

NOTES TO CHART II

"In April, 1798, there was born in New Ipswich, N. H., a boy who was to exert a tremendous influence upon the manufacture of pianos in this country and in Europe. Jonas Chickering received the good common-school training of the town. His father, a farmer, who was also the village blacksmith, apprenticed him in his seventeenth year to John Gould, the cabinet-maker of New Ipswich. The boy pursued his work faithfully, having few recreations except the occasional chances at song which came through singing school or divine service.

"New Ipswich was not especially musical, but it possessed one instrumental rarity, a piano! This single piano was a London-made affair, by Christopher Ganer, and had been used by royalty abroad. It was the piano of the Princess Amelia, daughter of George III. Not a new instrument when it was first imported, the piano soon got out of order. There was consternation at this, since even Boston had at that time no regular workman in this branch of repairing. The musical cabinet-maker was called in as the only resort, and offered to attempt to restore the instrument. The task was accomplished successfully, and the youth returned to his cabinet-work longing for more pianos to exercise his powers upon.

"At the age of twenty the young man came to Boston with a light heart and an almost empty pocketbook. Some historians give the age of Chickering, at his advent in Boston, as twenty-three, but he must have been much younger than that, for he was admitted to the Handel and Haydn Society on October 4th, 1818, when he was but twenty years old. It is pleasant to think of the young musical enthusiast immediately seeking congenial surroundings. He joined the choir of Park Street Church and was a valued member of that organization for a long time. He immediately sought for employment in piano-making.

"In the town of Boston, when the young Chickering arrived there, only one piano-maker existed—Mr. John Osborne. With him the young man at once took service. This was in 1819. Within the next five years Jonas Chickering had mastered every detail of the work and had made many improvements of his own. He associated himself with James Stewart, a Scotchman, who, however, soon returned to Europe. In 1823, Chickering began business upon his own account. By 1830 he had advanced far beyond his competitors. He was practically the pioneer in the business, for the few sporadic attempts at piano-building which had preceded him came to naught. Jonas Chickering began his experiments in 1822, and in 1823 his first instrument was offered for sale. From that on there was constant advance.

"Jonas Chickering soon associated with himself a sailor, master of a fine sea-going vessel, Captain John Mackay. There was much advantage in this partnership, for Captain Mackay made frequent voyages to South American ports in the interest of the firm. He generally sailed with his hold full of very sweet-toned, six-octave pianos, which he sold in the different ports, after which he would return laden with rosewood and mahogany, which was again used in the factory, so that the trips paid the firm on