s death, the investments in his estate were found to be badly tangled, and the heirs engaged the lawyer Hugh Porter to manage these assets. As part of this process, Charles H. Stone sued to be allowed to receive the third of the estate that had been inherited by his wife, now deceased. Stone charged Porter with having mismanaged the properties in the estate, allowing its total worth of over a million dollars<sup>181</sup> to shrink to only one-half that amount; he also claimed that Porter had wrongly transferred some \$600,000 from the estate into his own account. Porter countered that the properties had been riddled with debts, and that he had chosen to avoid plunging the heirs into bankruptcy by nursing

177. *MTR2* 18, no. 5 (June 9, 1894): 15.

178. “30 Years Ago in the Trade: From the Files of Presto, May 30, 1895,” *Presto*, no. 2027 (May 30, 1925): 8.

179. In two transactions in that year, lots 16–19 were sold, followed by lot 45, in block 707.

180. The lots in question were nos. 20–25, 46–49, 51–52, and 54–55 in block 707. In conveyances in 1888 and 1891, the property changed hands between members of the family, evidently pursuant to legal requirements. In 1897, a referee in the lawsuit of the Union Dime Savings Institution against Lucy A. Hale (a matter of a defaulted mortgage) sold the property to the Union Dime Savings Institution; later the same year the Institution sold it back to Lucy A. Hale. Finally, in 1901, Lucy A. Hale made the sale to the City Real Estate Company in consideration of payment of one dollar, which immediately sold it to the Ludin Realty Company. These records are all found at the Manhattan Business Center, New York City Register’s Office. The last-named company owned the property for more than a century until it was sold to the Hudson Yards Development Corporation of New York City to form part of the new Hudson Park and Boulevard (see above).

181. Assuming that this figure represents the entire estate and not just one group of investments, this accounts for the lowest estimate of the value of the estate, given above.

along these investments until they could be put on a paying basis. According to Porter, he himself had started up the piano business again, had overseen the setting aside of \$130,000 from the estate to ensure its success, and had chosen Stone as president. Although the business had been successful for several years, Stone had decided to close the company without notifying Porter. The capital had subsequently been divided up among the Hale heirs, but Stone had gained control of Mrs. Hale's portion through some means. Again, according to Porter, Mrs. Hale had been consulting a clairvoyant and had heard mediums speak in the voices of her deceased husband and daughter, sending messages from beyond the grave that Mr. Stone was to be trusted. She had changed her mind after discovering Stone in the company of the clairvoyant's daughter (whom Stone afterwards married). Consequently, Mrs. Hale had demanded that Stone return her stocks and bonds, valued at \$200,000, but he had refused. Porter said that for his part, he had worked steadily on this matter for sixteen years and, although he had been well paid, he considered the charge that he had wrongly taken the \$600,000 to be slanderous.<sup>182</sup>

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Joseph P. Hale's first factory at Hudson and Canal streets was said to have produced four pianos a week, and the capacity of his last factory was set at 200 a week—a 5,000 percent increase. A rough estimate of the total production of Hale's factories during his career of twenty-three years, from late in 1860 to his death—calculated from the most positive statements of anticipated production and factories' capacities,<sup>183</sup> but allowing for "down time" caused by destruction, rebuilding, labor strikes, and economic slumps—yields a total of 82,000 instruments. Even if the actual production had been half that number, Hale would still be considered a major figure in the history of American piano manufacturing. He was no innovator, however, and his instruments did not feature up-to-date mechanical improvements desired by the most discriminating customers.<sup>184</sup> He made ordinary pianos for ordinary people. He was

182. *MTR2* 29, no. 9 (Aug. 26, 1899): 14. The amount of the company's capital is given as \$131,000 in the other source of this information, the *New York Daily Tribune* (Aug. 23, 1899): 5.

183. Omitted from the sources are claims of producing a certain number of pianos without indicating the time period in question. Some of these are quite breathtaking, such as the advertisement placed in the *Musical Courier* in June 1881: "J. P. Hale is making 100,000 of those splendid NEW SCALE UPRIGHT and SQUARE PIANOS for the Trade, at HALF-PRICE." See *MC* 2, no. 71 (June 8, 1881); 426.

quoted in January, 1879, as saying that he had started to manufacture upright pianos only two years previously, and his production of that model had now risen to two for every one square piano he made.<sup>185</sup> In spite of his claims in 1875 and 1878 that he would begin making grand pianos (see above),<sup>186</sup> no evidence of such production exists. He was still turning out squares in 1881, to judge from a catalogue issued by the New York Piano Co. (a manufacturer and dealer) in Montreal,<sup>187</sup> listing pianos made by themselves and by Albert Weber, Decker & Son, and Joseph P. Hale in New York; Vose & Sons in Boston; and R. S. Williams & Son and Heintzman & Co. in Toronto. Hale and his pianos are described here in glowing terms:

Being a manufacturer of great wealth, he is able to produce a first-class instrument at a moderate price. Their great power, strength and durability make them deservedly favorites with Schools, Convents and the general public; and from the fact that they seldom require the tuner, they give general satisfaction.<sup>188</sup>

Three square models by Hale are listed.<sup>189</sup> The description of style no. 5 (\$325) is: "Rich rosewood case, 7 octaves, front round corners, medium size, serpentine mouldings, carved legs. (The best piano for the money in America)." Style no. 8 (\$375) has a "Double-veneered rosewood case, 7½ octaves, large front round corners, three solid rosewood mouldings, carved legs. Agraffe treble." Style no. 9 (\$450) features a "Double-veneered mottled rosewood case, 7½ octaves, back finished like front, four large round corners, three solid rosewood mouldings, richly carved legs, full agraffe." Likewise, there are three upright models. Style no. 15 (\$350) is: "Four feet high. 7 octaves. Double-veneered, fine rosewood case, front round corners, extra fancy fret-work

184. That is, unless they happened to be incorporated into the parts made by his suppliers, as in the case of Francis W. Young's actions and the Steinway patent, as discussed above.

185. *MTRI* 7, no. 13 (January 25, 1879): 15.

186. *MTRI* 6, no. 4 (June 18, 1878): 83.

187. *Catalogue and Price List for 1881-2: New York Piano Co. General Wholesale and Retail House for the Disposal of American, Canadian and European Pianos and Organs in British North America* (Montreal: New York Piano Co.).

188. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

189. For comparison, Weber (\$550-\$1200), Decker (\$450-\$850), and Heintzman (\$375-\$800) are each represented by squares, uprights, and grands, while for Williams (\$300-\$400) and Vose (\$375-\$500) squares and uprights are listed. The prices are no doubt given in Canadian dollars.

front over keyboard, richly carved legs, medium size.” Style no. 16 is: “Four feet six inches high.  $7\frac{1}{2}$  octaves. Double-veneered fine rosewood case, front round corners, richly carved legs, fine French polished panels on front and sides. These are the most elegant as well as substantial Upright Piano[s] produced in the United States at the price.” Finally, style no. 17 has the features of no. 16, but “with three strings [i.e., triple stringing] and agraffe.”<sup>190</sup> Pictures of nos. 8 and 16, the medium model in each category, are shown.<sup>191</sup> The square has heavy, carved cabriole legs, rounded corners, a case with a scalloped apron in front, and a fretwork music rack—a combination featured in fifty-eight of the 134 photos of square grand pianos made in the 1860s through the 1880s, offered for sale on the website of the Antique Piano Shop in Friendsville, TN. (instruments with a straight-bottomed case and the other features are also found in many photos).<sup>192</sup> The picture of the Hale upright shows more unique features, as compared with surviving examples: two solid panels (not fretwork) above the keyboard and one wide panel underneath, and carved cabriole legs in front, in each of which the upper, convex arc is made distinct from the lower, somewhat smaller, concave arc.

Very few of Hale’s pianos evidently survive today, although some may be hidden in private possession. The National Museum of American History (Smithsonian Institution) has an anonymous upright (MI\* 316176) “doubtfully attributed” to Joseph P. Hale and reported to bear serial no. 908.<sup>193</sup> Its outward appearance does not coincide with the photo mentioned above, and it is indeed a doubtful example. An unrestored square grand marked “J. P. Hale / NEW YORK / Square Grand” with fancy mouldings, ornate mother-of-pearl inlay on the name-board, and all the visible characteristics of Hale’s style no. 8, was sold on eBay for \$400 on July 24, 2015.<sup>194</sup> Another square grand, evidently restored inside and out, marked “J. P. Hale / NEW YORK” and likewise showing the above-mentioned characteristics was being offered on eBay for \$5,000 (up through January 2016).<sup>195</sup> The most accessible example is in Meeteetse, WY, at the Cowboy Bar, owned by Big Jim Blake. It is an

190. *Catalogue and Price List*, 13–14.

191. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

192. [antiquepianoshop.com](http://antiquepianoshop.com) (accessed Jan. 22, 2016).

193. [http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah\\_605878](http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_605878) (accessed Sept. 16, 2014).

194. No longer posted on the internet.

195. No longer posted on the internet.

upright marked “J. P. Hale Co. / NEW YORK” on the fallboard and “Cabinet Grand” below, on the key stop rail. According to its owner, his grandfather Joshua purchased it as a new instrument in Illinois in 1892 and brought it out to California on a wagon. Never restored, it now continues to entertain patrons in the bar.<sup>196</sup>

Little information is available about serial numbers of Hale’s pianos. In a letter to the Emerson Piano Co. (Boston) in 1892, the Chicago manufacturing and retailing firm of Lyon & Healy stated that they had had a piano stenciled with the Emerson brand, but it was made by Hale. Bearing the serial number 71,615, it had been sold in 1888.<sup>197</sup> An official report of a lawsuit in 1910 concerned a J. P. Hale piano, style no. 5 (a square model) with the serial number 88,989, in the possession of a certain party in Jasper County, TX.<sup>198</sup> From these two sources, one can extrapolate a system in which numbers in the 70,000s represent instruments made by the Hale company in or before the year 1888, with numbers in the 80,000s indicating a later date. This conclusion, based on reported facts, bears no resemblance to the numbering system for Hale pianos given in the *Pierce Piano Atlas*,<sup>199</sup> which takes little account of known years of production and seems to have led at least two readers seriously astray.<sup>200</sup> With so much misinformation written about Joseph P. Hale and his pianos during his lifetime and thereafter, perhaps the best

196. Personal correspondence from Big Jim Blake, March 22, 2005.

197. *MC* 24, no. 24 (June 15, 1892): 19.

