

# Harwood Harp Guitars

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Gregg Miner

## CHAPTERS

### INTRODUCTION

#### J. W. JENKINS' SONS MUSIC CO. HISTORY

Jenkins Co. Timeline

The Harwood Story

- 1878-1889: Pre-Harwood Trademark period
- 1889-1894: Boston (Haynes) Period
- c.1894-c.1911: Kansas City (Jenkins) Period
- The Sanborn Maps
- Harwood Production Numbers
- The "New York" Stamp
- The White Block Fretboard Inlay
- c.1911-c.1920s Ramp Down Period
- Final Years

#### CATALOGS & ADS

- Cadenza Advertisements
- Catalogs

#### ICONOGRAPHY

#### AMERICA'S FIRST HARP GUITAR?

#### HARWOOD HARP GUITARS

#### OTHER HARWOOD INSTRUMENTS

#### OTHER HARP GUITARS INFLUENCED BY THE HARWOOD

#### LESTER PAYNE

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## INTRODUCTION

If you've never heard of "Harwood" guitars and mandolins, you're probably not alone. The first I ever heard of "Harwood" instruments was when the late Dan Most sent me images of, and later procured for me, the magnificent double-neck, double sound hole 18-string harp guitar that I used on my 1995 *A Christmas Collection* project.<sup>1</sup> At the time, I just assumed Harwood was some obscure maker, and presented as such in my CD liner notes. I never imagined that it was actually a popular, long-produced name brand of a hugely successful (although eventually completely forgotten) musical instrument company, J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co. of Kansas City, Missouri.

Once I had access to the Internet, in 2002 I found the (then) single "Harwood" reference. Michael Holmes of Mugwumps Online included this trivia on his Q & A page:

"Harwood was a brand name used by J. W. Jenkins Company, a Kansas City, MO musical instrument dealer and wholesaler. They introduced the Harwood brand in 1885, which they may not have actually manufactured. Circa 1895 they established a factory and produced guitars and mandolins under the Clifford and the Washington brand names. Some guitars marked "Harwood, New York" have been seen. It is not known if these are also by Jenkins."

That's when I discovered that "Harwood" wasn't a person, or even a company, it was a *brand name*. Today, we still don't know where the name came from but think it *may* have been inspired by a Harwood community near Chicago where company founder John Woodward Jenkins was originally from. "Harwood" was established as the best of the five Jenkins instrument lines.

Since publishing my own Harwood page within Harpguitars.net in 2004, much dialog and discovery have taken place in the mandolin and guitar community, with an actual fifth-generation Jenkins descendant – Bob Jenkins<sup>2</sup> – finally getting into the action. The biggest questions were invariably "Who made them?", "Where and When?", and "What's the deal with that 'New York' stamp?!"

Many of these mysteries are now solved, thanks to Bill Graham's Fall, 2011 Fretboard Journal (FJ) article, which prompted my own update – turns out, Bob Jenkins and I had independently discovered some of the same clues and information during the years leading up to 2011! After the article was published, Bob continued to uncover a huge amount of additional information and "smoking gun" clues, which I have consolidated herein with his assistance.

Meanwhile, a surprising number of different Harwood harp guitar models have turned up over the years, which I methodically added to my web site, and finally, this "finished" article.

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<sup>1</sup> Pictured on the title page, and see <http://minermusic.com/cc/grinch.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Sadly, Bob passed away in 2024.

Most exciting for me personally was the discovery of a strange little story in an old *Cadenza* magazine that suggests that J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co. may have produced America's first harp guitars!



## J. W. JENKINS' SONS MUSIC CO. HISTORY

I will leave it to others to write a more thorough history of the company, which, amazingly, lasted from 1878 to 1972 – nearly one hundred years! We now know that the “Harwood” brand instruments were first built for the Jenkins Co. by John C. Haynes & Co. in Boston, and then at Jenkins' own shop and factories in Kansas City, Missouri. Combined, this represents the 1889-c.1911 period. During this time, it is of course possible that Harwood guitars and mandolins were additionally jobbed out elsewhere, but I see no reason why they would have needed to be and suspect that these two facilities, especially Jenkins' own, satisfied the demand and built the quality instruments most players and collectors are familiar with. Then, from 1912 until they petered out before 1930, many believe that Jenkins jobbed out their “Harwood” instruments from Chicago area companies like Regal, Harmony, etc. Still of possible interest to diehard researchers would be the years between 1885 and 1889, when the “Harwood” brand was apparently first used (per the trademark filing). It's most likely, however, that *if* used, it was applied to other instruments and *not* guitars or mandolins. Later Jenkins circa-dated catalogs include “nearly X years ago” statements referencing Harwood guitars and mandolins that invariably point back to 1889, not 1885.

This article will not include much about the other, lesser quality Jenkins brands – Washington, Clifford, Standard and Royal – which were also more likely to have been outsourced elsewhere. For brevity's sake, throughout this article I will abbreviate *J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co.* as simply “Jenkins.”

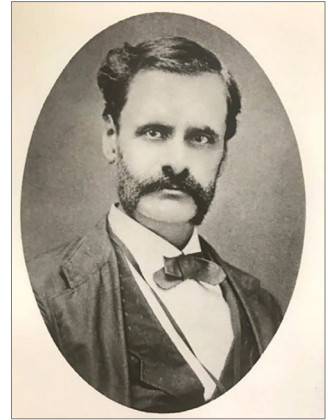
**Chronology:** Making sense of the myriad clues provided by Bob and others was challenging, but it finally coalesced. I'll start with a bulleted timeline, as abbreviated as possible, which gives the chronology of every key fact or event concerning the Jenkins Co. and/or the “Harwood” brand. All key addresses are within a 6-block radius of downtown Kansas City, Missouri.

Following that is a more detailed explanation of some of the more important events. Though this is my own work (and occasionally my own theories and conclusions), the bulk of it comes from the research of Bob, through collaboration. We all owe him our gratitude!



## Jenkins Co. Timeline (Stringed Instrument - Related)

- June 1878: Company founded by John Woodward Jenkins.
  - Name: J. W. Jenkins Music Co.
  - **Store location #1:** 615 Main Street, Kansas City, MO.
- Mid-1880s: Oldest son, John Wesley Jenkins, joined company.
  - Name change: J. W. Jenkins & Son Music Co.
- August 22, 1885: First use of Harwood brand name.
- January (presumed Jan 1), 1889: Jenkins contracts Haynes to build Harwood guitars and mandolins.
- February 25, 1889: **Harwood trademark filed.**
- 1890: Founder died, two younger sons (Frederick & Clifford) joined company.
  - Final name change: J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co.
- c.1891: **Store location #2:** Store moves to 921-923 Main St.
- c.1893: **Factory #1:** Jenkins begins building their own Harwoods, starting with "two experienced men" in a small shop on the top floor of 921 Main St.
- January 1, 1895: **Haynes contract cancelled**, Jenkins exclusively manufactures Harwood brand themselves.
- c.1898: **Factory #2:** New, separate two-story factory at 1417-1419 Walnut St.
- January 1901: **Store location #3:** Store moves to 1013-1015 Walnut St.
- c.1901-1907: **Factory #3:** Walnut factory closed, relocated to share space with large piano warehouse at 1008-1014 Grand, behind the new store.
- August 1910: Fire at Walnut store, store rebuilt. Grand factory not affected. Additional piano warehouse on West Sixteenth St.
- ????: **Grand factory closed.**
- c.1920: New warehouse at 2100 Wyandotte.
- 1925: Store is still at 1013/1015 Walnut and has a 100-person repair shop.
- 1932: **Store location #4:** Store moves to final location at 1217 Walnut.
- Early 1970's: Company liquidated, records lost, store and warehouse torn down.



John Woodward Jenkins (1882-1890)  
© Kansas City Public Library

Music lover and able performer turned salesman, Jenkins Sr. originally found success selling organs on the road, traveling by wagon around the wider Kansas City area. He finally landed a permanent location, sharing space with a doctor and a sewing machine shop on Kansas City's Main St., then home to just a few thousand people. He quickly expanded into assorted instruments and sheet music.



John Wesley Jenkins (1864-1932)  
© Kansas City Public Library

John W. began working as a clerk for his father as a teenager and soon became responsible for stringed instruments. He would lead and greatly expand the company after his father's death in 1890., with his younger brothers joining him in the family business.



## The “Harwood” Story

### **1878-1889: Pre-Harwood Trademark period**

According to Bob Jenkins, the company’s original founder, John Woodward Jenkins, came to the Kansas City area from the Chicago area. The patriarch opened his small music store in Kansas City in 1878. This was the beginning of J. W. Jenkins Music Co., which would grow and transition over to his three sons in 1890 as J. W. Jenkins’ Sons, the father/founder passing away that year. It quickly grew to become the largest musical instrument firm in the Midwest outside Chicago.

Regarding the Harwood name, Bob said, “At one time, the company sold an ‘Elburn’ brand piano, probably named after Elburn, Illinois, just west of Chicago. There is also a town called Harwood Heights in the same area, although the town was not incorporated until the 1950’s.” This is where we theorize that the “Harwood” brand name probably came from – assuming this town was called Harwood back in the 1800’s.

