

# Donation of the Month

## W.H. Jewett Piano



1975.376.1  
Donor: Mrs. Grier Warren

In the early 1880s, Rogers was well on its way to becoming a bustling city in the growing Northwest Arkansas region. As new families moved into the area, they brought household treasures with them for their new homes. This piano is a wonderful example of such a family treasure that traveled to Rogers.

The piano belonged to Mr. and Mrs. W.P. Peach, who moved from Lebanon, Illinois to Rogers in 1882. Four of the Peach daughters played this piano and it remained in the Peach family home for many years. The piano is a square grand, made by W.H. Jewett & Co. of Boston, Massachusetts, probably in the late 1870s.

By the late nineteenth century, the piano had become a sought after piece of household furniture. Having a piano in the home meant family respectability as well as a certain financial prosperity. Pianos were a means of entertaining guests in the formal parlor; they provided an opportunity for daughters, like the Peach sisters, to showcase musical accomplishment for guests, including potential suitors. The piano was a prominent center of group activity and groups around the piano have become particularly well-known images of Victorian life.

As the interest in pianos and the demand for them increased, manufacturers produced more and more

instruments, thanks to factory assembly lines using advanced industrial technology. Boston boasted several prominent piano manufacturers at this time. The Jewett piano manufacturing company was established around 1860 in Boston and went through a series of names including Allen & Jewett Pianos, W.H. Jewett & Co., and Jewett & Co. until it was purchased by Steinert.

The shape of this piano also speaks of its popularity. Many mid-nineteenth century piano makers began concentrating on developing the square (actually a rectangular box) piano with a high quality sound and decorative appearance. Square grand pianos were especially popular in American homes from the 1850s through the 1880s, thanks to a more convenient size and shape for smaller homes.

The piano was given to the Rogers Historical Museum in memory of Otto Koppe, husband of Bessie Peach Koppe, and is now on view as part of the 1895 Hawkins House home tours.

Credits: Ames, Kenneth L., ed. *Victorian Furniture, Essays from a Victorian Society Autumn Symposium*, 1983. Concert Pitch Piano Services, "Story of the Piano," Toronto, Canada.

<http://www.concertpitchpiano.com/Pianostory.html>, 2006.

Rogers Historical Museum Research Library, Donor and Object Files.