198. *The Southwestern Reporter: Containing all the Current Decisions of the Supreme and Appellate Courts of Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee and Texas*, vol. 131, November 9–December 10, 1910 (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1911), 633.

199. *Pierce Piano Atlas*, 8th ed., 125. Production years are listed, starting with 1870 (ten years later than Hale’s first year of production) and ending with 1914 (some twenty years beyond the last probable date of activity in the Hale factory under Charles H. Stone). The serial number 40,000 is assigned to 1870, moving next to 45,000 for 1875, 50,000 for 1880, and so on up to the year 1900 (no. 70,000). The series then progresses from 1901 (no. 71,000) with serial numbers in increments of 1,000 being assigned to every successive year up to 1914 (no. 84,000). Mr. Larry E. Ashley, publisher of the *Pierce Piano Atlas*, kindly responded on Nov. 27, 2015, to my question about the origin of these numbers. He reported that they had been gathered by his father, Bob Pierce, and by N. E. Michel, and had first been published in the book in 1947.

200. A few years ago, the website “justanswer.com” received a request from an owner of a Hale upright piano in fair-to-good condition, serial no. 89730, who wished to know its value. The appraiser responded with a price range (\$800–\$1,000) and added that the serial number placed its date of manufacture circa 1919. This appraiser clearly consulted the *Pierce Piano Atlas* and projected the years ahead from 1914 to match the given number. See [www.justanswer.com/musical.instrument-appraisal/68vyb-j-p-hale-upright-piano-fair-good-condition.html#re.v/459/](http://www.justanswer.com/musical.instrument-appraisal/68vyb-j-p-hale-upright-piano-fair-good-condition.html#re.v/459/) (accessed Jan. 21, 2016). A

advice to the unwary, on this subject, is *caveat lector!*

\* \* \* \*

Directly after his death, Joseph P. Hale received a condemning eulogy from editor William M. Thoms in the *American Art Journal*, containing the following comments:

In looking over the results of his 20 years experience in the piano-forte trade we do not find a single contribution to the development of the piano-forte, not a single idea originated by him that could benefit either the instrument or the trade. In fact his whole tendency was rather to destroy, or take away from, than add to, anything that would tend to make the piano-forte what it should be, a work of art. . . . The worst recommendation a pianomaker could bring, in seeking employment, was that he had worked in Hale's factory. . . . Viewed justly we are forced to the conclusion that Hale's methods of doing business have done more to demoralize the manufacture of the piano-forte than all the other abuses that have crept into it of late years combined.<sup>201</sup>

In 1890, Daniel Spillane's *History of the American Pianoforte* damned Hale not even with faint praise, but with total lack of recognition. The tide began to turn somewhat in 1895, when, on March 28, the piano-felt magnate Alfred Dolge addressed members of the Piano Manufacturers' Association at their dinner at the Waldorf Hotel in New York, naming men who had contributed to their industry in the past; he included several "very much misjudged in their day," starting with Joseph P. Hale, "the father of what is now called the Commercial Piano."<sup>202</sup> A last gasp of anti-Hale sentiment was included in the flurry of journalistic excesses generated by John C. Freund's younger brother, Harry Edward Freund, in his own trade journal, *The Musical Age*. In November 1903, looking ahead to the convention of the National Association of Piano Dealers of America at Atlantic City, overlapping with that of the National Piano Manufacturers' Association of America, Harry Freund did his best to work up enthusiasm for a great bonfire of square pianos to be held on the beach as a demonstration of the obsolescence of that model.<sup>203</sup> Rival

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similar case involves a request for information from an owner of an "Arion" upright piano, serial no. 63519. The appraiser's response was that this trade name had been bought and used by the J. P. Hale piano company after about 1918, and that the piano appeared to have been made in the mid-to-late 1920s. See [www.justanswer.com/musical-instrument-appraisal/4vhd-arion-upright-piano-serial-number-65319-refinished-3-chipped.html#re.v/459/](http://www.justanswer.com/musical-instrument-appraisal/4vhd-arion-upright-piano-serial-number-65319-refinished-3-chipped.html#re.v/459/) (accessed Jan. 21, 2016).

201. *AAJ* 39, no. 26 (Oct. 20, 1883): 513.

202. *MTR2* 20, no. 13 (March 30, 1895): 15.

journals responded with deprecatory comments, some humorous, including the following bit of verse:

FROM THE FIRE

When flames leaped high by ocean's tide  
 And smoke filled all the air,  
 A voice in thin-toned accents cried  
 And startled each man there;  
 "I am of famous stock," it said,  
 "My ancestors were great,  
 For me the first o'erstrung was made[,]  
 I bear the first full plate!"  
 And then they pulled it from the pyre  
 And read the name it bore—  
 "'Twas *J. P. Hale*—"back in the fire,  
 And let the d – d thing burn!"<sup>204</sup>

Alfred Dolge continued his support of Hale's reputation in the first volume of *Pianos and Their Makers*, published in 1911, in which he wrote:

Hale is, beyond question, the father of the "commercial" piano of America, and has done splendid pioneer work in his sphere, to the benefit of the entire trade. . . . A genius as an organizer, he carried the division of labor to the last point, so that he could reduce his labor cost to less than half of what his competitors paid. . . . It will be readily understood that Hale could sell his pianos far below the cost price of a high-grade piano and still make a good profit. These revolutionary methods caused bitter antagonism on the part of his competitors of the old school. Hale went on with his business complacently, and argued that the makers of high-class pianos were all wrong in antagonizing him, because, by his low price, he was bringing the piano within the reach of the working class. Once introduced there, out of each of 10 buyers of his cheap pianos, at least one would develop within 10 years into a good piano player, who would then not be satisfied until he possessed a high-class instrument.<sup>205</sup>

In later years, the former onus of having worked in the Hale factory, once a source of shame, had become a matter of pride. Piano makers identified positively with this background in the 1910s and 1920s were John A. Weser,<sup>206</sup> Jacob Henry Becker,<sup>207</sup> Ernest Leins,<sup>208</sup> and Francis

203. See my "Harry Edward Freund's Great Square Piano Bonfire."

204. *Presto*, no. 933 (May 26, 1904): 33. The rhyming scheme of the poem fails in the final line, but its author shows knowledge of the history of the square piano. The reference to the worthlessness of the Hale piano seems like the recitation of an old attitude, no longer held.

205. Dolge, *Pianos and Their Makers*, vol. 1, 179–80.

Connor.<sup>209</sup>

By 1920, Hale's accomplishments were a well-respected legend in the annals of the piano trade, to judge from the recollections of a journalist who had visited and interviewed the great industrialist at his home in 1880 (see Appendix 9).

In our own time, the distinguished piano manufacturer Henry Z. Steinway, scion of a dynasty as famous as royalty, put his own positive stamp on Hale's legacy, naming him "the founder of the present day piano business."<sup>210</sup>

206. *MTR2* 64, no. 21 (May 26, 1917): 7.

207. Carl Wilhelm Schlegel, *American Families of German Ancestry in the United States: Genealogical and Biographical* (New York: The American Historical Society, 1918–1926), 40.

208. *Presto*, no. 2044 (Sept. 26, 1925): 13.

209. *Presto-Times*, no. 2210 (Dec. 8, 1928): 6.

210. Henry Z. Steinway, personal communication (Dec. 14, 2005).



## APPENDIX I

**American Music Trade Journals Cited in the Present Article  
(Sigla, Consecutive Titles, and Consecutive Editors)***AAJ*

*Watson's Weekly Art Journal* (1864–66)

*American Art Journal* (1866–67)

*Watson's Art Journal* (1867–75)

*American Art Journal* (1876–)

Henry C. Watson (1864–75)

William M. Thoms (1876–)

*MTR1*

*Music Trade Review* (1875–80)

John Christian Freund (1875–80)

*MTR2*

*Music Trade Journal* (1879–80)

*Musical Critic and Trade Review* (1880–82/85)

*Music Trade Review* (1882/85–)

Charles Avery Welles (1879–86)

Jefferson Davis Bill (1882/85–89/91)

William G. Carr (1886–87)

Edward Lyman Bill (1887/89–)

*MC*

*Musical and Sewing Machine Gazette* (1880)

*Musical and Sewing Machine Courier* (1880)

*Musical Courier* (1880–)

William E. Nickerson (1880–81)

Howard Lockwood, publisher (1880–83)

Otto Floersheim (1883–94)

Marc A. Blumenberg (1883–)

## APPENDIX 2A

## COMMERCIAL

## PIANOS

SOME SLIGHT DISTURBANCE IN THE ANCIENT TRANQUILITY  
OF THE TRADE

## Fair Prospects of a General Revolution in Prices

## Incredible Difference in Cost of Essentially the Same Instruments

There is excitement in the Piano trade and there are good grounds for the inference that the excitement, now limited to local circles, will soon become public and general, and assume national proportions. {And as all that concerns and affects the general interests of commerce must be included in all large views of public welfare, and become the lawful subject of public information and public discussion, it will not be interpreted as an infringement upon the rights of individuals or the privileges of special classes, to state that certain facts not hitherto matter of wide publication—facts, however, which have been operating with secret and silent force during a period of several years, with deadly peril to some of the traditional features of the trade, are now coming to the surface.