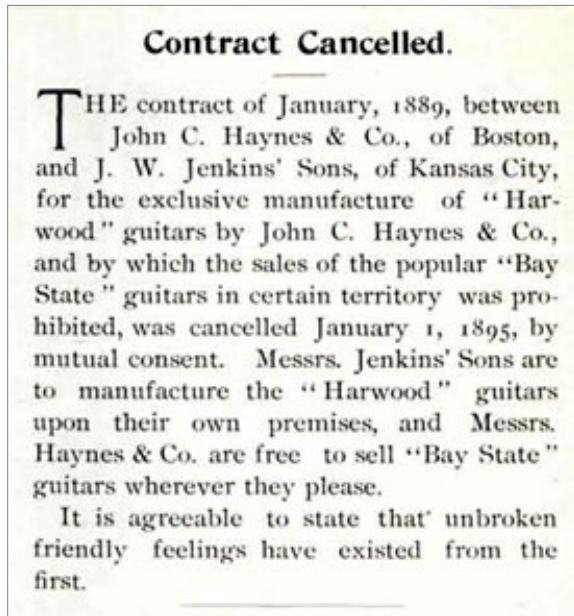
Though we don’t believe that there were any *pre*-Haynes mandolins or guitars, the 1889 trademark filing for the “Harwood” brand intriguingly states that the name had been in use “since August 22, 1885.” That’s a pretty specific date! What does it mean? It was about 3-1/2 years earlier, and not, apparently, an estimate; it must have been tied to a specific event that Jenkins and his first son could easily recall.

Now is as good a time as any to mention that “Harwood” was used on many other types of instruments sold by Jenkins; perhaps this first use applied to one of those. Jenkins didn’t actually produce any of these instruments but contracted their various suppliers to brand them as such. According to Bob Jenkins, the band instruments were made in Indiana, the violin family instruments were probably imported from Germany, and the pianos were made in Rochester, New York in the early days, and much later, by Aeolian in Memphis. Similarly, Harwood banjos seen in the early catalogs were probably made on the East Coast.

Again, we doubt that Jenkins had introduced the Harwood brand in the form of guitars or mandolins in 1885. But the writing was on the wall: In 1880, the “Spanish Students” had instigated the inexorable mandolin craze in America, which the now-successful Jenkins Co. must surely have taken notice of. They needed mandolins to sell – and *fast!* But who would *build them?*



## 1889-1894: Boston (Haynes) period



It was the discovery of this announcement in the January 19, 1895, Music Trade Review that finally revealed to us that John C. Haynes & Co. built the "Harwood" brand mandolin and guitars for the J. W. Jenkins' Sons Company under an exclusive contract from January 1889 through the last day of 1894. (Interestingly, the agreement forbade Haynes from marketing their "Bay State" instruments in certain territories.) The contract was cancelled "agreeably" on January 1, 1895, and Jenkins announced that they would subsequently manufacture them on their own Kansas City premises (though they had probably already started building them a year or more earlier).

This information was exciting news for Harwood aficionados, who had been frustrated in not knowing who built these instruments, or where. However, the Haynes-built period of course only includes instruments built *within those six short years*, and the serial number code has yet to be cracked. It is more likely – depending on the style of instrument – that any given instrument encountered today was built in Kansas City, albeit by similarly skilled hands.

Almost immediately after contracting Haynes, the Jenkins Co. filed a trademark on "Harwood." This was filed on February 25, 1889, and granted on July 23 (this date known from the 30-year renewal of the trademark in 1919).<sup>3</sup> There was a specific logo design attached to the trademark as well: the well-known stamp appearing on the neck blocks of specimens.



Above: The mid-late 1890's catalog includes this trademark along with the "HARWOOD" engraving used on the neck inlays.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.harpguitars.net/history/harwood/trademark.pdf>

## c.1894-c.1911: Kansas City (Jenkins) period

### 921-923 Main St.

While the Haynes Co. was producing Harwoods for the Jenkins Co., the latter moved its store to a 4-story building at 921 Main St. (around 1891). Before long, Jenkins would turn the top floor into a workshop to try building guitars and mandolins themselves.



The new store at 921 Main Street. © Kansas City Public Library

A fascinating and important source of information regarding Jenkins' Harwood production is in the form of an article in the *Kansas City Journal* of December 13, 1898.<sup>4</sup> The reporter wrote a very thorough and presumably accurate piece, and even if an "inside job," I suspect that there is little hyperbole to the account, which gets only slightly flowery at the conclusion. The story told fits perfectly with the *Music Trade Review's* revelation of the Haynes contract, opening with:

**"Five years ago**, the J. W. Jenkins' Sons' Music Co., whose large retail store is located at 921-923 Main street, decided there was an opening in Kansas City for a factory that would turn out a good grade of mandolins and guitars. Up to that time all such instruments sold in this city came from the East, which also supplied all the territory west and south of here."

Doing the math – five years back from December 1898's article compared to Haynes' contract termination of January 1, 1895 – suggests that 1894 was an overlapping year, and indeed, 1893

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.harpguitars.net/history/harwood/KCJournal,December13,1898.pdf> (Thanks to Bob Jenkins for providing the scans.)

is corroborated by an in-house Jenkins historical account written in 1968. So, by late 1893, Jenkins had turned the top floor of their Main St. store into a workshop and started producing their own Harwood instruments “with two workmen, but the workmen were the best and most experienced that could be hired.”

As we have found so many Swedish names associated with the Jenkins factory, we hypothesize that some of the Haynes/Bay State workers wound up working for Jenkins. Indeed, these first two skilled workmen may very well have been poached from Haynes. In 1896, the Kansas City directory lists one Frank Swenson as “foreman, J. W. Jenkins' Sons.” In later years he is listed as a cabinetmaker. Other Swedish names of c.1900 workers (Claus Holm, Ludwig Johnson) are revealed in a 1950 Jenkins newsletter. It’s not known if any of these are related to the Haynes workforce in some way.

The FJ article pointed out that Harwoods are very similar to Bay State instruments, and Harwood instrument quality certainly supports the idea that disciples of Haynes shop foreman Julius Nelson – who, with his brother Carl would later start Vega, and were themselves disciples of famed Swedish guitar maker Pehr Anderberg – may have been the talent behind the Kansas City Harwoods.

However, all of this is of course speculation. My point here is simply that there is no reason to expect the Jenkins-built instruments to be inferior to Haynes factory or other East Coast instruments. And these days, more and more collectors are quoting Frank Ford’s long-ago observation on Harwood guitars: “They were built with nearly the same delicacy and craftsmanship as Martin guitars, and they sound great.”

Below left: A mid-1890s retail price list. Below right: A 1900 envelope which formerly contained a Jenkins' violin E string, listing the Main St. address and the five lines of guitars and mandolins.

**SPECIAL NOTICE to YOU**

You as a Retailer Must not Sell the  
**Harwood Guitars and Mandolins**  
AT LESS THAN PRICES QUOTED HEREIN.

**THESE PRICES**  
Are the **LEAST** the goods are retailed for in Kansas City, where we present you the lowest and finest quality goods being sold under this list, **excepting** where the customer is a **RECOMMENDED TEACHER**, in which case a discount of 20% may be allowed.

HARWOOD GUITARS.	HARWOOD MANDOLINS.
Style No. 1 . . . . . \$25 00	Style No. 41 . . . . . \$25 00
Style No. 1 1/2 . . . . . 22 50	Style No. 42 . . . . . 22 50
Style No. 1 1/4 . . . . . 20 00	Style No. 43 . . . . . 22 50
Style No. 1 3/4 . . . . . 30 00	Style No. 44 . . . . . 40 00
Style No. 2 . . . . . 28 00	Style No. 45 . . . . . 40 00
Style No. 2 1/2 . . . . . 32 50	Style No. 51 . . . . . 40 00
Style No. 3 . . . . . 40 00	Style No. 52 . . . . . 40 00
Style No. 4 . . . . . 45 00	Style No. 60 . . . . . 40 00
Style No. 5 . . . . . 40 00	Style No. 61 . . . . . 75 00
Style No. 8 . . . . . 45 00	
Style No. 9 . . . . . 55 00	

Nothing gives a customer more confidence in a good article than uniformity of price; and although in many cases the HARWOOD instruments are sold at 25% advance on the above, we would advise that no charge be made. Have you examined our **NEW CATALOGUE**?

**WASHINGTON GUITARS AND MANDOLINS!**  
They are more than a match for many of the so-called Swedish goods. We, as manufacturers guarantee them to have more potent excellence than any other of the price.

**J. W. Jenkins' Sons, 921 Main St.,**  
KANSAS CITY, MO.,  
Mfrs. of Harwood, Washington and Clifford Guitars and Mandolins.

*E strings*

GUOKERT'S CHORDS OF THE GUITAR, 50 Cts.

**J. W. Jenkins' Sons**  
MUSIC COMPANY,  
921-923 Main St., Kansas City, Mo.

Manufacturers of the Celebrated  
**HARWOOD WASHINGTON CLIFFORD STANDARD ROYAL** GUITARS AND MANDOLINS.

Ask for Special Catalogue of these goods.

Use the **HARWOOD** Special, Tested, Warranted Strings for all Instruments. Perfect in Tone and durability. See Special Price List.

THIS TRADE MARK is a guarantee of a perfect Guitar or Mandolin. Note the spelling—**H-A-R-W-O-O-D** Used and Recommended by the Profession Generally.

SEE THE NEW 1899-1900 STYLES OF H-A-R-W-O-O-D-S.

Trade Mark REGISTERED

**All Harwood** GUITARS AND MANDOLINS WARRANTED FOR 5 YEARS.

50 to 75 per cent DISCOUNT

on all copyright sheet music. There is nothing in the Music Line we do not sell and you know you can depend on the quality when it's from "Jenkins." New goods all the time from our own and Eastern factories.

**J. W. Jenkins' Sons**  
MUSIC COMPANY,  
921-923 MAIN STREET.  
KANSAS CITY'S OLDEST AND UP-TO-DATE MUSIC HOUSE.

## 1417-1419 Walnut St.

Let's go back to the 1898 *Journal* account, which goes into wonderful detail about the new Walnut Street factory but doesn't offer any clues on how long this factory had been in operation. In checking the Kansas City Directories, Bob Jenkins found that "guitar and mandolin manufacturing" was listed at the original 921 Main address in 1895, 1896 and 1897. 1898 did not include any "mfg." listing, and 1899 listed the new address. If we knew which month/season the directories were printed, we could better pin it down, but the move likely happened in 1898 (perhaps that year's directory was being prepared while Jenkins was in transition?).

