

Trade Glances and Observations

Lucien Wulsin, president of the Baldwin Piano Co., Cincinnati, was in Chicago on April 15 en route home from a trip which extended to the Rocky Mountain States and California.

Mr. Wulsin visited the Baldwin Divisions in San Francisco, Dallas and Denver, and at all of them he found business in pianos so much improved that it filled him with enthusiasm.

The condition which Mr. Wulsin ran across in the West and Southwest is extending to other parts of the nation as seasonal work is putting money in circulation and as the speculative markets in the big money centers are beginning to resume a stride nearer normal. In other words, the U. S. A. is a great nation in its wants, and when it wants anything, be it pianos or peanuts, it buys them and makes the best possible use of them.

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Radio has been having its own difficulties to keep its head above the water in these times of speculative smashups and general uncertainty. Quite a number of radio manufacturers have discontinued their operations, but the two big ones that went to the wall in Fort Wayne—the Steinite and the Continental—made the rest of the radio men gasp and sit up and take notice. Both these concerns had put up great modern factories and the sailing seemed very smooth for several months.

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For something like twenty miles around about South Bend, Ind., the big Templin Piano Co. signs attract the attention of the motorist and other passers-by, which sign still read: "Mason & Hamlin, Knabe, Chickering Pianos." The thought comes to mind, Will this sign and this line of pianos be in evidence a year hence or will any change be necessary?

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Two decades of continuity in well-doing, and that faithful piano dealers renew their youth "like the eagles," are the memories enlivened as the visitor in South Bend, Ind., reads in the daily papers of that city the notice of Elbel Bros., piano dealers, that they are now occupying their new store. For in The Presto of April 14, 1910, appeared an item concerning the same house, saying "We are just about to remodel our store."

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That 25 per cent of the American people incur monthly obligations in excess of their incomes is an estimate made by Dr. C. W. Phelps, of the University of Chattanooga, Tenn. But the good professor will have to get new statistics to prove that easy-payment buying is an unmitigated evil. Without the installment plan, the average American home would never have had a piano, a sewing machine or any of the modern improvements that have put the average American modes of living far and away beyond anything that any other land under the sun can show. The miser cheats himself.

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W. B. Price, formerly president of the late Price & Teeple Piano Co., is now in a line entirely outside of the piano industry. He is associated with Otis & Co., a large investment and brokerage house of Chicago, Cleveland, New York and other cities. His office is at 105 West Adams street, Chicago.

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R. B. Oslund, known by many who have had dealings with him as "Hustling Oslund," proprietor of the Oslund Piano House, Spokane, Wash., has the sagacity to get trade all the time, for when one line gets slow he hitches onto another angle of the music business and "keeps on by keeping on." When the piano trade slackened up some months ago, he went in strong for radio and ordered as high as 100 sets a day for awhile. Now that the piano business is coming back, he is going in for pianos with his old-time vigor. Not at all like a weather-vane are these changes, for there is nothing fickle or inconstant in this wide-awake music dealer's make-up, nor is he an unreliable opportunist. He is simply a mercantile-minded business man who takes time by the forelock and by taking advantage of circumstances as they arise in front of him, paves new highways of success. The trade in things musical needs many more men of this type.

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As one motors about the country and sees, here and there, automobiles parked outside of this and that factory, a mass of cars at some great electric establishment, many cars at an automobile plant and a goodly number at some of the radio factories he instinctively sizes up the activities going on within. Thus, when a Presto-Times correspondent drove up to the Schumann piano factory, at Rockford, Ill., a few days ago and encountered quite a little congestion of cars in the parking place around that factory it appeared to him that there must be activity within.

What he saw within the walls of the factory and in

the office gave proof of at least normal conditions. No great rush but "active activity." President Van Matre said that particularly the new line of grands were in excellent demand. The Schumann Piano Company is fortunate in having many faithful, stick-to-it representatives; dealers who have built up a good trade and many of them made snug fortunes in selling the Schumann piano; real dealers in the true sense and who continue their activities with success.

Mr. Van Matre admits that he would like more business, yet, without bragging, he knows that the Schumann trade is keeping his house right in the front row in the country today. He said: "Remember our motto is, 'One piano and that the best that can be made.'"

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The final meeting of the creditors of the defunct H. C. Bay Piano Co. was held in the office of Harry A. Parkin, referee in bankruptcy, 137 South La Salle street, Chicago, on April 25.

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W. C. Heaton, one-time prominent piano man, now well along in radio, while reluctantly admitting that he is out of the piano game, salutes his former associates with the salutation: "But don't forget that I am still in the music business."

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The manner in which some piano manufacturing corporations are tackling radio manufacturing suggests courage of a kind that some of their contemporaries speak of as "nerve." In view of conditions in marketing radio and the boiling pepper-pots of Wall Street, not to speak of the wars among the Orientals nor the extravagant spending of cash by the young at home, it is nerve. Radio seems to be an uncertainty save for those big concerns that go in for it backed by big capital and by men whose whole lives and energies are thrown into the radio hopper. The great National Carbon Co.'s side-line of making the Eveready radio was discontinued, not because it had to but because it had gigantic manufacturing interests in other directions upon which it wanted to concentrate its energies. It was an instance of voluntary withdrawal. Several of the piano makers who began manufacturing radios some time ago are meeting with at least fair success. Gulbransen Co., Bush & Lane, and Jesse French & Sons for instances. But piano firms that would engage in that line of manufacture now must be prepared to compete with such giants as the Atwater Kent, the RCA, the Majestic, the Crosley, the Zenith, Thomas A. Edison, and where are they going to "fetch up at" with such powerful and experienced and very successful rivals?