The facts and developments which are now interpreted as such

## POTENT CAUSES OF REVOLUTION,

and now unmistakably manifest in the symptoms of a profound agitation prevailing among the community of Piano Manufacturers throughout the country, and in the perspective adoption of common measures of protection against the impending destruction of a golden privilege of the trade—the apparently inevitable abolition of an ancient scale of prices which, however disproportionate, fictitious and fanciful, appears to have been held, hitherto, as inviolable as the original rights of man—have long been apparent to the leading representatives of this great industry in the United States, and have been the occasion of a great deal of concern in limited circles. It is but recently, however, that these

prevailing apprehensions of the possible early downfall of an artificial and fictitious scale of prices which appears to have set aside for two ages the great mercantile principle of equity or correspondence in the proportions of cost and value, have led to such measures of self preservation as to incur a new peril—the danger of such public disclosures of

#### RED TAPE IN THE PIANO BUSINESS,

as would seem but to increase the peril from which these negotiations and counsels are seeking to rescue the trade, the new danger being that of incurring the disfavor of the public by direct revelations of such an elaborate system of superfluous intermediate processes and of indirect, circuitous and irrelevant ways in the common routine of sales, attended in prices with such enormous multiplications of the manufacturing outlay as would be treated as a commercial impossibility in any other department of commerce. {A comprehensive statement of the situation, and the aim [?] and substance of events and developments which are now producing these interesting and important results are as follows: Some fifteen years ago, and just about the time, by the way, that the first bugle notes of liberty were calling the soldiers of the nation to a war, the termination of which was to be the liberation of several millions of people from a rather more serious kind of bondage than that of unreasonable prices in an indispensable commodity of civilized life,} Mr. J. P. Hale, an enterprising citizen of Massachusetts, of ripe experience in various departments of industry and commerce, a man of uncommon discernment and great originality of views, as well as a sort of constitutional strength of purpose in the patient execution of business projects, conceived the idea either that the traditional system of fictitious prices in the piano trade was a

#### STUPENDOUS HUMBUG

to which a great community had too long rendered an ignorant submission and which could in the course of time be made to yield to the persistent opposition of legitimate private enterprise, in co-operation with that terrible law of supply and demand—the final arbiter of prices in all markets—or else that the monopoly of the Piano by the upper ten thousand was a fraud on the lower ten million—that the manifest destiny of the instrument was that of a larger utility and a larger beneficence, like that of the printing press, the fulfillment of which, in placing it within reach of the multitude as the sweetest treasure of the household, and the noblest ornament of the parlor and the hearth was one of the duties that

commercial enterprise owed to society. At all events a severe mathematical computation of the necessary outlay of production and a comparison with established market prices, was, to Mr. Hale,

#### A NEW REVELATION OF THE SOCIAL DESTINY OF THE PIANO.

This incredible margin of profits was interpreted as a magnificent opportunity for rendering the Nation a vast service, at the same time that it presented the certainty of satisfactory reward to such enterprise as would produce an instrument absolutely equal in all intrinsic points of superiority to those of the oldest prestige and widest renown, and, while reserving a lawful margin, be still enabled to place the new instrument upon the markets of the Nation at one-half or one third the established figures. {The enterprise of Mr. Hale contemplated the production of a supply for a vast public demand, an inmeasureable but unsupplied patronage that already had existence, the patronage of the unnumbered multitude comprised in the great middle classes. The originality of the discovery was in demonstrating the possibility of supplying a National necessity, a great social requirement, for which the commerce of the age made no provision whatever.} The upshot of the matter was that the enterprising Massachusetts merchant, having strained his faith from all dangerous doubts and fears, proceeded to illustrate it in works, and to carry his great plan in practical operation. The first results of the new process were the production of a piano in the fall of 1860, from the factory corner of Canal and Hudson streets, which very soon received from as large a jury of musical and mechanical critics and experts as ever sat upon the merits of any similar instrument, a unanimous judgment of substantial praise in all essential points of excellence and superiority. The two interesting features of this first effort of production for the multitude were that the instrument was immediately placed by the authorities of the country on terms of absolute equality with the leading pianos of largest fame and oldest prestige, in form, in mechanical construction and component material, in range and compass and perfection of tone and in the great matter of durability, while the price at which it was placed at the disposal of the trade was

#### A SURPRISE TO THE MANUFACTURERS AND DEALERS

of the world. Rigid examinations revealed the same taste and mechanical skill, the same quality and proportions of material, ash, maple and rosewood, pins and strings from the same factory, and nine-tenths of the

component parts from the same hands at the same cost, in the piano of the multitude as in the older instruments, which, through the enchantment or the tyranny of prestige and reputation, had maintained for half a century, a scale of prices threefold that of the new instrument. {In such facts and such conditions as these, existed the force that, in the course of time, was to manifest itself in revolutionizing the trade by the gradual exposure of an antique system of red tape and the abolition of the old system of artificial and oppressive rates. The economy as well as the intrinsic excellence of the new piano was such as to give it an immediate introduction upon the market of the nation on terms that won public favor everywhere. The facilities of manufacturing were enlarged and multiplied year by year to meet a demand that seemed to defy all estimate or measurement;} wholesale and retail dealers in rapid succession accepted the new lesson of economy and abandoned old names to sell the new piano; smaller manufacturers in all sections of the country found it to be an immense saving to withdraw from the manufacturing industry and to order supplies from the New York factory, each under his own name as a separate local trademark, and thus, with the practical concealment of the name and the presence of

#### THE ORIGINAL AND PIONEER SPIRIT

{of this new interest of the public, the Piano of the middle classes was finding its way by a thousand old channels of trade under a hundred familiar names to every centre of population and of commerce throughout the country and the continent. The development of Mr. Hale's enterprise was a silent and invisible growth, a series of successive enlargements and expansions by a sort of geometric progression, until the present aggregate production of the great New York factory is computed three-fold that of the combined capacity of any other three establishments in the world, the measure of the product being the supply of about one-fifth of the entire trade of the United States. The domain of the new Piano, in the meantime has come to be measured by the dimensions of the nation, and as no two things can occupy the same space at the same time,} the approachment of so large a presence upon the select and inviolable territory of the older and more famous instruments has commenced to be felt, and it is just this inevitable and irresistible encroachment of a lawful force upon all artificial and fictitious power that has brought about the present disturbance of the ancient tranquillity of the piano trade. No matter for how long a time a scale of prices may have been main-

tained in violation of every principle of equity and proportion, the omnipotence of prestige and reputation must inevitably yield at last to

THE SUPREME CONSIDERATION OF MONEY,

the question of expense, and the time seems to have come at last when the wealthier classes, as well as the industrial multitude, have recognized the fact that there are no better grounds for utterly ignoring the principle of economy in the selection and purchase of a piano, than in any other mercantile transaction. And when it is stated, upon the authority of experience, as well as of professional criticism, that there is not, on account of elaborate and extra finish, a difference to exceed twenty-five dollars between the common \$800 pianos and the instrument that now sells at about one-third the sum, the entire community have good ground for serious reflection. As already stated, an interesting feature of the business of the New York factory has been that of filling large orders for manufacturers in all sections of the country, the stencils of the former manufacturers being still used for printing upon the instrument the various individual names. It is now understood, however, that from the first day of January next, the New York manufacturer will entirely relinquish this feature of his trade, and henceforth and forever the piano, which has achieved so large a measure of renown under so many different trade marks, will be known to the remotest ends of civilization under

THE TRUE NAME OF THE "HALE PIANO."

And as of the same date of this interesting new departure, arrangements will be completed for placing upon the markets of the country, certain improved instruments to be included in the same general scale of prices,—as Hale's Upright Pianos, to be the leading upright in the United States, and a full agraffe square grand to excel any he has yet made,—and as the name of the great manufacturer is thus about to go before the community with a fame already earned, it may be appropriate to the connection to present a few general facts of a personal and historic kind marking the steps in the progressive development of the largest, most successful and most beneficent enterprise known to the annals of the modern piano. J. P. Hale, the founder of what may be properly termed a new empire of commerce, like the majority of men whose names have become the subject of historic record in connection with some large service to society—as in the case of Franklin, who gave us the commercial uses of lightning, and of Fulton, who made the first

application of steam to the industries of life—appears to have achieved the material triumphs of his life without any large assistance of circumstances; without reliance upon external aid, and without any friendly intervention of fortune. Born at Bernardston, Franklin County, Massachusetts, his father, a hardy New England farmer, died and left him at the age of three years for dependence during the earlier days of childhood to a mother who found in spinning and weaving the means for support of a family. Called, however, at a still tender age, to the robust duties which generally wait upon full manhood, we find him at the age of twelve years, entrusted with the full responsibilities of a public agent or employe, and giving evidence of the same calibre and moral force which distinguished him later in life, and which seem to have constituted his sole inheritance, his public employment being that of a carrier of letters and papers, over a route of eighty-five miles, in the vicinity of his native county, his trip being semi-weekly, and including seventeen stations. Marrying at an early age, and removing to Vermont, whence he soon returned to Massachusetts, the next few years of his life were spent in the mechanical industries, first at Greenfield, then at Bernardston, then at Wooster, where he afterward engaged in the crockery business, in connection with real estate and building, during a period of thirteen years, when, in the year 1860, at the age of forty, having saved a moderate competency, he came to New York city, and after engaging for a few months in the manufacture of packing boxes, in the fall of the same year, upon}

#### THE GREAT ENTERPRISE OF HIS LIFE.

Establishing a small factory corner Hudson and Canal streets, the first year's production averaged about four pianos a week. Moving, the second year, to 478 and 480 Broadway, he remained four years, at the end of which time the sales of the new piano were averaging 500 a year, and the indications of success on a public and national scale began to be manifest, when, erecting a large five-story edifice, corner Tenth avenue and Thirty-sixth street, its proportions were again outgrown in the course of three years, and a new six-story building was erected opposite, thus affording employment for 150 to 200 men, and a capacity for turning out twenty to twenty-four pianos a week. The presence of the piano upon the markets of the country began now to be felt as

#### A FEATURE OF OUR NATIONAL COMMERCE,

and the task of meeting the demand for dealers and manufacturers began to be a formidable one. In 1870 a mammoth structure, eight stories

in height by 200 feet depth was erected, the capacity thus increased amounting to about sixty Pianos a week. In 1872 the manufacturing facilities were further enlarged by the addition of another eight story building, while the completion, the present year, of still another eight-story addition of 100x200 feet, will provide, upon the early completion of all the rooms, a capacity for an average production of 150 Pianos a week, and the employment of a full regiment of one thousand skilled workmen, a capacity three times larger than that of any other manufactory in the world, and contributing, as already stated, about

ONE FIFTH THE SUPPLY OF THE ENTIRE TRADE OF THE CONTINENT.