By December of that year the KCJ article appeared which showed they were up and running like clockwork with (presumably new) state-of-the-art equipment. The workforce had by then increased to twenty-five men with a reported 500 instruments a month and annual output of 5,000 instruments. This is certainly not far-fetched, especially when one pictures the assembly line process described in the article.

A telling statistic appears eight months later, when an August, 1899 article appeared in *The Kansas City Manufacturer* that consisted of two verbatim paragraphs from the earlier KCJ article, with *one distinct change*: someone went to the trouble to update "...while the annual output is 5,000 instruments..." to "...while **the annual output for this season will exceed 5,000 instruments...**"<sup>5</sup> This wasn't a random figure – *someone was counting!*

The article reveals the general wood types and sources and that Jenkins decided to make their own purfling. Curiously, there is no mention of shell or celluloid inlay. I was also impressed with not just the 150-degree drying room for raw boards, but a second drying step, when the instruments (sans strings) were "hung up for another seasoning, for no guitar or mandolin is ready for the player until it has aged several months and gotten its 'tone'."

Also impressive was their dedication to finish – three separate (very grueling-sounding) workstations from filler to varnish to polish where "for hours he rubs and rubs until the instruments reflect his features like a looking glass." And the writer was not describing the high-end custom instruments but the *base* models!

The article included scenes from the newly established factory (c.1897) at 1417-1419 Walnut Street that took up two floors stocked with then-state-of-the-art machinery (next page).

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.harpguitars.net/history/harwood/KCManufacturer,August,1899.pdf>

# IN ALL COUNTRIES

Mandolins and Guitars Made by J. W. Jenkins' Sons Are Used.

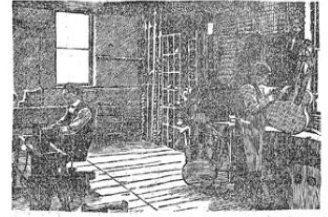
## WONDERS OF THE MAKE

Music in Distant Lands From Kansas City Instruments.

### THE MARKET IS RAPIDLY INCREASING

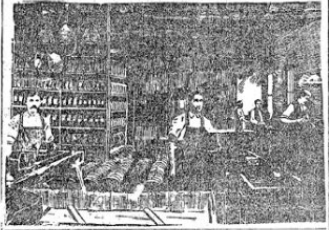
An Interesting Account of How the Sweet Toned Instruments Are Manufactured in this City.

Five years ago the J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Company, whose large retail store is located at 2100 Main street, decided there was no opening in Kansas City for a factory that would turn out a good grade of mandolins and guitars. Up to that time



all such instruments sold in this city came from the East, which was supplied all the territory west and south of here. The factory was started in a small way, with two workmen, but the workmen were the best and most experienced that could be found, and so a result, in a short time the mandolins and guitars from the Jenkins' factory had obtained a reputation which not only created a demand for them in the West, but in the Middle West, where they were then competing with the best work that could be turned out by Eastern and Continental factories. It became necessary to enlarge the factory and employ more men in order to keep up with the orders, and this enlarge-

ment of the plant has not only made it possible to meet the demand for instruments, but to produce a larger quantity of instruments than any other factory in the world. The manufacturer of a mandolin or guitar is a work of time, and the workmen are paid for the time they spend in the shop. The material is handled and put together,



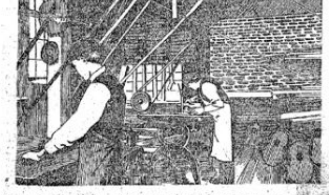
which is the "chuck" of guitar bodies and mandolin bodies. The sides of the same thickness are cut in the lathe, and when just into the proper form, constitute the sides of the instrument. All the work and after day a workman stands at this saw cutting up the boards that, after passing through the successive departments, comes at the end,

is a beautiful straight instrument. This combination of stock is then turned over to the workmen in the shop department, whose work it is to get the instrument into the shape that takes place, however, the sides are taken in hand by a man who cuts

it into the proper shape and size. The work is done in the shaper room, which is first put into the dry room, where it remains for a period of from three to six months; the higher grade of wood, the mahogany and rosewood, taking the longer period to season, and the cheaper grades, like oak and maple, taking the shorter period. The temperature in the dry room is constantly kept at 110 degrees, and as fast as one lot of wood is seasoned it is removed and the room filled again with another lot, so that the factory has constantly on hand a full supply of material ready for use.

After leaving the dry room, the rough boards are taken to the shaper room, fitted with new shaper and mounted on chimes. Like all parts of the factory, this room is equipped with the most modern tools obtainable for doing the work. An engraving shows a fine piece of rough board, just as it came from the sawmill. When the boards leave that room they are ready to get together in the form of a mandolin or guitar.

To secure the neck for guitars, the first step is to place these boards on a band saw, which cuts them into what is known as top, back and sides. These are as thick as the next step is to cut them down to one-eight of an inch thick,



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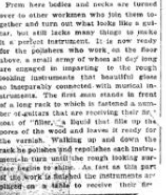
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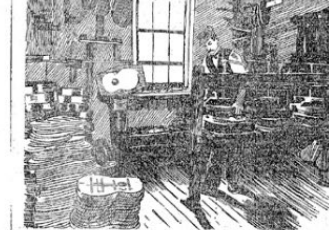
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round body workmen, are engaged in fitting the various pieces together. First the top and sides are released with strips of wood that not only strengthen them but assist in maintaining their shape. The sides are placed in a guitar shaped mold and firmly fixed together with a strip around the lower and upper edge that will hold in solid top and bottom in place. After the edges have been placed smooth the top and bottom are glued on and the mold placed in a press screwed tightly down and left to dry. When dried it emerges in the form of a rough looking guitar body. It is at this stage passed over to another workman who takes it to the shaper. The shaper is an ingenious piece of machinery that removes any imperfections in the shape that may remain after the treatment just left the mold. Two rapidly revolving iron uprights move over and around the guitar body and in an incredible short time make it perfect as far as shape is concerned.



Over in one corner of the room is a large wooden drum looking another drum which is covered with sandpaper and by this machine the guitar body gets its final rough polishing. Pressed against the rotating surface of the drum the guitar body rapidly assumes a smooth appearance and the fine grain of the wood shows up distinctly. While all this is going on our workmen are using their hands to make the necks for the guitars. And right here in the factory of J. W. Jenkins' Sons are given out of the thousands of superior instruments that help make the name "Jenkins" famous in every part of the world. A machine is set in the end of each such which fits in a neck,

ready to be fitted to the instrument and for an entire mandolin to be ready for the shaper and it has aged several months and gotten the "tone." When that has occurred they are taken to still another room and the strings put on and are then ready for the market. This is the process through which ordinary guitars go at the factory of J. W. Jenkins' Sons, but there is another class of work going on in the manufacture of higher grade of instruments. These latter are made beautifully by means of a machine that is used in the shaper room, which is first put into the dry room, where it remains for a period of from three to six months; the higher grade of wood, the mahogany and rosewood, taking the longer period to season, and the cheaper grades, like oak and maple, taking the shorter period. The temperature in the dry room is constantly kept at 110 degrees, and as fast as one lot of wood is seasoned it is removed and the room filled again with another lot, so that the factory has constantly on hand a full supply of material ready for use.

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Note the three double-soundhole harp guitars being assembled!

I found the spinning metal body shaper fascinating – how exactly did this work?!

“The shaper is an ingenious piece of machinery that removes any imperfections in the shape that remain after the instrument has left the mold. Two rapidly revolving iron uprights move over and around the guitar body and in an incredibly short time make it perfect as far as shape is concerned.”

Though the images are only engravings, they were obviously made from photographs or real scenes, depicting the actual Walnut St. factory activities from 1898.

The 1899 article included these two new photographs:

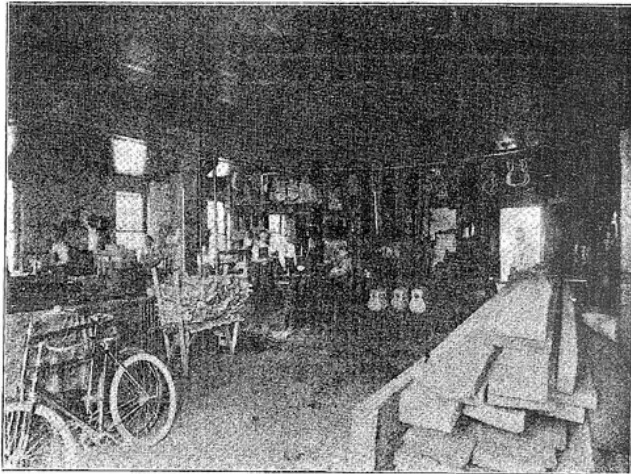
### THE KANSAS CITY MANUFACTURER.

#### SWEET TONED INSTRUMENTS.

ARTISTIC AND BEAUTIFUL PRODUCTS  
MANUFACTURED IN THE JENKINS'  
GUITAR & MANDOLIN FACTORY.

