



AMICA International

Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association

Honor Roll

Elmer F. Brooks

From THE AMICA October 1969

BROOKS, ELMER, JR., Commercial st.; E. Rochester, N.Y., 14445
(VICE PRESIDENT, AEOLIAN AMERICAN CORPORATION)

Any collector who has written to Aeolian American for information regarding the shipping dates, etc., of Ampico and Duo-Art pianos will be pleased to see Mr. Brooks added to our list of Honorary. Mr. Brooks is very personable, is interested in reproducers (he has an Ampico in the shop, and his mother still has her original Duo-Art), and has been accommodating to collectors above & beyond the call of contemporary commercial duty.

AEOLIAN AMERICAN CORPORATION
MAKERS OF FINE PIANOS
EAST ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
14445

September 24, 1965

Mr. Will Wild and Mr. Valerie Anderson
AMICA
P.O. Box 172
Columbia, South Carolina 29302

Dear Folks:

Through the years I've enjoyed my honorary membership in AMICA and the monthly news bulletins that have been received here at Aeolian American Corporation in East Rochester.

As you may have heard, Aeolian Piano, Inc. of which we were a part was closed down completely at the end of the week day on Thursday, April 4, when Citicorp Industrial Credit, who originally funded the purchase of the company, now fit to seize its assets. Since that time we've had but a small skeleton staff to maintain security and be sure that nothing was produced, received or shipped.

The Chickering & Sons trademark, with all finished goods from Rochester and everything at the Memphis facility, to include the Mason & Haskett operating in Newark and all accounts receivable, was purchased by the Maritz Company, who have announced they will continue to manufacture Chickering & Sons pianos after the fashion type of pianos produced at the Memphis facility.

The balance of what had been Aeolian American at East Rochester has been acquired by Frost-Head & Company of Ivoryton, Connecticut, and for the last couple of weeks all materials, to include finished goods, have been in the process of being transferred from East Rochester to Ivoryton, Connecticut. This process will continue until the transfer is complete, after which the Marine Midland Bank of Rochester, who own title to all of the piano making equipment, machines, templates and other items, will divest themselves and liquidate through an auction yet to be scheduled.

While the disposition of the old Chickering, Mason & Haskett and Froese shipping equipment has yet to be decided upon, it is presumed Maritz will eventually get the shipping registers, with Frost-Head having those pertaining to both the Mason & Haskett and Froese lines.

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Obviously, I shall not be at this address and would appreciate your transferring the news bulletin and any other correspondence to my home at -

2859 Lake Road
Milliamer, New York 14589
Phone: (315) 509-8494

Since it is questionable as to how much benefit I might be to the piano industry in the future, I should be quite agreeable to continuing my membership in AMICA as an active dues paying member.

Beyond this, as soon as I have a little time, I plan to run an ad with the hopes of finding a new home for what is an exquisitely made Player piano desk which I've owned these many years.

I shall look forward to receiving your future bulletins at home. Thanks, and -

Sincerely yours,

E. F. Brooks, Jr.

EFB:BA

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The AMICA, October 1970:

AEOLIAN -AMERICAN MERGER BACKGROUND

Elmer Brooks

Subsequent to our earlier correspondence I wanted the opportunity to talk. to our former President, Bob Hill, to insofar as possible clear up the question of whether a fire at one of the Aeolian factories could have contributed in any way to the conditions leading up to the affiliation between the Aeolian Company and the American Piano Company.

I was born in Meriden, Connecticut in 1918, where my Dad, Elmer Brooks, Sr., was Superintendent of the Aeolian Company factory located on Tremont Street in that city. With the deterioration of business in the late 20's it was apparently decided to close the Aeolian plant in Meriden, at which time the Elmer Brooks' family relocated to Garwood, New Jersey where Dad was Superintendent, or I guess you would now call it General Manager ,of the Aeolian Company plant there which was termed the Votey Organ Company. I know that the Meriden plant never burned,and we were all in New Jersey in September, 1932 on the effective date that the Aeolian Company merged with the American Piano Company. There was no fire there, nor can I recall ever having heard a reference to any fire the Aeolian Company ever experienced in any of its at that (*illegible word*) time. I don't even recall that there was Aeolian factory in New York City in 1932.

The first President of the newly formed Aeolian Corporation was William Alfring, the former President of Aeolian,and the Vice President was Gardner Kavanaugh, the former President of the American Piano Company.

I only wish we had something on the background and introduction of the Duo-Art, but I don't.

A number of years ago I tried to do a little checking into the background of the Aeolian Company and while I unfortunately did not keep a Bibliography, I 'm reasonably certain that what is listed below is accurate.

“The beginnings of the Aeolian Company in the United States were initiated by William B. Tremaine, whose interests lay along the line of mechanically motivated musical instruments. After having perfected and marketed many thousands of the mechanical Orguinettes, and later the Celestina, an improved model, Tremaine bought out the English Aeolian Company in 1887. He soon realized that the “perforated note sheet “ originally patented in ‘England in 1846 would be useful and essential in the development of mechanically operated musical instruments and coincidental with the establishment of Aeolian he bought out the interests of the Automatic Paper Company of Boston. The "Trumpetto", a mouth-blown reed horn using a music roll to select the notes, was the forerunner of the "Organette", a hand cranked (*illegible word*) model organ -which, in turn, gave way to the Toot-blown mechanically operated organ. The adaptation of the mechanically operated, roll controlled, -piano playing device was perfected by E. S. Voty and was called the “Pianoa." This was a separate player mechanism in the piano itself, the refining of the ability of the mechanism took place and the ultimate perfecting of the Duo-Art Reproducer resulted. The Duo-Art was incorporated in pianos made by George Steck, Weber, Stroud, Wheelock and many others. It is interesting to note that Steinway & Sons sent many

thousands of their pianos to Aeolian for the installation of the Duo-Art. Steinway, however, continued to control the marketing of their own pianos. With plants in many parts of the states outside of New York City in such places as Boston, Meriden, Connecticut and Garwood, New Jersey, there were also plants in Germany, France and England as well. Company owned retail stores existed in such far-off places as London, Paris, Madrid, Sidney, Br̃sbane and Adelaide,

Australia. F. H. B. Tremaine succeeded his father as head of the corporation in 1907 and in

1932 with control having passed to William Alfring, then President of Aeolian, this firm merged with the American Piano Corporation. Be sure that I'll keep asking questions and when and if I do get some answers I'll be only too happy to send them along to you.

(signed) E. F. Brooks Jr., President, Aeolian American Corporation