{In regard to Mr. Hale's success in solving the public problem of a low-priced piano for the multitude, a partial explanation is in the faithful and rigid application of the general principles that constitute economy in any branch of the manufacturing interest. An economist by nature, in the largest sense, and endowed with a magnificent genius for organizing great industries, his personal supervision of his vast business has been vigilant, untiring and rigorous, while every lesson of a thorough mercantile experience, and every aid of mathematical calculation have been united with a thorough study of all the markets of material and supplies, and to uncommon judgment and discrimination in the employment of mechanical skill, to attain the minimum outlay in production. Content with the smallest practicable margin of profits, refraining from all retail transactions, cumbering his Piano with no artificial and intermediate expense of sale, employing no teachers and no red tape professionals and agents to effect sales upon commissions to be charged to the purchaser, the instrument is enabled to reach the legitimate dealer, and through him, the public, at a clean price that has been the surprise of the century. In brief, the success of the entire enterprise can be interpreted simply as the legitimate and inevitable triumph that attends economy and equity, and honest merit, whenever and wherever placed in opposition to the pretension or the impudence, or the tyranny of reputation and prestige, when brought to the support of a false theory in commerce.}

NEW YORK, December 17.

*Cincinnati Daily Times* (Dec. 20, 1875): 3. Reprinted in *MTR1* 1, no. 5 (Jan. 3, 1876): 61–62. (Text included here between the brackets { } does not appear in the reprint.)



## APPENDIX 2B

## EXCITEMENT IN THE PIANO TRADE

*From the Cincinnati Daily Times*

There is excitement in the piano trade. It would appear from recent manifestations that the entire community of wholesale dealers have become agitated, if not absolutely terrified, under decidedly the most momentous question that the laws and fortunes of commerce have ever yet forced upon their consideration, the question being none other than that of the impending fate of the old system of standard prices—the evident probability of an approaching decline from the ancient scale that looks as if it were going to be so steep, so sudden, and so enormous as to be equivalent to a revolution of the trade. As a matter of course, this downfall of prices implies the destruction, also, of that elaborate system of red tape in the manipulations of the business which is believed to have been hitherto the principal means of maintaining and perpetuating those inequitable and artificial prices.

The circumstances and conditions which justify these fears and anticipations are, in a certain sense, phenomenal, and of rare occurrence in commerce. It seems that Hale, the great New York manufacturer, whose factories on Tenth avenue and Thirty-fifth street, are said to turn out not less than one-fifth the aggregate production of the continent, has, during several years past, been placing upon the markets of the country, at an average of absolutely less than one-half the prevailing prices of first-class pianos, an instrument which appears to have achieved a special popularity and to have passed into very general use. The musical profession appear to have given the low-priced, or half-price, piano an honest and universal indorsement, all tests of experts in musical mechanism indicating its practical identity, in all essential and permanent features of excellence, with rival instruments whose older prestige and larger fame had commanded for them three times the selling price. It has accordingly long been apparent to shrewd observers in the trade that the possibility of longer maintaining the old scale of prices in the presence of these facts, which must, in the nature of things, gradually become public, was a question that was bound to become an ominous one to rival manufacturers in the course of time. And the events which have gradually led to these results are about as follows:

Some fifteen years ago Mr. J. P. Hale, an enterprising citizen of Massachusetts, of ripe experience in various departments of practical industry and commerce, a man of uncommon judgment and discernment in affairs, a mechanical expert as well as a far-seeing, cool-headed financier, given to observation and invention and liberal views, but endowed with a constitutional strength of purpose in the patient execution of business projects, conceived the idea either that the traditional system of high and purely artificial prices in the piano trade was a stupendous humbug, to which the community ought to be taught the folly of submission, or else that the monopoly of the piano by the upper ten thousand was a fraud upon the great industrial middle classes, the idea being that the manifest destiny of the instrument was that of a larger utility and larger beneficence, like that of the printing press, the fulfillment of which in placing it within reach of the multitude was a duty which commercial enterprises owed to society. This new revelation to Mr. Hale of the larger social destiny of the piano was the easy and simple result of a mathematical computation of the necessary outlay of production and a comparison with established market prices. The incredible margin of profits thus revealed was interpreted as a magnificent opportunity for rendering the nation a vast service at the same time that it presented a field of remunerative enterprise as large as the area of our national commerce—enterprise that contemplated simply the supply of a vast public demand that already existed—the unsupplied patronage of the great middle classes. The originality of the enterprise was in demonstrating the possibility of supplying a vast social requirement, a national necessity, for which the commerce of the age made no provision whatever.

The result of Mr. Hale's calculations and reflections was the production, in 1860, of the first piano of the multitude, the memorable incidents of this first effort of production being that the new instrument was almost immediately placed by the authorities of the country on terms of absolute equality with the leading and oldest pianos of the day, in mechanical construction, in form and component material, in range and compass and perfection of tone, in wearing qualities, and in durability, while the new price was a surprise to the manufacturers and dealers of the world. Rigid and exhaustive examinations revealed the same taste and mechanical skill, the same quality and proportions of material—ash, maple, and rosewood, pins and strings from the same factory, and nine-tenths of the component parts from the same hands, at the same cost, in

the new piano of the multitude as in the older instruments, there being not according to professional criticism, since confirmed by experience a difference to exceed \$35 on account of extra mechanical finish between the common \$800 piano and the instrument which then began to sell and has since sold at about one-third that sum. In marking the development of this largest and most beneficent enterprise known to the commercial annals of music, there are facts and incidents of a personal or historic kind that will be read with interest.

J. P. Hale, the founder of what may very properly be termed a new empire of commerce, like the majority of men whose names have become the subject of historic record in connection with some large service to society, as in the case of Franklin, who gave us the commercial uses of lightning, and of Fulton, who made the first application of steam to the industries of life, appears to have achieved the material triumphs of his life without material assistance of circumstances, without reliance on external aid, and without remarkably friendly intervention of fortune. Born at Bernardston, Franklin County, Mass., he became, through the death of his father, a hardy New-England farmer, dependent from the third year of his age upon a mother who found in the primitive industry of the loom and spinning wheel, her narrow resources, for the support of a family. Called, however, at a still tender age to the robust duties which generally wait upon full manhood, his fourteenth year found him intrusted with the serious responsibilities of a public agent or employe, and giving early evidence of the calibre and unbending integrity of purpose and of character which distinguished him later in life, and which seem to have constituted about all his inheritance, his public employment being that of a juvenile mail agent—a carrier of letters and papers over a long and important route of seventy-five miles in the vicinity of his native county, the trip being semi-weekly and including thirteen stations. Marrying at an early age and removing to Vermont, whence he soon returned to Massachusetts, the next few years of his life were spent in the mechanical industries, first at Greenfield, then at Worcester, where he afterward engaged extensively, during a period of eighteen years, in the crockery business, in connection with real estate and the building of houses, a department in which he is said to have initiated that unequalled management and economy, which afterward developed to so much larger ends in the manufacture of pianos. It was in the year 1860, when, at forty years of age, having created for himself a handsome business cap-

ital, he came to New-York City, and, after engaging for a few months in the manufacture of boxes, entered in the Fall of the same year upon the great enterprize of his life. Establishing a small factory at the corner Hudson and Canal streets, the first year's production averaged about four pianos a week. Moving, the second year, to Nos. 478 and 480 Broadway, he remained for four years, at the end of which time the sales of the new piano were averaging 500 a year, and the indications of success on a public and national scale began to be manifest, when, erecting a large five-story edifice corner Tenth avenue and Thirty-sixth street, its proportions were again outgrown in the course of three years, and a new six-story building was erected opposite, thus affording employment for two hundred men and a capacity of about twenty-four pianos a week. The presence of the piano upon the markets of the nation began now to be felt as a feature of our national commerce, and the task of meeting the demand from dealers and manufacturers began to be a formidable one. Wholesale and retail dealers in rapid succession accepted the new lesson of economy, and abandoned old names to sell the new piano. Manufacturers in all sections, including a number of established and wide reputation, began to withdraw from manufacturing and to order their instruments under their old name and trade-mark from the New-York factory, and in 1870, to meet a demand which seemed to defy all estimate or limitation, a mammoth eight-story structure, 200 feet in depth, was added, the capacity thus increased amounting to sixty pianos a week. In 1872 the manufacturing facilities were again enlarged by the addition of another eight-story building, while the completion of still another eight-story addition of 100x200 feet, will soon provide a capacity for producing 150 pianos a week and the employment of 1,000 skilled workmen, a capacity three times larger than that of any other establishment in the world, and contributing fully one-fifth the entire trade of the continent. It is understood that Mr. Hale is now placing before the country certain improvements, including a full agraffe square grand and "Hale's upright pianos," to be the leading upright of the United States, the improvements, of course, to be included in the general scale of low prices.

Reprinted in *New York Times* (Jan. 23, 1876): 7; reprinted in *New York Evening Post* (Feb. 2, 1876): 2.

## APPENDIX 3

## JOSEPH P. HALE

Mr. HALE has placed his name among the eminent benefactors of the age. He has produced an entire revolution in piano-building. This instrument, formerly a luxury and at high cost, has been placed within the reach of the middle and artisan classes. The farmer on the prairie, the miner on the mountain, the fisherman on the sea-coast, and the intelligent mechanic anywhere, can easily adorn his home and educate his children with this elegant instrument. The system by which a substantial piano can be bought at less than half the ordinary price originated with Mr. Hale, and by him has been perfected. He has been his own educator, the builder of his own style of business, the architect of his own fortune. He is one of the marked men of the age. His business is simply gigantic. It costs him a million a year to run it. From Christmas to Christmas he turns out 5500 pianos. He has 1200 men on his pay-roll, who are paid \$12,000 a week. For sixteen years he has been manufacturing pianos in New York; during all this time Mr. Hale has never made a note, nor borrowed a dollar, nor incurred a debt that he did not pay on Saturday night. For ten years he had no clerk or book-keeper; no foreman or collector. Immense, complicated, and distracting as the business was, he held everything in his own hands, made his own contracts, sold his goods, made all his purchases, and kept his own accounts. Not one man in a thousand could have done this and made it a success.