The manufacture of Harwood guitars and mandolins here has obtained for Kansas City a notable place in musical circles for the production of high grade sweet toned instruments and the following information and

mahogany from Central America, spruce from Norway and Sweden, and oak and maple from New York. The capacity of the factory is 500 mandolins and guitars a month, while the annual output for this season will exceed 5,000 instruments, which are sent to all parts of the world. J. W. Jenkins' Sons' mandolins and guitars, made in Kansas City, are played in Mexico, South and Central America, the Sandwich Islands, Cuba and Porto Rico. They can be found in almost every town and city in the Union and the "Harwood" guitar has attained a celeb-



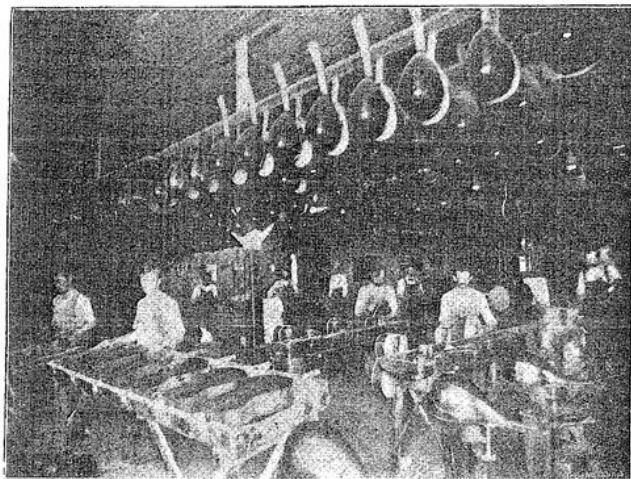
MAKING FRAMES OF HARWOOD GUITARS AND MANDOLINS IN THE JENKINS FACTORY.

illustrations will prove of interest to all readers.

Five years ago the J. W. Jenkins' Sons' Music Co., whose large retail store is located at 921-923 Main street, decided there was an opening in Kansas City for a factory that would turn out a good grade of mandolins and guitars. Up to that time all such instruments sold in this city came from the East, which also supplied all the territory west and south of here. The factory was started in a small way, with two workmen, but the workmen were the best and most experienced that could be hired, and as a result in a short time the mandolins and guitars from the Jenkins factory had attained a reputation which not only created a demand for them in the West, but in the East as well, where they came into competition with the best work that could be turned out by Eastern and Continental factories.

It became necessary to enlarge the factory and employ more men in order to keep up with the orders, and this enlargement has gone on until to-day the factory of J. W. Jenkins' Sons, at 1417 and 1419 Walnut St., is one of the largest and best equipped in the United States. Twenty-five men are constantly employed, who annually use up over 50,000 feet of lumber which goes into the frame of mandolins and guitars. This consists of rosewood from South America,

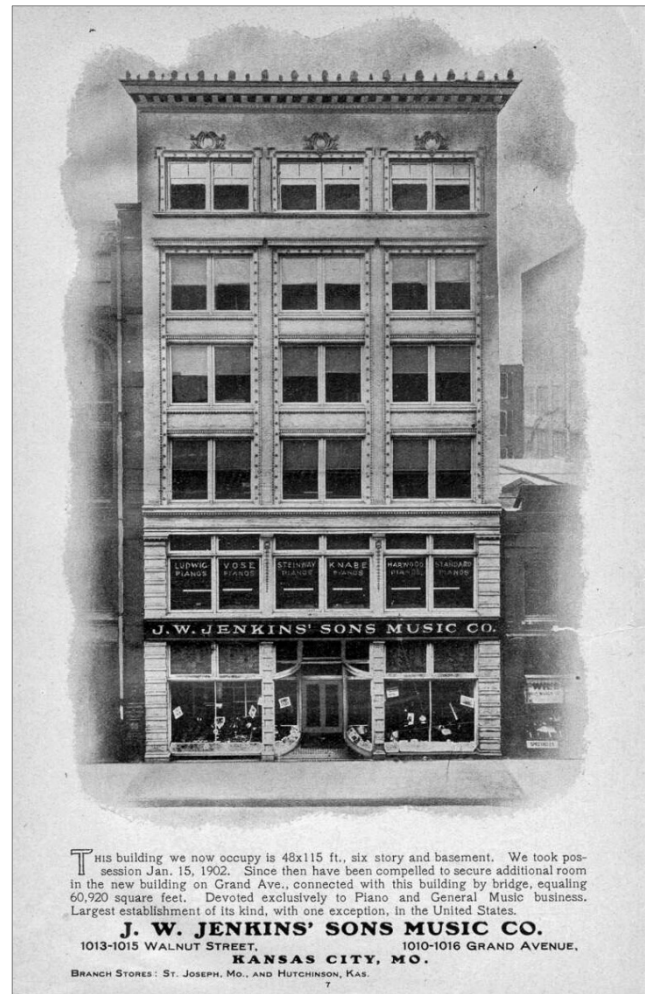
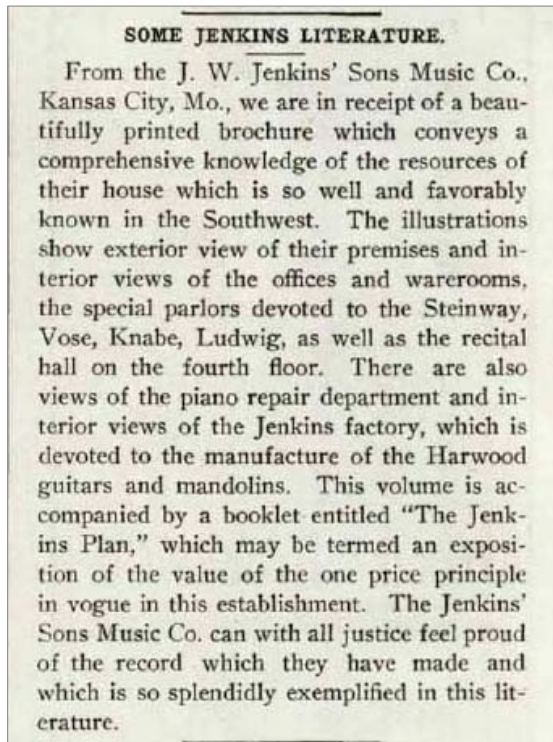
among musicians that places it ahead of that class of musical instruments. Both mandolins and guitars are made to suit all classes of pocketbooks, from the plain, but serviceable and sweet toned instrument, retailing at \$5, to the beautiful ones made of rosewood, inlaid with handsome veneers, that sell for \$150.



FINISHING AND POLISHING DEPARTMENT OF JENKINS' HARWOOD GUITAR AND MANDOLIN FACTORY.

## 1013-1015 Walnut St

At the end of 1900, with the new factory in full production, Jenkins found a new location for their rapidly expanding retail store: a brand new 6-floor building at 1013-1015 Walnut Street, which they moved into on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1901.



In December 1903, the Music Trade Review editors write about receiving a new "beautifully printed brochure" from the Jenkins Company (above left). Its many illustrations of the Walnut Street establishment included offices, warerooms, piano parlors, 4<sup>th</sup> floor recital hall and piano repair department. Later, a report on the August 1910 store fire listed then-current details about what each floor contained. Ground floor: sales room; 2<sup>nd</sup> floor: organs and smaller musical instruments; 3<sup>rd</sup> floor: pianolas and piano players, 4<sup>th</sup> floor: cheaper pianos; 5<sup>th</sup> floor: high priced pianos; top floor: repair shop (containing "5 or 6 pianos" at the time of the fire). There was also a basement. Accompanied by this rare image of the building from the c.1908 catalog, these descriptions help give us a nice mental picture of the Jenkins facilities at the turn of the last century.



A period photograph of the 1013-1015 Walnut St building. © Kansas City Public Library

The 1903 MTR clipping also mentioned "interior views of the Jenkins factory, which is devoted to the manufacture of the Harwood guitars and mandolins." Unfortunately, its location is not given. Around this time, they had moved the factory to its final site on Grand.

### 1008-1014 Grand Avenue

The catalog from c.1908 (shown further below) reveals that Harwoods were then still in full production, with new instruments and models being introduced. Even without catalog references, historical photographs and surviving instruments tell us that they continually experimented with all their stringed instruments, harp guitars perhaps even more so. These c.1908 instruments were being made in the third and final factory location, which we now know was in their 4-floor warehouse, located just behind the new store which opened in 1901 at 1013-1015 Walnut St. This factory fronted Grand Avenue, and between Grand and the store's Main St. was an alley separating the buildings; there also appears to have been some sort of connection between the two buildings. We don't know which floors contained the factory. The 1907 Sanborn map (shown next) states only "Piano Storage" on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors; however, by August 1910, they had an additional separate piano warehouse. The 1909 Sanborn map lists "Musical Institutes 2 & 3" (which could mean almost anything) and include "Buffing and Plating Room" on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor (brass instrument repair?).

Bob Jenkins found a rare postcard that, remarkably, shows this facility:



Bob said, "The tall building in the center is the R. A. Long Building, 928 Grand, built in 1907. The tall white building to its left is the Commerce Trust Building at 922 Walnut built in 1906. What we're looking at here is the intersection of Tenth Street and Grand Avenue, looking north down Grand. The tall white building down the street is the Scarritt building, 818 Grand, built in 1907. In the foreground, facing Grand Avenue, is a (multi)-story brick building. If you look closely, above the (top) floor windows, you can see that there is a sign that says "J.W. Jenkins Sons Music Co." This postcard dates from 1907–1915."

Bob Jenkins hit a dead end in determining how long Jenkins may have manufactured instruments in this facility, as city directories are missing from this decade. Even if not producing, they probably kept this building for storage and repair until about 1920, when they moved to their final large warehouse at 2100 Wyandotte.

Both Bob and Bill Graham theorized that 1911 was the last year for Jenkins-produced Harwoods.

