

# “Furnished With Two Concert Grands ...”

by Lynne Belluscio

A couple of months ago, I received an e-mail from some folks in Buffalo who were moving to Boston. They had a square Steinway grand piano that they had bought at an auction on Lake Street in LeRoy about 30 years ago and they weren't moving it to Boston. They wanted to donate the piano to the Historical Society. Well, we already have a grand piano - a 9 foot Steinway that was used at Ingham University, so I wasn't interested at first. However it seems that the square Steinway also has an Ingham connection ... and it can be played! (The piano in the back parlor hasn't been restored and we don't have the funds to do the work.) So to make a long story a little shorter, we now have two Steinway pianos in the back parlor.

Last Wednesday, Caccamise Moving Company from Honeoye Falls, (yes, Tony Caccamise is originally from LeRoy) moved the 1,400 lb. square piano from Buffalo to LeRoy. The story that came with the square Steinway was that it was made in 1865 and was given to Ingham in return for a student's tuition. So far we haven't been able to discover any information about that, however, there is a label inside for the Henry S. Mackie Piano Company in Rochester.

Today I called the Steinway archives in New York and gave them the serial number 14215.

They told me that it was made in 1867 and confirmed that it was delivered to the Mackie Company in Rochester. So far I cannot find any connection between Mackie and Ingham. The Music Department at Ingham noted in the 1879 catalogue, that “A large hall, furnished with two Concert Grands of the best quality, is available for vocal and instrumental practice ...” It also cost \$10.00 per term to practice 1½ hours per day on the Grand piano. However, it doesn't mention if the pianos were Steinways.

The nine foot Steinway Grand piano that has been in LeRoy House since the 1950s has a number of 42902 and my contact in New York verified that construction began on February 15, 1881 and the piano was delivered to Ingham December 9, 1882. It is the largest model piano manufactured by Steinway. It is probably the piano that is mentioned in the minutes of the



Ingham trustees on October 10th, 1882: “D.R. Bacon moved that seven old pianos be exchanged for a new one according to the offer of Misses Gibson & Stone of Rochester, N.Y.” There are Ingham alumnae by the name of Gibson and Stone, but I can't make a good connection -- yet.

Midst all of the excitement about the new Steinway, Denise Duthé, who works in the Jell-O Gallery, has helped locate a Steinway authority in Canandaigua. He's going to stop by sometime soon to take a look at the “new” square Steinway and the “old” Steinway D. He will be able to tell us what we need to do to put them back in playable order. And Denise has tried the square piano and has declared that the middle section has good action, but the upper and lower ranges will need “some work.”

The Steinway Company was founded in New York City in 1853 by Heinrich Engelhard Steinweg, a German immigrant. Two years later they won a gold medal at the 1855 American Institute Fair in New York's Crystal

Palace. In the 1870s Steinway established a professional community in what is now the Astoria section of Queens in New York City. The company town was known as Steinway Village and had its own foundries, post office, parks and housing for employees. Steinway Village later became part of Long Island City.

In the 1800s, the square piano was very popular, but when it went out of favor, many were scrapped and the beautiful wood burned. (Both of our pianos are constructed of beautiful rosewood.) In fact, in our archives, we have a huge wooden square piano case -- its guts long removed -- which serves as a table. At one time we believed that the piano had belonged to the LeRoy family, but we cannot prove it. Throughout the world there are universities and schools that are known as “Steinway Schools”, which only use Steinway pianos. Oberlin in Ohio became a Steinway School in 1877. Perhaps that was an Ingham aspiration also.