His system is a peculiar one. He does not believe in red tape, huge commission, nor paying from thirty to forty per cent to music-men or music-dealers for their good will. Far-seeing, cool-headed, a mechanical expert with uncommon judgment, he proposed to revolutionize the piano trade. He saw no reason why the community should pay \$800 for an instrument that could be afforded at \$400; nor give \$600 for what should cost but \$200 and allow a fair profit. He conceived it to be a duty to utilize the piano, and bring its boon to the masses as the printing-press and the telegraph-wire come to all. In carrying out this idea of reducing the incredible amount of profits, Mr. Hale has been eminently successful. He has built a piano of excellent qualities and elegant finish, and in material, range, compass, tone, wearing power, and durability, which, with the low price, has astonished the dealers of the world. He sells only at wholesale; while he buys only for cash himself, he gives liberal credit

to his customers. Once a year Mr. Hale makes his contracts with the principal dealers in the principal cities—in Chicago and St. Louis; in Baltimore and New York; in Boston and Philadelphia; and in all prominent cities West, North, and South. With all his facilities for business, Mr. Hale can not fill his orders. From three to five hundred are constantly ahead, and dealers can wait their turn.

#### THE REAL VALUE

of the piano is attested by its popularity, by its increasing sales from year to year, and the system adopted in its manufacture. The pianos are cheap, not because the material is cheap or the workmanship faulty, but because the manufacturer knows how to economize; knows how to turn out an instrument at the smallest possible cost. He gives the benefit of this economy to his customers. He contents himself with a small profit of ten dollars on an instrument, and his immense sales bring him an income of \$55,000 a year. A Hale piano can be purchased for a family or a school for \$200 [1877: \$150], and from that upward to \$300. In tone, finish, look, and durability, it will be equal to those in the market for which the sum of \$600 is asked. Place them side by side, cover up the name, and no one could tell the high-priced instrument from Hale's low-priced one. Mr. Hale can manufacture a good piano cheaper than any other man in the United States. He buys his stock in immense quantities. He has the best workmen in the State. Many of his men have worked in the leading piano factories of the land. He buys his material of the same houses that furnish material for the costly pianos. The same men who manufacture parts for an \$800 piano do the same thing for Hale's \$200 ones. The same men make the key-board, the frame, the screws, the wires, and the felting. Some of Hale's low-priced pianos have been in use in schools from six to ten years, and have been banged upon for ten hours a day, and are good and sound this moment. Mr. Hale's customers not only continue from year to year, but his patronage is constantly increasing. One Western customer who sold sixteen pianos a year now sells a thousand.

Mr. Hale's PERSONAL HISTORY is as romantic as his business career. He was born at Bernardstown, Mass. His father, a hardy farmer, died when Joseph was three years old. His mother had a hand-to-hand fight with poverty. She did her best to keep her little household together and give them bread. The spinning-wheel and the loom afforded the narrow resources of support. Joseph was early put to work. School privileges were

few, and those he was not permitted to enjoy. He was robust, intelligent, and persevering, and at fourteen did the work of a man. In his boyhood he exhibited marked talent and that calibre, unbending integrity, and firmness of purpose which have marked his maturer life. Like John Quincy Adams, he "rode post." Twice a week he took the mail on horseback, riding seventy-five miles, and leaving matter at seventeen post-offices. He took cheerfully any business that was honorable, and did it well. His theory was that business did not make the man—a resolute, vigorous person could achieve success out of any thing. Such a one could go blindfold into life, lay his hands upon any thing, and, if he choose, win.

Acting on this principle, Mr. Hale took any thing that promised a decent livelihood. His real business life began in Worcester. He had a faculty for building. He erected a large number of dwellings, and was content with a small profit. Beside building, he had some business constantly on hand. Now he was a painter; he kept a shoe-store; sold paper-hangings, crockery, and house-furnishing goods; then he was in the cutlery business. All the while his building went on. He would build a house quicker and for less money than any man in the State. He used his own stock, painted some of his houses with his own hand, and furnished others. He bought largely from the great cities, and imported some of his stock. His energy, his indomitable perseverance, fine judgment, and business capacity, with his probity and manly manners, won the popular confidence and regard. He was elevated to positions of civil trust, had an honorable place in the great association of mechanics, and ranked foremost among the citizens of Worcester.

In the way of trade, he often visited New York. He saw at a glance that the metropolis—the great centre of trade—was the place for a man who wanted to make a national repute. He sold out his business sixteen years ago, and came to the city. He had a capital of about thirty thousand dollars, was free from debt, with no business on hand. He could not long be idle. He formed a partnership with a manufacturer of pianos; for Mr. Hale saw that there was money in it. The connection proved an unfortunate one. The man misrepresented his business. He was a schemer, without capital, and deeply involved. Mr. Hale bought out his partner, and resolved hereafter to go alone. He purposed a revolution in the manufacture and sale of pianos. He would throw on the market an excellent instrument, at popular prices. The industrial and middle classes should have a piano equal to the best, at a low cost—one that should

meet the wants of the American people. Here his far-sightedness came in. He saw a great field for the sale of his instruments. Music was being introduced as a part of common-school education. Every farmer would want a piano as much as a cooking-stove. He had no sympathy with high prices and high commission, and did not care whether the men who were enjoying these exorbitant rates were friends or foes.

The system adopted by Mr. Hale became at once immensely popular. It embraced the following features: The production of first-class pianos, at a low price, at a profit, at two hundred dollars. To bring the price down, Mr. Hale gave personal attention to all the details of business. He watched every piece of work till the piano was complete. His factory is noted for holding all new improvements in manufacture. He buys only the best material—buys for cash, in large quantities. He buys at the lowest possible rates, and often has half a million feet of seasoned lumber on hand. Every workman is paid on Saturday afternoon, and every bill is paid before Saturday night. No liquor is allowed on the premises. A prominent piano-man said, "Mr. Hale, you can not make pianos without Germans. You can not have Germans without beer." "Well," was the reply, "when I can not manufacture pianos without beer, then I will close up." One thousand workmen are employed in the factory; some of them came from the leading establishments in the city. If men do not like the rules, they are not obliged to remain. Once discharged, they are never allowed to return.

The perfection of Hale's pianos grows out of the methods of work. Men work by the piece. One man does one thing and nothing else. Each workman must be on time; he has a standard up to which his work must come. Every workman is allowed a certain number of young men who are apprenticed for three years. The lads work on the part of the instrument that the workman makes. The boy is instructed without troubling the principal. When the boy's work comes up to the standard the workman gets the same pay he has for his own labor. At the end of three years the boy has a good trade, a bench of tools, and regular employment.

The musical profession appear to have given the low-priced piano a hearty, honest, and universal indorsement. A leading manufacturer who charges the highest price for pianos was recently out West. He looked into a large piano-house. He found six of his own instruments on sale—grand, square, and upright. The asking prices for these instruments were six, eight, and ten hundred dollars [surely the reverse order was meant]. In another room were fifty of Hale's pianos. In look, tone, and finish,



these low-priced instruments were equal to the costly ones in the other saloon. The city manufacturer complained of the meagre display of his own pianos as compared with Hale's lower-priced instruments. "That is the way it is," said the dealer. "We have fifty orders for Hale's pianos to one of your high-priced ones. These low-priced instruments are popular. They look well, wear well, sound well, and there is nothing but your name to distinguish your instrument from Mr. Hale's. Mr. Hale says—and we believe him—that he uses the same material that you use; puts in as good work as you put in; buys the different parts from the men you deal with; that substantially the work is equal to your own. Put a Hale piano into a school or family in any town in the South or West, and it will bring orders for a dozen more. The sale increases every year. My orders are behind, and I can not get pianos enough to meet the demand. People are not fools. A man could not commit a big fraud on the public, continue it for a period of over sixteen years, and increase his business and his fortune all the while. Something besides low prices distinguishes Hale's pianos. They have substantial merit, and prove themselves what they are recommended to be."

Mr. Hale's personal traits have aided him in his career. He would attract attention anywhere by his tall and commanding stature. His face beams with intelligence and benevolence. His unquestioned business ability is manifest to all, with his strong common-sense, keen judgment, and what the world calls levelheadedness. He early developed a talent for construction, for executive ability, and intuitive knowledge of men, that made him everywhere master of the situation. Mr. Hale has kept his money out of real estate (except for buying and selling property on which to build factories) and out of speculations, held it in his own hands, and kept it strictly in his business (except for his money-lending and railroad-building). When reverses came [1877: come] that bring such devastation with them, Mr. Hale having no interest to pay and fearing no shrinkage, has passed through panics without feeling them. His sales were never larger and his prospects never better than during the late financial convulsion. Those who dislike his system of piano-building admire the manliness and integrity of the man. He is recognized as a leader among the manufacturers of the nation. He has been called to positions of trust by acclamation. In matters of dispute he is accepted as an arbitrator. His fine judgment and probity seldom allow an appeal. His habits are very simple, and he practices what he demands of his men. He

uses no liquor and does not stimulate even with tea or coffee. When a lad he saw the woes and sorrows of drunkenness. Like young Daniel in the king's court, "he purposed in his heart" not to drink wine nor strong drink, nor in any way contribute to the spread of intemperance.

Mr. Hale's manufactory is one of the most complete in the country. His buildings have kept pace with the increase of his business. He established himself in 1860 in a small factory on Hudson and Canal. He soon outgrew his humble quarters and moved to larger ones. After three or four removals, each demanded by the increase of his trade, Mr. Hale began the erection of his splendid factory on Tenth Avenue and Thirty-fifth street. The building is brick, eight stories high, with a frontage of four hundred and fifty feet. The rooms are arranged to carry out Mr. Hale's system of manufacture. Each room is devoted to a specific part of the piano, and each workman spends his time on one part of the instrument, and does nothing else. In erecting this model building, Mr. Hale carried out his ideal of pay as you go. Every story was paid for as it went up. All workmen were paid on Saturday night. When the roof was on and the factory complete, there was not one dollar due any man for labor or stock. The grounds for a new and immense factory have been bought on the River at One-Hundred-and-Forty-sixth street. The new building will be eight hundred feet front, fifty feet wide, eight stories high, occupying two blocks. The entire manufactory will be under one roof. All parts of the instruments will be constructed in the building. Arrangements are made for ten freight cars to run in and load under the roof. The present factory is eight [1877: nine] stories high, to which an addition is being made of sixty by one hundred feet. Mr. Hale has constantly on hand two thousand pianos in process of completion. A piano is sent from the factory every thirty minutes during the ten hours of daily work.