### **The 1910 Fire**

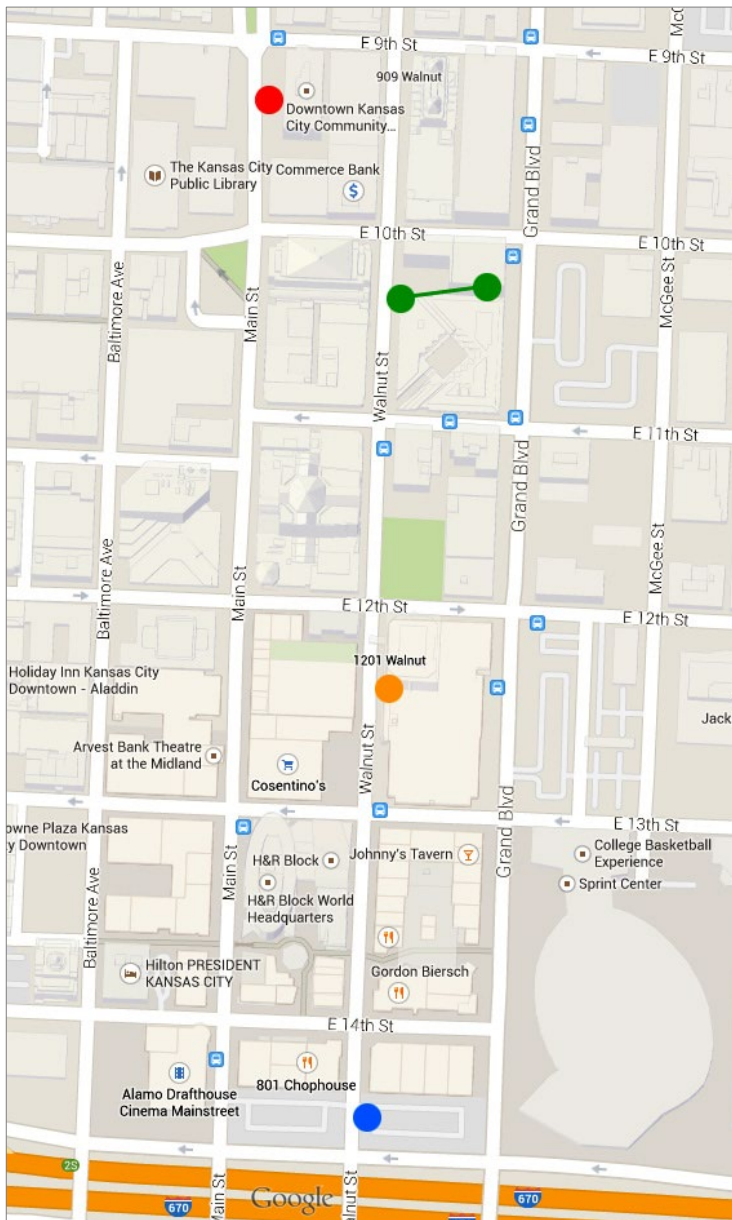
Did this event have any bearing on the discontinuation of Harwood production? I doubt it, as they were fully insured, but who knows? The newspaper clippings about the fire provided the first of many clues that pointed Bob to the Grand Ave. factory location but otherwise remain interesting only in the context of Jenkins history.

At one o'clock in the morning on August 24, 1910, lightning struck the roof of the 1013 Walnut building. The sixth (top) floor quickly caught fire, and considering the fact that it was their piano repair shop, it's amazing that things didn't quickly disintegrate. By 2:30 am, the fire was under control but had already cost the life of a young firefighter. Though it never progressed below the sixth floor, water from three hoses made its way all the way down to ground level, causing extensive damage on every floor. Fortunately, the factory building only an alley away was unaffected. Various loss figures were reported (\$100,000, \$25,000). The next day's article mentions employees moving pianos from the company's warehouse on West Sixteenth St. to a neighboring store that offered to help Jenkins out while they rebuilt – which they did. The store remained there for another twenty-two years before moving two blocks down into a larger, brand-new building, their final location.



## The Sanborn Maps:

At this point, I thought I'd take a trip through the Jenkins' physical locations discussed above via the Sanborn maps. This provenance came from the help of various Mandolin Café Forum users, after which Bob Jenkins tracked down the crucial Sanborn maps of the area (in our great good fortune, these are now digitized!). For those unfamiliar with Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, the footnote below provides an explanation.<sup>6</sup>



Incidentally, Jenkins had several other store outlets (per Bob Jenkins), which aren't part of this discussion, specifically: 3 cities in Kansas, 2 in Missouri, 2 in Oklahoma and 1 in Arkansas. There were also piano and organ stores in Amarillo and Lubbock, Texas, and Roswell, N.M.

All of the key Kansas City addresses were in a 3 block by 6 block area of what is now smack in the middle of Kansas City. In the modern map at left:

Red dot is the 921/923 Main St. store (c.1891-c.1901).

Blue dot is the 1417-1419 Walnut St. factory (c.1897-c.1904).

Green dot (left) is the 1013-1015 Walnut St. store (c.1901-1932) connecting through the back alley to:

Green dot (right) the 1008-1014 Grand Blvd. warehouse/factory (c.1901-c.1911).

Orange dot is the 1217 Walnut store (c.1932-1972).

Not shown: the original store at 615 Main St, an additional c.1910 warehouse on W 16th St. and the final warehouse on Wyandotte.

On the next page is a Sanborn Map Symbol Key that might be of use or interest. All maps below are aligned ↑ North.

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanborn\\_maps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanborn_maps)

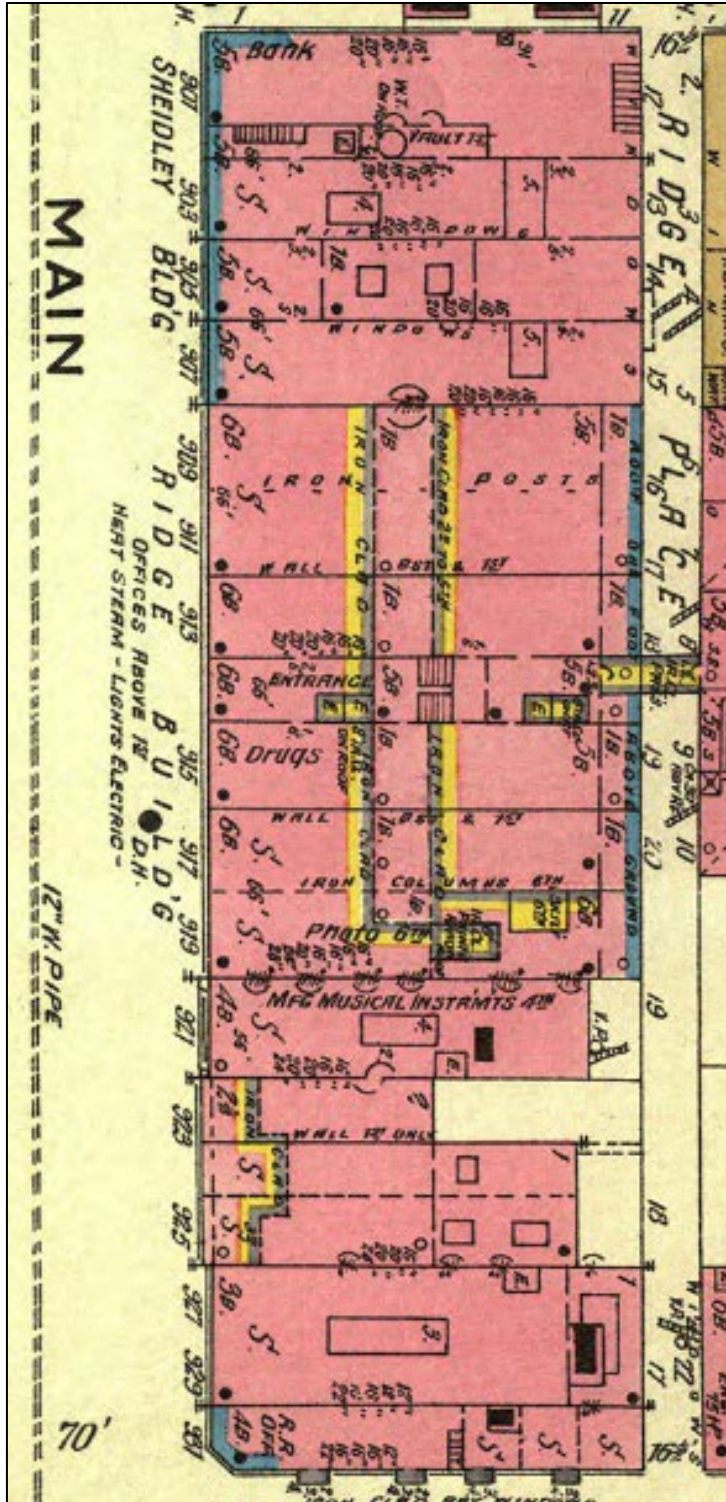
# KEY

	NUMBER OF STORIES 4	Fire Proof Building
	SLATE OR TIN ROOF	Iron Building
	COMPOSITION ROOF	Brick Building, with Metal Cornice
	SHINGLE ROOF	" " " " Frame "
	FRAME PARTITION	" " " " Side
	HEIGHT OF BUILDING	" " " " Stone Front
		Brick Special
		" " " " with Frame Side
		Frame Building, not a special.
		" " " " Special
	BRICK WALL 1ST.	Wall, 1 <sup>st</sup> Story - no opening through it.
	BR. WALL 1ST.	" " " " with openings
	S. Store	Fire Wall, 6 inches above roof
	SKYLIGHT LIGHTING TOP STORY ONLY	" " " " 12 " " "
	2 SKYLIGHT LIGHTING TWO STORIES	" " " " 18 " " "
	3 SKYLIGHT LIGHTING THREE STORIES.	" " " " 24 " " "
	S = STORE D = DWELLING	Opening in Division Wall
		" " " " with Iron Door
		Windows with Iron Shutters
		Window opening in 1 <sup>st</sup> Story
		" " " " 2 <sup>d</sup> "
		Windows " " 2 <sup>d</sup> & 3 <sup>d</sup> Stories
		" " " " 2 <sup>d</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> "
		Stable
		Chimneys
		Steam Boilers
		Hydrants
		Reference to
		175
		Adjoining Sheet

