

KOHLER & CAMPBELL

Founded in 1896 as a partnership between Charles Kohler and J. C. Campbell, in less than 20 years Kohler and Campbell became the world's leading manufacturer of upright and grand pianos, player pianos and automatic reproducing actions. The first factory was in a small loft building on 14th Street in New York City but after the company was established only a few years the business expanded to such a degree that it moved to much larger quarters, occupying an entire building built for it at 50th Street and Eleventh Avenue and continued to expand into adjoining and nearby buildings until it occupied over one million feet of floor space. Under the direction of Charles Kohler, who became the entire owner upon Mr. Campbell's death in 1904, Kohler & Campbell popularized the player piano in America, manufacturing player actions for other piano makers in its subsidiaries and making available to the public for the first time the music of the world's leading artists through the Welte-Mignon reproducing action.

The position of Kohler & Campbell in the piano industry is well illustrated by the distinguished piano companies either founded or acquired by it during its 65 years of operation. Among those companies are Hazelton Brothers, Francis Bacon Piano Company, Behning Piano Company, Milton Piano Company, Behr Brothers, Brambach Piano

Company, Davenport and Treacy Company, Kroeger Piano Company, McPhail, Stultz and Bauer, Astor Piano Company, Newton Piano Company, Waldorf Piano Company and Ejur Brothers. Nearly every major piano manufacturer purchased player actions from the Auto Pneumatic Action Company and The Standard Pneumatic Action Company, manufacturing subsidiaries of Kohler & Campbell during the days of the player piano. Their combined production exceeded 50,000 player actions per year.

Although through the acquisition of the Francis Bacon Piano Company, Kohler & Campbell traces its heritage back to 1789, the date of the founding of the first piano company in America by John Jacob Astor, progressive leadership and modern production techniques have always been outstanding attributes of the company. Julius A. White, originally joined the company in 1921 and became president in 1930. Under his direction, the former loosely-knit organization was consolidated administratively and the manufacturing facilities were all brought under one roof. Following World War II, he moved the factories from their 50th Street location to the Bronx and a larger, more modern building. Again in 1954, seeing that the manufacture of durable goods in a multi-story urban plant was no longer economically practical, he engineered the move of the entire manufacturing facility from New York to Granite Falls, North Carolina. The site was carefully picked for its skilled woodworkers and its proximity to the heart of the Appalachian hardwood lumber producing area.

In 1956, the presidency of the company passed on to a third generation

when Charles Kohler White, grandson of the founder, assumed the position. Charles Kohler White met his accidental death in 1957 after which Charles L. Clayton was elected president. The other officers were: Rita Kohler White, daughter of the founder, secretary, Robert H. Meuser, treasurer and Gaylord M. Huffstader, sales manager. The company was represented by W. O. Patrick Care; Paul Corbett, Louis J. Nienaber, Bert C Bruce, Sr., Hyrum B. Summerhays, and E. G. Burghardt .Kobler & Campbell offered a complete line of spinet and console pianos. The spinet was offered in five models and ten wood and finish combinations. The console was available in six different models and eight different finishes. The 45" Studio designed principally for use in studios, auditoriums or school rooms and it is of extra-rugged construction in three finishes.

Kohler & Campbell was one of the largest piano companies in America at one time, producing as many as sixty different names at a time, many of which were stencils (private labels) during and after the great depression. Kohler & Campbell purchased many piano factories throughout the United States. Kohler & Campbell pianos were well built and make excellent entry level pianos in good condition. Many of their pianos were handcrafted in many respects. In later years as a result of being manufactured in the heartland of the American furniture industry where raw material's availability and craftsmanship were passed on from generation to generation.

See also: Astor, Brambach, Davenport, Milton, Behning, J.C. Campbell, Hazleton, Stratford, Behr Brothers, Celeste, Charles Kohler, Tom

Thumb, Francis Bacon, Francis , Classic, Kroger, and Waldorf.