This establishment is run on a perfect system. Mr. Hale is master of details, making an instrument at the smallest possible cost. In the establishment there is no waste, no idleness, no confusion, no smoking, no drinking, and no rioting. Every tool has its place, and every man is at his own bench. Mr. Hale is his own superintendent. Every improvement has been introduced to save time and insure economy, by Mr. Hale himself. One hundred pianos are worked upon a day. Each has a truck, so that the workmen can move it without assistance. Even in teaming the same economy is used—one horse is in the morning and another in the afternoon, so that no time is lost in feeding. This system of driving the work

without waste runs through the entire establishment, and gives a clue to some of the methods by which an elegant piano can be afforded at so low a price.

It has been charged that Mr. Hale could not sell pianos at his price and live, unless the instrument was an inferior one. He is charged with using green timber and an inferior quality of rosewood, with cheap iron frames, screws, and wires. The answer to these charges is that such shams would not noly be dishonest, but foolish. Between a first-class article and an inferior one, the saving would only be fifteen dollars on a piano. The profit on each instrument is only ten dollars, and the imperfect instrument would be thrown back on him at his own cost. The fact stands out that Mr. Hale makes and sells fifty-five hundred pianos a year. They go to all parts of the land, with a warantee that the maker is well able to back up. On these pianos, eminent houses are not afraid to stencil their own name. The trade for sixteen years has been increasing, and the oldest customers are still patrons of the house. Every consideration of policy and integrity demands of Mr. Hale an honest instrument. A piece of timber is not allowed to be used till it is two years old. The stuff must be clear or the tone will be harmed. The best material and the best workmanship are secured, both American and imported. This guarantees the excellence of the piano, and the instrument makes its own sale.

Mr. Hale is very bold in defending his workmanship. He ordered from Steinway, Chickering, and Weber, each, one of their best pianos. These have been placed in his wareroom, between his own. A piano sold for six hundred dollars is put in contrast with one of Hale's, which is offered for two hundred dollars. Customers can test each, and test the relative merits of the high price and the low.

All unknown to fame, sixteen years ago Joseph P. Hale began his career as a piano manufacturer in New York. From his little establishment on Canal street, he sent out a solitary piano destined to make a revolution in the trade. He has built up a gigantic business, holding on steadily to his motto of a good piano at a low price. His fame is as wide as the country. His pianos are sold in every part of the land. His beneficent labors have made glad thousands of humble homes, and carried happiness to tens of thousands of hearts. It was a great step for humanity when Massachusetts put carpets and cooking-stoves among the "necessities of life" which the sheriff could not touch. Mr. Hale has done more than this. He has not only made a fortune out of his trade, but he has placed

the elegance and charm of music, heretofore a luxury, monopolized by the rich, within the reach of the great mass of families in America, and put a fine piano within the means of the middle and working people of the United States.

Matthew Hale Smith, *Successful Folks. How They Win. Illustrated in the Career of Eight Hundred Eminent Men* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1878), 368–78. This work was preceded by “Joseph P. Hale, the Great Piano Manufacturer: Advance Sheets from Matthew Hale Smith’s New Book on ‘Successful People and How They Win’” (1877). These two sources differ in that certain numbers expressed as numerals in the 1877 version are spelled out in words in the published version (1878). Otherwise, differences in the 1877 version are presented here within square brackets where they occur, and text in the 1877 version that was deleted in 1878 is included here between the brackets { }.

## APPENDIX 4

## HALE'S BUSINESS AND BUILDINGS

**Pianofortes with Misleading Names—Manufactories that were Insecure**

It was not practicable to find in the city yesterday Mr. Joseph P. Hale, the owner of the pianoforte factory that blazed up and tumbled down in a few minutes. He was in the country, and no one in his residence in Thirty-fourth street knew where. He was not easily found when his factory tumbled down in December, 1870. At that time a very painful sprained ankle kept him from sight of all who desired to ask questions. He had no office except a room in his factory, and the young man Stone, "who had gone down town" seems to have been his only confidant. His mail was received at his house, his business letters being opened in the peaceful and secluded security of the bosom of his family, and his son-in-law was his book-keeper and general manager in his absence. What men in his employ recall and say of him it might be unjust to quote, for very frequently employees cherish long a sense of grievance and wrong that may overbalance their powers of deliberate judgment, and even if he has been mean, grinding, exacting, cruel, that is no more than many are, and is merely a question between him and his men.

A leading pianoforte manufacturer, who authorizes the statement, and is willing, if desired to, to "back it up," said to a *Sun* reporter yesterday: "I have known Mr. Hale for a great many years, not personally with any degree of intimacy, but by reason of his peculiar business. He comes from Massachusetts, where he used to carry on the crockery business in Worcester, something less than a lifetime ago. He is now about sixty years old. shrewd, bound to make money, no matter who perishes; and you may say with truth that he has been the curse of the pianoforte business, or at least of those in it who are still making a reputation. He commenced here with Grovesteen, a great many years ago, under the firm name of Grovesteen & Hale. I do not now remember where their factory was. They were regarded as bad birds even then; but their concern was so small that little attention was directed to them. About thirteen or fourteen years ago they dissolved partnership, and Hale continued the business on his own account, making the very cheapest pianofortes. Then he extended his business, after a time, to money-lending operations, and went largely into the manufacture of contract pianofortes. You may not understand that. I will explain. He would buy by contract,

at the lowest possible figures—and consequently the poorest class of goods—ready-made cases from one party, legs from another, key-boards from a third, actions from a fourth, and so on, and would then put these together, in a well-varnished and showy form, in his factory. Of course such instruments could not last. Within a year's use they would become the direst rattle-traps imaginable. Of course he could get up no trade on them, which would enable him to sell his wares openly with his name on them. Nobody wanted a Hale piano. Then he went into the so-called 'bogus pianoforte' business, making his patch-work instruments in large quantities, and putting on them any names that were ordered by dealers or agents, or that might seem advantageous. Those names were almost always close on the names of real and reputable makers and firms, and the practice was helped generally by putting them on in ornamental Old English lettering, which is liable to be easily misunderstood by persons not accustomed to it, and in which even the very elect are not to be scorned for confusing an *m* and a *w*, an *n* and a *u*, and so on. So on his makes of pianofortes, so called, there would be such names as 'Stemmay & Co.' or 'Steinmetz & Co.' for Steinway & Co.; 'Stack,' 'Stock,' or 'Strack,' for Steck; 'Baines Bros.' for Haines Bros.; 'Decker & Bro.,' or 'Decker & Co.' for Decker Bros.; 'Hazeltine' for Hazelton, and so on. In addition to these he turned out many instruments under a dozen names, such as 'Grand Union,' 'Mozart,' etc., which were rushed off at low prices on the unwary in the rural districts. His sales were made through irresponsible dealers in Texas, Iowa, Nebraska, and other far Western States, almost entirely. Built as they were, of the poorest materials, and in the most flimsy manner, of course within a year their absolute worthlessness was fully demonstrated. I have never been in his factory, and know nothing concerning it beyond what I have read in the papers; but one thing I have noted about it, and that was the position of the drying rooms. All the responsible manufacturers have their drying rooms outside the factory proper, and even then are so careful that they use steam heat; but this man seems to have used a red-hot stove, fed by shavings, in the midst of one of the stories of his factory, where it was but an arm's length from the most combustible materials. Surely any insurance company that have placed any insurance on that establishment are traitors to their trust." [The section on buildings is omitted here.]

*Sun* (Sept. 5, 1877): 1; reprinted in *MTRI* 4, no. 10 (Sept. 18, 1877): 164–65.

## APPENDIX 5

## HALE AND HIS PIANOS.

The Man Who Can Neither Be Blown, Burnt, nor Slandered into Obscurity—He Has Revolutionized the Piano Trade of the World, and Achieved a Mighty Success—How He Has Sounded the Death-Knell of Swindling Prices.

*Special Correspondence of The Tribune.*

**New York, Dec. 7**—If a man has a big brain and heart, and if he has learned to do or make something which everybody wants, he can no more be held down by adverse fortune than Niagara can be made to run up hill. This fact is clinched right home in noticing the remarkable way in which Joseph P. Hale, monarch of the piano business in America, triumphs over every assault of perverse fate.

To see in a single night his mammoth factory swept to fiery ruin would have discouraged almost any man. To have been immediately assailed by envious and jealous business competitors, eager to take advantage of, and by malicious revenge add to, his misfortune by their calumnies against his name and credit, would have completed the disheartenment of any ordinary mortal. But Mr. Hale, besides not being one of the sort of men to stay crushed, was too well assured of the stability of his reputation among music-lovers the world over, and he buckled at his work again as vigorously as ever.

The result is amazing,—or would be so, if it were any other man than the indomitable Hale. Within a few weeks' time he has put a large temporary factory in the briskest kind of running order, and is shipping his admirable instruments at the rate of some ten a day to his busy agents all over the country. Meanwhile, the men who make fancy-priced pianos tear their hair with rage, and wonder if a tornado or earthquake were to hit Hale good and square, it would bother him any. Instead of applying practical common-sense to the business as he has done for years, they still grope in the old tracks. They invest all they can beg or borrow in hiring concertizing musicians to play their pianos up and down the land. They build costly and useless halls to advertise themselves. They get up gorgeous exhibits at international fairs, and squander money freely to se-

cure worthless and fraudulent "medals," and "diplomas." Some of them are now scraping funds together, and have had their agents in the field abroad, for a grand charge on the judges at the Paris Exhibition next year. All of this vain outlay they seek to make up by demanding for each one of their pianos from two to three times the cost of manufacture. In the flush days preceding the panic, that sort of nonsense was swallowed. People then paid cheerfully 200 or 300 per cent extra for a pretentious name. They don't do it any more. It is the pianos they want now, not the name.