COUNTING FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, LOOKING TOWARD BUILDING. DOT REPRESENTS OPENING

BRICK HORIZONTAL  
IRON VERTICAL

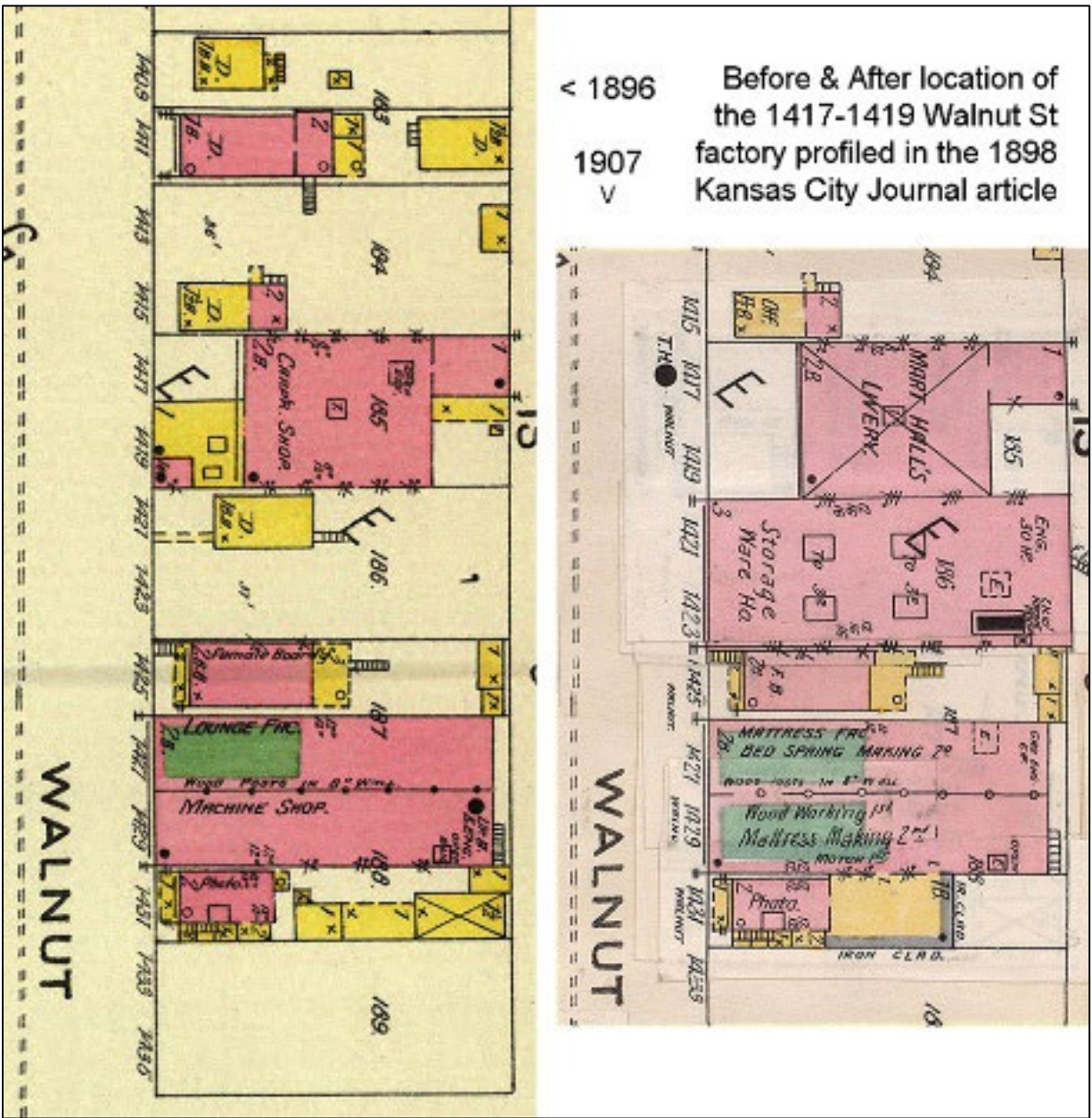
Reference to  
**175**  
Adjoining Sheet



The first map of note was created in April 1896. It shows “Mfg Musical Instruments” at 921 Main St. and (seemingly) the adjoining 923.

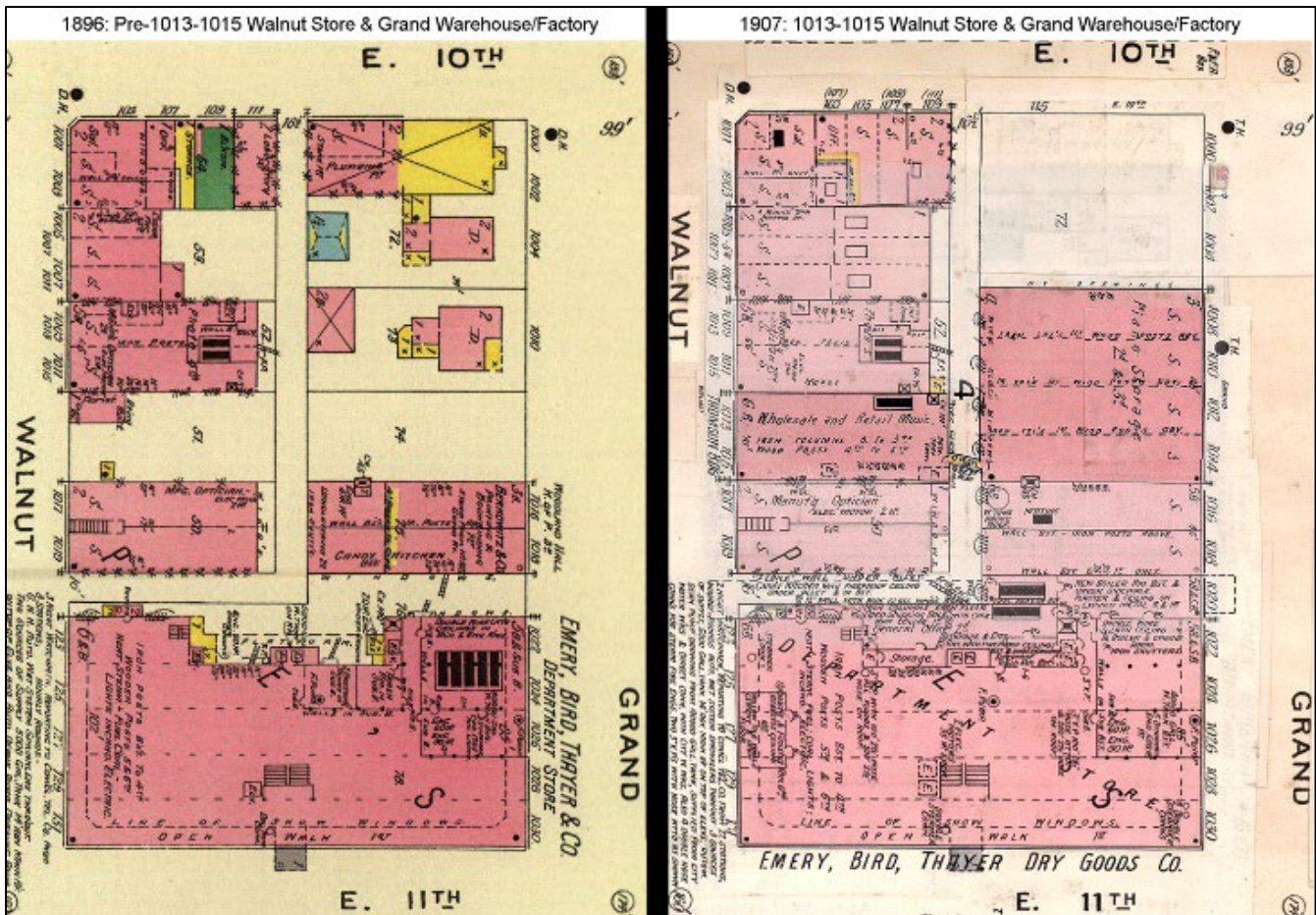
Note that the map specifically states “MFG MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS 4<sup>TH</sup>.” Bob and I take this to mean that there was a shop established on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the building, which fits with our premise that this is where they began their own Harwood production experiments in late 1893. Note that there is a skylight on this top floor and the elevator in this building. The store would naturally be on the street level of 921, 923 or both. Jenkins likely leased the entire building, with floors 2 & 3 for offices, storage, pianos and other instruments. They moved out of this building in January 1901.

Our next search is for Jenkins' first dedicated 2-floor factory at 1417-1419 Walnut St. – which unfortunately came and went within the eleven years between Sanborn documentation. These two “Before” and “After” maps at least show the size. *At left:* In the April 1896 Sanborn's we see a “Carpenter's Shop” at this location. Seems like the perfect spot to take over! As discussed above, Jenkins' shop was still on the top floor of 921 Main at this point, moving into this Walnut spot sometime before December 1898. We don't yet know when they left this location – only that it was by 1907, as the next Sanborn map available shows the factory taken over by “Mort Hall's Livery” (right of image).

