

# ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

## A Guide to the Boardman & Gray's Piano Manufactory Collection

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### Summary Information

**Repository**

Albany Institute of History & Art Library

**Creator**

Gray Family

**Title**

Boardman & Gray's Piano Manufactory Collection

**Identifier**

MG 203

**Date**

1848-2007

**Physical Description**

3 boxes

**Physical Location**

The materials are located onsite in the Museum.

**Language of the Material**

English

**Abstract**

James A. Gray founded the Boardman & Gray Piano Manufacturing company of Albany, New York in 1837, with the business expertise and financial support of his business partner, William G. Boardman. The company patented their own design for the Dolce Campana attachment for the Piano Forte, and enjoyed great renown, including designing a model for singer Jenny Lind.

This collection includes books, community newsletters, correspondence, newspaper clippings, photographs, sheet music, and song books.

## **Preferred Citation**

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Boardman and Gray's Piano Manufactory Collection, 1848-2007, MG 203. Albany Institute of History & Art Library, Albany, New York.

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## **Conditions Governing Access and Use**

### **Restrictions on Access**

None

### **Copyright**

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## **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Accession: # LIB.2006.199

Accession Source/Date: Gift of Edward and Patricia Trudeau, family of Margaret Gray Trudeau, April 2007

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## **Processing Information**

Processed by R. Luedtke, July 2010; finding aid updated by H. Cox, June 2021.

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## **Biographical/Historical**

James A. Gray founded the Boardman & Gray Piano Manufacturing company of Albany, New York, in 1837. His business partner, William G. Boardman, provided the business expertise and financial support. The original site of the factory was at Elm Tree Corner (North Pearl and State Streets), whereas the most well-known and largest factory was at 239 North Pearl Street.

The Boardman & Gray Piano Manufacturing company patented their own design for the Dolce Campana attachment for the Piano Forte, which produced sounds like “sweet bells” (around 1847). The Dolce Campana attachment was patented in 1849. They were also one of the only companies to use a steel frame design for their piano construction. The company was well known, with pianos of their craftsmanship going all the way to London, England. The invention received the first premium at the great State Fair at Buffalo, September 1848; the gold medal at the State Fair of Syracuse in 1849; first premium at New York 1849; and the same at Maryland. The Company received the highest award and medal at the World’s Columbian Exposition held at Chicago in 1893.

The famous Swedish singer, Jenny Lind (Johanna Maria Lind) was very fond of the Boardman & Gray Pianos. The company made a model after her, known as the Jenny Lind Piano Forte. The Jenny Lind Piano Forte was made exclusively for her personal use while she was touring in the United States. They also made a piano exclusively for the Irish born Opera Diva, Catherine Hayes, (known as the “Swan of Erin”). The company received personal letters of praise from both Jenny Lind and Catherine Hayes. The pianos of Boardman & Gray as well as the Dolce Campana attachment were widely praised by composers, pianists, singers, and music teachers.

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## Scope and Contents

The majority of records within are newspaper clippings, photographs, song books, sheet music, community newsletters, books, letters from customers and proprietors. There is also one scrapbook which contains newspaper clippings, letters from customers and proprietors, as well as letters from famous singers and composers.

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## Contents List

The following section contains a listing of the materials in the collection.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Godey’s Lady’s Book: Extracts from the Numbers of January and February on Piano Forte Making (Boardman & Gray); Golden Opinions of the Boardman & Gray Pianos (booklet); Testimonial Book: Boardman & Gray Pianos; Boardman & Gray Pianos Catalog (grey); Boardman & Gray Pianos Catalog (brown)	1	1
One letter and four telegrams of satisfied customers in reference to Boardman & Gray Pianos		2
Trade Mark Certificate for Boardman & Gray Pianos, November 23, 1909		3

Book: Loudonville Traveling the Loudon Plank Road – Featuring Friendship House owned by Gray family, 1997	4
Winter 2004 Edition of The Greater Loudonville Association newsletter featuring article on Boardman & Gray Pianos;	5
Clipping with a photograph of James A. Gray Square Piano No. 9012;	
Copy of newspaper clipping advertisement of Boardman & Gray Pianos;	
Photocopy of History of the County of Albany: Piano Manufacturing featuring James A. Gray;	
Photocopy of newspaper clipping of photograph of Boardman & Gray factory and music warehouse;	
Photocopy of June 2003 Piano Technicians Journal publication: A Tour Through a Pre -Civil War Piano Factory: featuring Boardman & Gray;	
Photocopy of photography of a Boardman & Gray Piano;	
Newspaper clipping: State St. at Pearl, 100 Years Ago 1841, Piano Makers Brought Albany Fame	
Albany Pioneer Certificate awarded to Boardman & Gray, February 10th, 1941;	6
Certificate of outstanding contribution to the advancement of good music, certified as a selected dealer for The Capehart the Panamuse	
Drawing Book of Butterflies compliments of Boardman & Gray Piano Manufacturers;	7
Four Christmas Carol Books compliments of Boardman & Gray Piano Manufacturers;	
Dolce Campana (Sweet Bells) Waltz, sheet music composed for the Piano Forte with especial reference to the Dolce Campana Attachment (1848)	
Photograph, Exhibit of Boardman & Gray Pianos, Chicago, Ill USA 1893 Two Photographs, Mrs. Quackenbush at the State St. Store of Boardman & Gray Pianos;	8
Photograph, Boardman & Gray Albany Factory 2 Scrapbook	2
Newspaper: Albany Times Union, August 6, 1950, article about Boardman & Gray Pianos (Oversize);	3
Newspaper: The Knickerbocker Press, March 2, 1930, For Sixty - Five Years John Ramroth Has Made Pianos in Albany Factory. (Oversize);	
Newspaper: Albany Evening Journal, Feb 7, 1910 with advertisement of Boardman & Gray Pianos (Oversize)	