Joseph P. Hale at the very outset made his pianos of the best possible materials, and with every improvement known to the art. Then he sold them at a slight advance on cost, and destiny did the rest. It built up for him a magnificent reputation, and set his superb instruments into every nook and corner of the country. So, when destructive conflagration and sneaking calumny came, they could not retard him. He will, in a few months, occupy a rebuilt establishment in this city larger and more complete than before, with a capacity for producing fifty pianos a day.

So perfectly are Hale's pianos made that other manufacturers often buy up large numbers of them, mark their own names thereon, and send them out to their agents and the public to be sold at double the price he charges. The very pianos that are offered under some celebrated name, at a monstrous price, are often right from the Hale factories, and exactly the same as those which he sells at reasonable figures. Of course he checks this evil whenever he hears of a case, but if a cash order comes to him for a thousand pianos, he cannot always tell who is the real party behind it. Thus it happens that many so-called manufacturers get hold of his instruments, put their own high sounding names on them, and inform the world that these are the famous pianos for which they have received such stacks of "medals" and "honorable mentions," and which can consequently only be sold at a big price.

The most responsible agents in all large cities joined hands some years ago with Mr. Hale in this noble work of carrying the divine art of music into every home. Thousands of these pianos have found their way into every city[,] town, and village, and the call is still for more.

Mr. Hale is now, I find, perfecting new scales that will surpass in richness and volume all previous triumphs of the piano-making art, signal as they have been. There is no such word as "rest" in his dictionary. He is always doing something bigger and better than has ever been done before.



To make the finest pianos in the world, to sell them one-half to two-thirds lower than the other makers charge for their inferior concerns, and to have his sales amount to more than those of all other manufacturers combined, have been the unvarying determinations of his life. He has always done this, and, so long as he lives, always will.

MUSICIAN.

*Chicago Daily Tribune* (Dec. 11, 1877): 5; reprinted (with changes in punctuation and minor changes in spelling, capitalization, and a few words) *New York Times* (Dec. 13, 1877): 5.

## APPENDIX 6

## A Card from J. P. Hale

To the Editor of the *Sun*: Sir:

My piano factory in Thirty-fifth street was destroyed by fire in September last while I was in California. On my return I immediately commenced rebuilding an exact duplicate of the former structure on the same plans and specifications as furnished by the Building Department.

I have for a long time been most grossly misrepresented by certain parties in the piano trade, whose loss of business is by them attributed to the increase of mine, and also by certain trade journals at the instigation of and by the support of parties who are well known. But more particularly since the fire have I been made the target of every species of abuse and calumny. Nothing more unjust and libellous has ever been written against any one in the piano trade. The public are familiar with the daily controversies of rival makers concerning their awards, but to attack me, a private citizen, in the leading journals of the city; to take the trouble of having them extensively copied by the press in various sections where it was thought would damage my business, to assail my private character in the most outrageous manner, to gloat over my losses and misfortunes, to slander the reputation of my agents, to run down my goods, to charge me with gross negligence and violation of law, to threaten me with arrest, prosecution, and even with death, evidences on the part of my rivals and traduces a vindictiveness and malice such as is not generally excited by simple competition in trade. In spite of all this opposition my business has constantly increased, until it has unquestionably become the largest of its kind in America. Failing in every attempt to injure me by the course pursued, advantage was taken of my absence from the city in the busiest season of the year, when I was shipping 120 pianos a week, and had laid in very large supplies of stock and materials for fall trade, and my factory was set on fire! There can be no doubt on this point. I have thoroughly investigated the facts, and know whereof I speak. It was deliberately set on fire! I have offered a reward of \$5,000 for any information which may lead to the arrest and conviction of the parties concerned in this infamous act. A subscription was generously made for the relief of the sufferers by the fire, and several hundred dollars were raised; but, so

far as I know, not one of my workmen ever received or applied for a dollar of this fund. Columns have been written on the subject of bogus stencils and trade marks.

The laws of the United States are well understood on this subject. I am known to be a responsible man, and if any party had any cause for complaint, it is a little strange that up to the present hour no one has sought redress. The simple fact is that there is no truth in the statements made. On the contrary, my trade marks have been repeatedly pirated. On a recent trip South I found over sixty pianos bearing my trade mark. The manufacturers are known, and such as are solvent must shortly respond through the proper channels. There is not a reliable, responsible maker in the trade who will make his affidavit in support of the charges so freely made against me. Pianos are cheaper to-day than they have been since the war. It is said that I have revolutionized the trade and brought down the prices. It is true; and therein lies the main cause of all this hatred and persecution.

I manufacture pianos for the people, selling at a small margin and conducting business on a large scale. The materials used are of the best quality, and the instruments are strongly and substantially made. The reason why other makers cannot compete is that I have no palatial ware-rooms, no high salaried clerks, no expensive travellers, no retinue of professionals with their influence and commissions, and instead of seeking trade, the trade seeks me.

My agents, represented as the meanest knaves in the business, on the contrary are the wealthiest, most respectable, and influential dealers in the trade, and men who have steadily sold my pianos for the last fifteen years. I have quietly pursued my business regardless of the effect it has had on the trade; but since the fire, the efforts of my enemies have redoubled and become so marked that forbearance has ceased to be a virtue, and I now propose to give them, one and all, an opportunity before the proper tribunals to prove their statements or abide the consequences.

J. P. HALE.

NEW YORK, Dec. 17, 1877.

*Sun* (Dec. 27, 1877): 3; reprinted with the title "A Statement from J. P. Hale," *MTRI* 5, no. 5 (Jan. 3, 1878): 83.

## APPENDIX 7

## Joseph P. Hale's Statement

## TO THE PUBLIC:

As the Editor of the *MUSIC TRADE REVIEW* has tendered me the use of his columns to correct some of the many misstatements in regard to my connection with the so-called Bogus Piano business, I cheerfully accept his offer, as I may be able to reach a class of persons who have been sadly misinformed in regard to my methods of conducting business.

The term, "Bogus Piano," I do not understand, as it simply means an imitation of something real. Now, as I never made in my life an imitation piano, as distinguished from the best makers, the term "bogus" certainly cannot be applied to me. The materials of which my pianos are constructed are of the very same kind, and purchased mostly from the same vendors, as are sought by Chickering, Steinway, and other first-class makers. My rosewood, my veneers, my cases, my actions, my felt, my sounding-boards and strings, are of this class of material, and are equal in cost and value to the best pianofortes manufactured. I have never made anything but a full rosewood piano, as far as this term applies to a piano, and have never placed anything but solid rosewood mouldings and rosewood veneers upon any instrument of my make. If other manufacturers in the trade, who decry me as a bogus or imitation piano maker, have as clean a record as this, the public will not be injured by the sale of imitation pianos. The great secret of this whole attack upon me lies in the fact that long ago I made up my mind that the pianos manufactured in this city and elsewhere, and sold at enormous prices, could be made for much less money, and a fair profit at the same time derived from them. With this end in view, and satisfied with a small profit, I undertook to make a good low-priced piano, which would meet the wants of the community at large, and so increase the demand on pianos that the business could be extended without limit. I built my factories, hired my men, and commenced my work to accomplish this purpose. The result has far exceeded my most sanguine expectations, and I can confidently say that no manufacturer in this country can compete with me in the number of pianos made and sold from year to year. This action on my part, and the enormous sales which are the consequence of this action, of course has engendered a feeling of strife and bitterness, which

has culminated in the most violent attacks upon my business and upon me personally. These attacks have come mostly from makers who never did and never will make a good, substantial and serviceable piano. They buy and use a much poorer material than I do, and use soft wood for cases and mouldings, and stain them in imitation of rosewood. *Here, then, you find the bogus or imitation piano.*

These makers, not satisfied with committing these frauds upon the public, charge me with manufacturing and sending out this kind of instrument, with which they are flooding the country. These pianos are becoming so well known for their worthlessness that many of my dealers inform me that their own trade has been interfered with by these pianos, as the sellers of these worthless instruments, in order to get rid of them, represent them as the Hale piano. Many of the fictitious names, such as Steinmay & Sons, Stanney & Co., Steinmetz & Co., Becker Bros., etc., etc., are placed upon these pianos made by these unscrupulous persons, and all of them charged to my account.

I have a large number of trade-marks, which are placed on my pianos at the request of purchasers. These trade-marks are all well known, and purchasers order them to suit themselves. Some of my larger dealers have trade marks of their own, which I apply at their request, when pianos are ordered, and it is singular that the public will purchase such pianos, with various trade marks upon them, in preference to those which have the names of prominent and well-known manufacturers. The laws of the United States are well known in regard to trade marks, and any one who desires to do so can, under proper forms of law, apply for and receive permission to use them. I have secured several through the proper representations, and they have become my property, and no one else has any authority to use them. I am known to be a responsible man, and any person or persons having cause of complaint, they know where to find me and seek redress. When I state that up to this time no one has sought such redress, it is the best evidence in the case that the stories about my counterfeiting the names of other parties by a similarity of trade mark are wholly and entirely untrue. On the other hand, the value of my trade marks can be seen, when I state that in a recent trip South I found over sixty (60) pianos made by other persons with my trade marks upon them. As this is in violation of the law of trade marks, and as these parties are well known to me, some of them as are able to respond pecuniarily will be called upon very shortly to do so through the proper chan-

nels. There is not a responsible member of the trade who will make his affidavit to-day in support of these charges made against me by rival makers. That I have revolutionized the trade and brought down prices may be, and no doubt is, true; hence the hatred of me, and the lying statements about me. My agents who are represented by these libellers in the Trade as knaves are men of the most unblemished reputation and respectable standing—many of them strong financially. Most of them have sold my pianos for fifteen years, and in all that time have increased their trade enormously, and never in any instance have they found fault with my pianos for any reason whatever; and I have a large number of letters from their customers testifying as to their durability and excellence of tone. I claim, therefore, for the reasons here given, that my pianos are far better than most of the instruments before the public, as a large number of them are made from the poorest material, with unseasoned lumber, and that the plates break and cases give way under the changes of the atmosphere to which they are subjected. In the hands of my dealers, who sell such large numbers of my pianos, they contend that in comparison with the highest class makers, their sales are equal, and in many instances largely in advance of them, and that my pianos placed alongside of the high-priced instruments, compare equally well in every respect, and give entire satisfaction to purchasers who do not have the money to invest in a \$500 or \$1,000 piano. I can see from my correspondence daily, that the country at large is being convinced as to the pretensions of these worthless makers, and discriminate very carefully as to the character of such instruments, and I can also see that it will not be long before the field will be clear for the manufacturers of the high-priced pianos, and for my low-priced instruments, which give entire satisfaction and are sold for less than one half the sum which these pianos bring. I have the means to carry out this issue, and although many of my enemies supposed I was unable to rise from the calamity which overtook me last fall, in the burning of my factory, and rejoiced in my misfortune, still, I have a few dollars left, and in a very short time my factory will be completed and ready to turn out 150 pianos a week, and thus supply a demand which is unprecedented. For the years to come I intend to work with special reference to those who have maligned and slandered me, and if in the sale of my pianos the prices are such as to astonish them, they have only themselves to thank for this result. The question is asked from Maine to California, Who makes these worthless pianos? and the

facts are becoming known in every direction, where truth can follow falsehood, that *Joseph P. Hale is not the man; neither has he ever made an imitation or bogus piano.*

I append to this article a few of the large number of certificates from various sources, in regard to myself personally, as well as to the excellence and durability of the pianos made and sold by me for many years past.