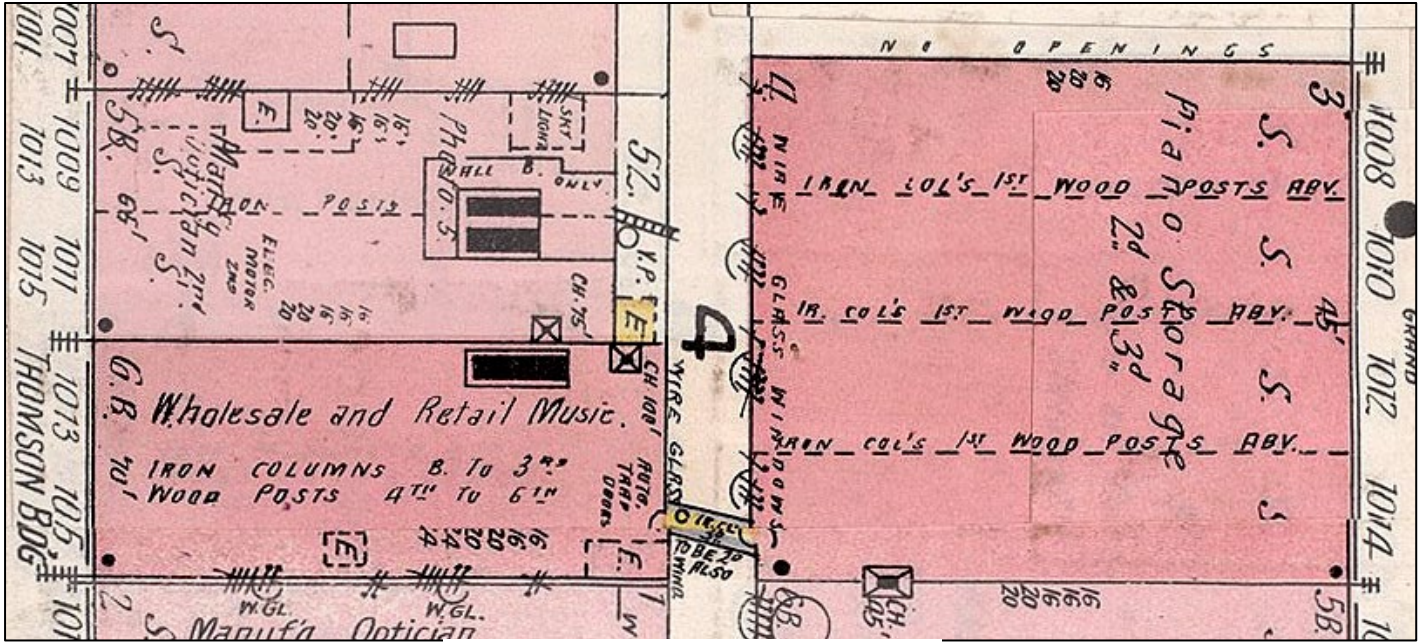


Meanwhile, while the new factory was churning out Harwoods, they relocated the store, moving a block over and down into a new, larger building. This was at 1013-1015 Walnut St., four blocks north of the factory. They got the keys on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1901, ending their store’s ten year stay on Main St.

Prior to their move, nothing much existed in the middle of this section of Walnut and Grand per the 1896 Sanborn map (left image). But on the 1907 map we see the new building, marked “Wholesale and Retail Music.” Note that this building consists of six floors (plus additional basement) with two elevators.

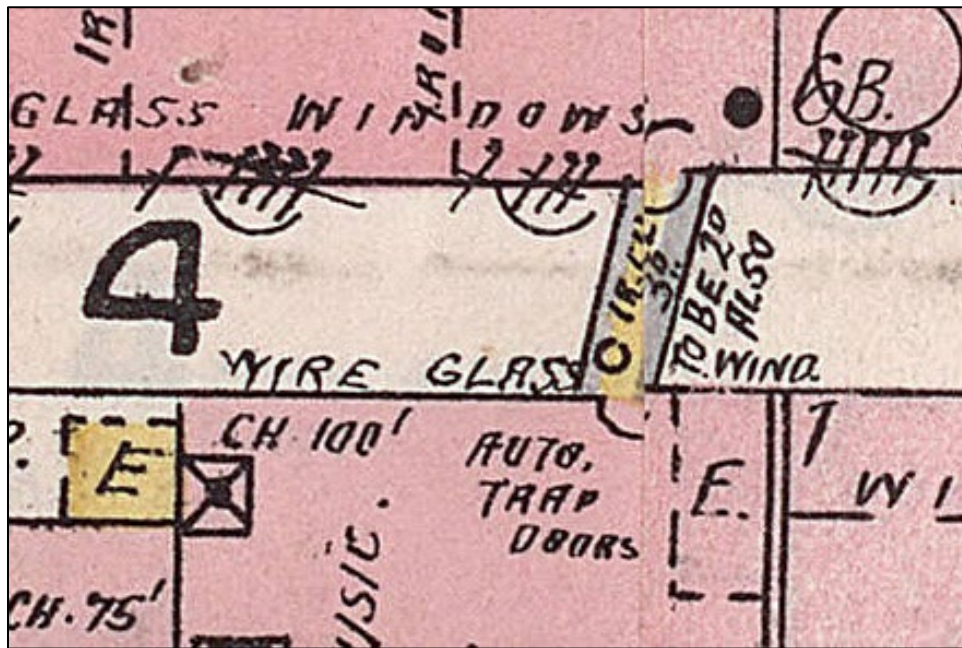


We also get a glimpse of Jenkins’ final Harwood-producing facilities (right image). The large building covering 1008-1114 Grand is labeled “Piano Storage 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>”. There is also a fourth floor, as we can deduce from the window symbols. We don’t know which floor or floors the factory took up.



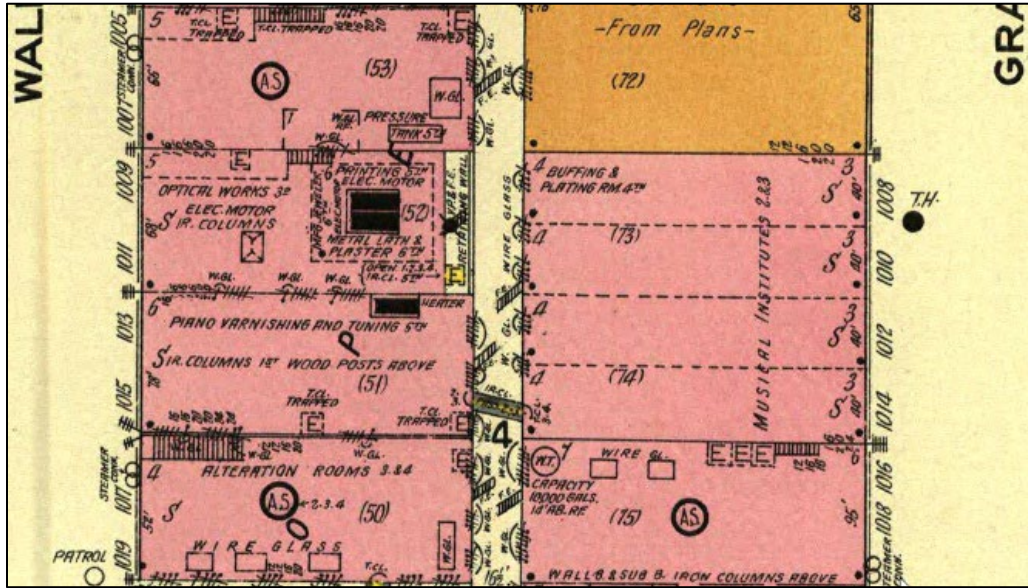
Close-up of map on previous page

Note that interesting connection between the two buildings (below); was it a covered path? Overhead walkway? Tunnel?!



Not unsurprisingly, the c.1908 catalog (shown in the next chapter) lists both the Walnut and Grand addresses shown above.

Two years later, a 1909 Sanborn map lists “Piano Varnishing and Tuning 5<sup>th</sup>”. This is in discrepancy with the 1910 fire report I mentioned above, which listed piano repair on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and “high priced pianos” on the 5<sup>th</sup> (but close!).

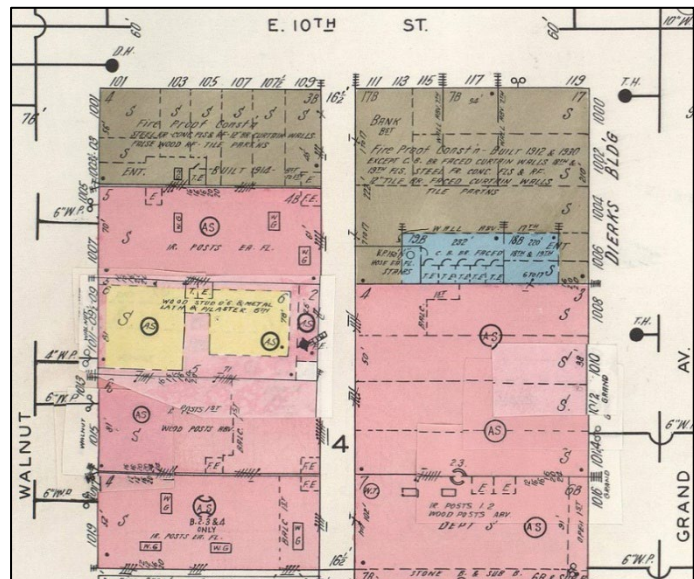


As mentioned above, the 4-floor warehouse/factory contains new notations that remain cryptic. But we can now see that same alleyway connection which again has doors at each end and says, “Pass 2-3” (an external, connecting “hallway” for floors 2 & 3, I would presume).

The next Sanborn we know of is from 1939, when both these buildings had been long vacated by Jenkins (below right).

The working theory is that at some point Jenkins farmed out Harwood instruments to various Chicago firms.

Alternatively/additionally, they *may* have moved part of the shop across the alley to one of the floors on Walnut Street. We know that in 1925 there was a 100-person repair shop there (which seems awfully large), and that some of the skilled Harwood luthiers had moved into repair where they stayed for the remainder of their careers.





Above: The final Jenkins store at 1217 Walnut store as it looked in its heyday (1932-1972) and today. Thankfully, the entire front façade was preserved for posterity.<sup>7</sup>



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<sup>7</sup> For more on the company's history, see <https://www.kansascity.com/news/your-kcq/article312087826.html>, accessed June 28, 2026.