Piano manufacturers entering radio making would naturally look for their best customers among the long-established piano retailers while catering to some of the rift-raffy clientele. Music dealers are the ones who know the musical needs and prospect lists of the communities. No new radio manufacturer can pick up a business by appointing cobblers, garage men, druggists, grocers or recent high school graduates as his agents—and these are just samples of the classes to whom he would be obliged to look if he turned down the able, well-known and reliable piano salesmen and piano dealers.

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Reverting again to a comparison of putting capital into musical enterprises, it is conceded by people of experience in the trade that an investment in piano manufacturing is rather more favorable for ultimate success and profit than a like investment in radio manufacturing. And even with some of the so-called nickel-in-the-slot combinations—electro-phono-radio machines, the supporting principle of construction and usefulness is liable to change in a season or a month, and leave the warehouses stocked with an unsalable article.

Such changes never befall the piano. Look at the assignments and bankruptcies in the radio manufacturing field. A dozen radio failures in as many months. The failures in piano manufacturing, which has four or five times as many units as radio, do not foot up to this list, in fact hardly approach it. Notable among the bigger radio failures two idle factories stand in one Indiana city as mute evidences of wrecked hopes. These are modern-built plants which opened only a short time ago, supplied with all kinds of modern equipment, manned by skilled operators who had set a lively manufacturing pace—buildings now ghosts of a brief and brilliant occupancy.

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In the J. M. S. building, South Bend, Ind., a call was made by a Presto-Times representative a few days ago on I. F. Dolk, who is with the advertising agency of Lamport, Fox & Co. Mr. Dolk represents the Pan-American band of Elkhart, Ind., and the Straube Piano Co., of Hammond, Ind. He says the trade is expecting quite a goodly pick-up as the summer comes on.

ADAM SCHNEIDER HONORED BY TESTIMONIAL DINNER

One of the Most Likable Men in the Chicago Trade Is Made the Guest of Distinction at Gala Night in Medinah Athletic Club, Chicago.

The testimonial dinner tendered to Adam Schneider at Medinah Athletic Club, Chicago, on the night of May 19, was a voluntary expression of appreciation for the man as well as for his work. The attendance was large and represented every organization in the music industry—the Chicago Piano & Organ Association, the Piano Club of Chicago, the Chicago Piano Manufacturers' Association, the National Piano & Music Travelers' Association and the National Piano Manufacturers' Association being a few of the organizations having representatives in attendance.

Mr. Schneider has been treasurer for almost every association in the piano business, local and national, and at present he does yeoman work as executive secretary of the Chicago Piano & Organ Association. He has friends by the thousands and not an enemy in the world, and his record abounds in achievements for the betterment of the piano trade. He has even done more than ever before for the interests of piano men in general since he resigned from the trusteeship of Julius Bauer & Co. some two years ago.

Instead of going on a long, idling vacation, as many another man who had retired from active business would have done, Mr. Schneider is working harder than ever—devoting his time and talents to Chicago's better life and institutions. In this great work he is not grouped with a knot of systematic artists but broadly, with vigor of mind and the irresistible persistence and perseverance that is Schneider-esque.

He is credited with some very remarkable results in getting pianos into the public and parochial schools of Chicago, and his interest in piano class teaching leads him on to do more to promote the plan. He has helped Dr. J. Lewis Browne, director of music in the public schools of Chicago, and Supt. Bogan to kindle the imagination of the children and inspire them for useful exertion at their piano lessons.

In this work Mr. Schneider realizes that stubborn resistance to any worthy improvement does not break down until it is no longer possible to deny what the world has accepted. He is broadminded enough to realize that the piano gives a culture that modifies the organism of cities, of states and of nations. So he is helping to introduce practices which encourage and foster a valuable variety of education; habits and tastes which contribute to form real character—to build a citizenry that despises the sot and the bandit, the bootlegger and blah-blah music; that has some veneration for parents and home and that realizes that mere smartness is the antithesis of true culture.

The party was a "stag." The dinner was gay and after the official program the dining room was cleared for those who wished to play cards. J. V. Sill, president of the Chicago Piano and Organ Association, said of Mr. Schneider: "We are all so much indebted to him for his great contribution toward the welfare of the Chicago trade during the past year, not to mention the previous years he has served so well. Many a good sale on the 'street' during the past year can be traced to Mr. Schneider's efforts. He has given generously to us and we are glad to honor him."

Several of the leaders in the trade attended as well as Dr. William J. Bogan, superintendent of schools, Chicago and Dr. J. Lewis Browne, director of music, Chicago public schools.

The Dinner and Presentation

Presto-Times not being able to get to press until the morning after the dinner, now tells what happened there.

The dinner was attended by a representative group of about 85 of the members of the trade and other friends of Mr. Schneider. Letters and telegrams of regret came from absent ones, including Albert Behning, Frank Edgar, C. E. Byrne, Mark P. Campbell, James T. Bristol, George P. Bent and Harry Bibb. Mr. Bibb wired three cheers for Mr. Schneider. E. B. Bartlett was toastmaster. He said that he and Mr. Schneider were born only a few miles apart. He introduced two of Mr. Schneider's sons and some one in the audience said, "The Schneiders have it."

Supt. William J. Bogan of the Chicago public schools characterized Mr. Schneider as a go-getter, who had led in the fight for piano instruction, and 12,000 children were now taking piano lessons in Chicago's schools. "I long for the day when music will take its place as a regular study in the schools," he said.

Dr. J. Lewis Browne, director of music in the Chicago public schools, said: "I don't know what I could have done without Adam Schneider." He had put 189 pianos in the public and parochial schools.