(Signed)

JOSEPH P. HALE.

112 West Thirty-fourth St., N. Y., April 2, 1878.

*MTRI* 5, no. 11 (Apr. 3, 1878): 216-17.

## APPENDIX 8

## THE OPENING OF JOSEPH P. HALE'S NEW FACTORY

About three weeks ago Joseph P. Hale opened his new factory at 519 West 35th street, which he has erected on the site of his old one, and as he sent us a very courteous invitation to come up and look over it, we paid him a visit last week and went through it with him, carefully and critically. One cannot but admire Mr. Hale's pluck and perseverance. A few months ago his place lay one mass of smoking ruins; he was in ill health himself, a condition which was not improved by the fact that the REVIEW and the entire press, with scarcely an exception, were "going for him" systematically. To-day he has entirely rebuilt his factory, and has it occupied by a perfect army of workmen, who are turning out eighty pianos per week, will turn out one hundred next week, and one hundred and twenty per week by the end of the month. His new factory is situated on 35th street (Nos. 519 to 537, inclusive), west of Tenth avenue, and runs through to 36th street, having a frontage of 225 feet on the former and 75 feet on the latter thoroughfare. Kindly placing himself at our disposal, Mr. Hale conducted us himself through his factory, floor by floor, and permitted us ample opportunity to see for ourselves how it had been constructed. While we cannot overcome our prejudice against all enormous structures which rear their heads to heaven, we must in all candor confess that every possible effort has been made to make the building not only solid, but fireproof. No expense seems to have been spared to obtain the most thorough and perfect result, while for light, ventilation and comfort to the workmen there are few factories that can be compared to it. In the course of a pleasant conversation with Mr. Hale while we made the rounds with him, we learned that his business was in so prosperous a condition that were he able to make two hundred pianos per week, he could, without difficulty, dispose of them to responsible dealers in the trade. At the present moment, he told us, he was over seven hundred pianos behind orders. In his store-room we found four pianos, two square and two uprights, which Mr. Hale submitted as fair samples of his work. We examined them, as may be imagined, not only with a feeling of curiosity, but with the greatest care, and, to be honest, we must confess that while they, of course, lacked the finish to be found on the instruments of the high-priced makers, we were, on the one



hand, surprised at their tone, and, on the other, convinced that for the money they are sold at, they, to our personal experience, surpass the instruments of the medium-priced makers, one and all. We satisfied ourselves on the spot that Mr. Hale gives more for the money than any two of his competitors put together. This is our mature opinion, and has been arrived at in the face of an almost overwhelming load of prejudice.

In one thing we must pay Mr. Hale a compliment. His system of economy of manufacture is perfect, and he could give some of the best men in the trade a good lesson. He does not lose a dollar by waste of material or time. This fact alone gives him a tremendous advantage, and enables him to drive many a bargain, which, while seeming to be hard, yields him a handsome profit.

On the whole, we were pleased with our visit, gratified by the courtesy with which we were received, and convinced that, if there are some things about Mr. Hale's method of doing business which we can never endorse, on the other hand, we, as having been amongst the most determined of his enemies, must admit that there is a business capacity, a power and a breadth about the man himself which is very interesting and most impressive.

*MTRI* 6, no. 3 (June 8, 1878): 58.

## APPENDIX 9

## NOTED INTERVIEWS IN PIANO INDUSTRY

Presto Staff Writers Tell of Their Recollections of Personal Talks with  
Prominent Manufacturers of the Past and Present who Have Made  
History in the World of Music

HOW I MET THE ORIGINAL STENCILER, THE PROPHET OF PRODUCTION,  
AND HOW HE VIEWED HIS WORK

By C. A. D. of Presto Staff

But for the man Alfred Dolge described as a "Yankee who manufactured pianos as he would have manufactured bedsteads," and who made more pianos in his time than any other man until long after he had passed away, the American music trade papers might not today be what they are. And also but for him such a term as "stencil" might not have filled a very large space in the literature of the industry and trade.

For it was because Joseph P. Hale embarked in piano manufacture with no higher purpose than to commercialize the instrument that John Freund sailed into him and his products with such epithets as "bastard boxes," and others no less resplendent in their reverse refinement. And from that time until comparatively recent years, the trade papers have fallen back upon the term of "thump-boxes" whenever they felt the need of rebuking some manufacturer who sought to climb by disregarding the rights of reputable piano names.

## The Trade Paper Attack

The vituperation of the first critic of Joseph P. Hale colored what is fondly termed "music journalism" for a quarter-century after. Nevertheless the great Stenciler was a notable character and, in the light of cooler judgments, it is now conceded that his part in the industry was much more than that of a vandal.

Joseph P. Hale was the prophet of what we of today call "production." He was a large manufacturer. He thought in thousands at a time when it was considered remarkable to talk hundreds in the manufacture and sale of pianos. It is possible that, had he never broken into the game, and in doing it, broken up some of the highly respectable ideas which

had to do with art, and not largely with money in its quick Aladin-like realization, there would be fewer large piano industries today. We might even yet be talking about great “outputs” of one hundred a month!

It was in the early '80s that I decided it was time the piano world knew more about the man Hale, who heretofore had been pictured as a kind of creature of the hoof and horn persuasion. Consequently one winter night I ascended the steep flight of steps that led to the massive front door of an old-fashioned palatial residence at No. [1]12 Thirty-fourth Street, New York,

#### The Arch-Stenciler's Home

The house stood just about where the Herald Square Hotel is today. It was surrounded by small shops at the Broadway corner, and more residences to the east of it. I pulled the bell-knob and the noted stenciler himself responded. I handed him my card and was invited to enter. The room was a long double drawing-room, the front and back parlor having been thrown into one. Far to the front, in line with the inner entrance from the street, was a small door which later I found led to Mr. Hale's private office. The arrangement seemed peculiarly in keeping with the “commercialism” of the man.

The scene which presented itself was somewhat dazzling to a callow youth in search of matter for publication. There was a group of well dressed ladies in the rear section of the long room, and several gentlemen stood or sat around, some of them smoking. Mr. Hale drew attention to the array of pianos, which gave the place the appearance more of a wareroom than a private parlor.

#### A Valuable Trade Name

“I know what you want me to say,” was about what he remarked when I told him that I wanted an interview. “But” he continued, “if you read the music trade papers”—there were three of them existing at that time—“you know that I am on the defensive. Nevertheless, I am sure that the pianos I am making are a blessing to the people who can't afford the high-priced kind, and I am equally sure that I am producing instruments that will serve their buyers more than a life-time and are worth a great deal more than I am getting for them.” His words have since been acknowledged to have been true.

Mr. Hale was told that the viewpoint of my visit was different. It was that he had been charged with making imitation pianos—using famous

names on his products. This he denied, saying that if that was being done it was by dealers who erased the names put on in his factory, and substituted others to suit their own purposes. "My pianos bear names that I own," he said, "and one of these names is worth as much money as any other piano name on earth!"

### The Arion Piano

This was so interesting that he was asked to mention the valuable piano name. For in those days, as now, there were several piano names that were considered almost priceless. Besides the Steinway and Chickering, at that time Albert Weber was still alive, and filled to the brim with ambition. His name was still a large asset in the piano trade. So were the names of Knabe, and Decker, and Haines Bros., and Hazelton Bros., and Sohmer—and perhaps one or two others—of great value. They all represented then, as now, values which are only obtained by time and serious striving to excell.

Consequently, the name of Joseph Hale's piano, in which so large an asset abided, was an item of much interest. And here is what the original stenciler said:

"My Arion piano is as well known as any. I place a valuation of one million dollars upon it alone. I have had to defend my right to the exclusive use of the name, and I feel that I may have to continue to appeal to the courts in order to hold it."

Piano men of that time will recall the "Arion" piano. The name has since then been employed by other manufacturers, and it was later claimed by a large Chicago concern.

### Personal Characteristics

But what impressed me in the presence of the great stenciler was that he was sincere. He believed that he was doing a great good in the world. He didn't believe that the so-called "stenciling" was at all irregular. He did feel that the hand of the industry was against him, and he was aggressive, combative, and defiant. He charged most of his troubles to the activities of the trade papers. Later he became a fairly liberal supporter of the papers and at the time of his death he was still the most prolific producer of pianos in the world. More than that, the despised pianos from his factory had been used by many reputable concerns, and, in at least two cases, they shone forth in the warerooms of other manufacturers as the product of their factories.

Joseph P. Hale was a remarkable man in personal appearance, as well as in commercial daring. He was of great physique and the unusual, almost fascinating, strength of his large head was accentuated by his long and curly hair. His beard was full and brown, and his eyes sparkled as he talked. I recall that it was my parting impression that, far from being of the hoof and horn breed of humanity, he was an affable, attractive personality, even if palpably lacking in "book larnin' " and plainly vain of his success as a money-getter.

*Presto*, no. 1746 (Jan. 8, 1920): 11. The author of this article, C. A. Daniell, and Frank D. Abbott were editors of this Chicago music-trade journal when the article was published.