## Harwood Production Numbers

Where to place the end of Jenkins’ production of Harwoods? For now, I’ll take 1911 (Bob and Bill’s theory). All told, if we count 1894 as the start of their Kansas City production, through 1911, that’s 18 years of Jenkins’ production of Harwoods. And that’s after six years of production by Haynes. This is a very long time, and if we accept the numbers given in the Kansas City Journal profile, the numbers are staggering.

Incidentally, that article seems quite unambiguous and I am confident that the “5000 instruments” per year refers just to guitars and bowl-back mandolins (along with harp guitars and the occasional mandolinettos and bandurrias). I’ve counted significantly more surviving Dyer harp guitars than Harwood anythings, and we know there were less than 600 Dyers produced...what gives with the Harwoods?

Manuf	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	Total
Haynes	50	100	150	200	250	300																		1050
Jenkins						25	200	500	1000	5000	5500	5000	4500	4000	3500	3000	2500	2000	1500	1000	500	250	100	40075

The chart above shows my completely theoretical ramp up from small two-man shop to full factory assembly line of 5000 guitars and mandolins a year, and subsequent ramp down before stopping production (subsequently farmed out to others). It also includes a completely random guess at Boston production. The numbers add up to over 40,000 mandolins and guitars! Even if we presume that my numbers are much too generous and we *halve* that number, we’re still at 20,000. *Where are all these instruments?!<sup>8</sup>*

One thing to remember is that we’re not sure if the “5000” count included all the lesser Jenkins brands along with the Harwoods. Some think Jenkins didn’t build anything but Harwoods – even the K.C. Journal article mentioned only “Harwood” instruments quite specifically.

But I wonder... several *Cadenza* ads (shown in a following chapter below) describe Washington and Clifford instruments being “manufactured” by Jenkins, at least *hinting* that they could have built all these brands (we know full well that many companies frequently advertised their jobbed-out instruments as self-manufactured, so it’s rarely proof).

As far as there being so many “lost” Jenkins instruments, remember that such lesser-quality instruments may have become much more quickly unusable and discarded. The mystery continues...



<sup>8</sup> Below, in an 1897 story - a year *before* the 1898 article - J. W. Jenkins claimed that they made **20,000 in the prior year!**

## The “New York” Stamp:

Speaking of mysteries...it seems that the information above seems to have put to rest our age-old “red herring hunt” for a mythical New York factory that produced Harwoods. It’s now generally believed that the “New York” stamp found on instruments from a certain period was simply a marketing ploy to give the Harwood brand more cachet. Curiously, Jenkins proudly announces in their 1895-1899 catalog “The Harwood American Guitars, manufactured in our own factory, under our personal supervision, in Kansas City, Missouri.” Then on the very same page, in discussing the stamps and trademarks, they exclaim:

“Every Genuine Harwood Guitar is stamped... ‘HARWOOD, New York’....”

...but without any explanation for it (!).

The early catalog demonstrates that this New York stamp, burned into the wood on the inside center seam and on the back of the headstock, was used on all Harwoods made by Jenkins during their first years of manufacture. Unfortunately for curious Harwood owners, *we don’t yet know if this stamp was used on any of the Boston-built Haynes instruments*. It could turn out to be that any Harwoods marked “New York” came from the Jenkins factory from c.1895-1900; we simply don’t know. They clearly *stopped* using it at some point, but as yet we have no firm idea when.

38 J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co., Kansas City, Mo.

### THE HARWOOD AMERICAN GUITARS,

MANUFACTURED IN OUR OWN FACTORY,  
UNDER OUR PERSONAL SUPERVISION,  
IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI.

Are the VERY BEST that Money, Material and Long Years of Practical  
Experience Have Yet Produced.

THEY EXCEL IN THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

*First.*—The wood used in all parts is of better quality and is seasoned longer before use than that of any other. *It is Ten Years since anyone ever heard of a Harwood Guitar splitting or cracking.*

*Second.*—In consequence of this, the tone is superior and has sustaining power which is simply marvelous.

*Third.*—The wedge-shaped neck, which was first used in the *Harwood*, is the most perfect and easiest to handle of any style yet introduced. A guitarist can play on a *Harwood* without cramping the fingers, as the fingerboard is slightly rounded on the top, similar to a violin. This point is appreciated by every guitarist, as they can play longer without tiring the fingers or hand.

*Fourth.*—There is no stained wood of any description used in the construction of the *Harwood Guitars*, every block and brace being genuine Mahogany, the back and sides of solid Rosewood, the neck of genuine Mahogany, the top of Spruce, the same as used in fine violins.

*Fifth.*—The *Bracing*, a very important point, is peculiar and different from all others, in that the braces and sounding bars are put together in such a manner that *the Guitar will stand being strung to concert pitch with steel strings* without the neck or sounding board springing or warping, and while left strung to this pitch seldom breaks strings. Everyone compliments the *Harwood* on this point.

*Every Genuine Harwood Guitar* is stamped twice (burned in the wood), “*HARWOOD, New York,*” on the back of the neck at the head, and on the Mahogany Brace under the sound hole, and the single word “*HARWOOD*” stamped in celluloid (see Fig. 2), which is inlaid on the fingerboard between the 17th and 18th frets; also the following registered triangular trade-mark (see Fig. 1) will be found stamped on the neck-block inside of every *Harwood Guitar*:




Figure 1.




Figure 2.

The above stamping and trade-mark has been necessary to save the unsuspecting public from buying the many imitations now in the market.

*The tone of the Harwood Guitars* is sweet, pure and powerful, with wonderful sustaining qualities. No guitar yet manufactured equals the *Harwood* in tone qualities; in fact, as many judges have expressed it, “*The Harwood is the Ideal Guitar.*”

## The White Block Fretboard Inlay:

I am so happy that Jenkins decided to add this very visible additional trademark to their original instruments, for it enables us to identify Harwood instruments in old photographs with a very high degree of certainty. No one has yet to identify any other maker's instruments that used a similar white block inlay during that period.



The material is the white celluloid commonly known today as “ivoroid” (some may be bone), engraved as shown in the Jenkins 1895-1899 catalog. An interesting (and very subtle!) clue about this well-known Harwood feature came from Mandolin Café Forum member “HarHolz,” who noticed on his New York-stamped parlor guitar (serial # 10351) that “there is in very tiny type the words ‘BALDWIN & GLEASON LIMITED NY PAT’. This is nearly impossible to read, and directly on the lower edge of the white (block). I can well imagine that this telltale text was trimmed away on most examples. They were a fine engraving company in NYC, from ca.1860-1901. There is a NY Times article of December 23, 1901, describing the fire consuming their facility in NYC. Presumably they stopped engraving at this point.” Like HarHolz, I also imagine that Jenkins would have purchased a large quantity of the ivoroid blocks (in multiple sizes) and thus have a big supply on hand that could have lasted well beyond 1901. Below, we’ll see that all the Harwoods in a c.1908 Jenkins catalog have the white block inlays as well. So, when did they stop? We don’t yet know.

Bob Jenkins pointed out that the high quality early Harwoods – those we suspect were made in the Jenkins factory (and including the Haynes factory for the white block logo) – seem to fall into these two broad categories:

- Those with the ivoroid block trademark inlay at the end of the fretboard, “New York” (usually) stamped into the back of the headstock, and nothing on the headplate.

And the reverse:

- Those with “Harwood” inlaid on the front of the headstock but missing the fretboard block.

Whether 1911 or much later was the end of Jenkins factory production, surely the blocks must have ran out well before then. Or they might have simply been phased out to change it up; Bill Graham in the FJ article wonders if the more visible headstock logo may have been in response to some of their more popular competitors like Gibson. Or – are we certain that the white block does not coincide with Haynes-Jenkins production and the headstock logo for later jobbers? Clearly, more research into this topic is required.



## c.1911-c.1920s Ramp Down Period:

Harwood guitars and mandolins and even possibly harp guitars were still seen and presumably built by someone as late as c.1930, as new Harwood custom guitars appeared in Jenkins catalogs from 1929 and 1930 (below). These have no logos showing, and the text suggests but in no way proves that Jenkins workers may still have been making them. Most believe they were built by Regal or others.

Page 158 J. W. Jenkins Sons' Music Co.

### THE NEW MICRO SCALE HARWOOD CUSTOM MADE GUITARS

The improved Harwood is a revelation in Guitar making. All the finer qualities resulting from the highest grade workmanship and finest materials are embodied in the new 1929 model Harwood. This make of instrument has enjoyed an enviable reputation for nearly forty years, but the new improved styles are nearer perfection than they ever have been before. The new Harwood is not flashy in appearance—their beauty lies in their simplicity and neatness of construction and finish. The object aimed at is to produce an instrument with a perfect scale and the beautiful tone of the true Spanish guitar.

Harwood instruments are made by workmen who have devoted their entire life to the production of the highest type of instrument that it is possible to produce. Our guarantee is your assurance of satisfaction.



No. B16-B18                      No. B20                      No. B30-B32

No. B16—Harwood Custom Made Guitar, Concert Size. Back and Sides of fine Mahogany, finished in natural color. Hand rubbed satin polish. Selected straight grain white Spruce top, Mahogany neck with Rosewood veneered head piece. Genuine Ebony fingerboard with scientifically correct scale. Sound hole inlaid with black and white wood lines. The top edge bound with black fiberloid. Fitted with high grade strings, perfectly adjusted. Each.....\$20.00

No. B20—Harwood Custom Made Guitar, Concert Size. Back and sides of selected Mahogany, finished in natural color with hand rubbed satin polish. Fine white Spruce top, Mahogany neck with Rosewood veneered head piece. Genuine Ebony fingerboard with scientifically correct scale. Top and back edges bound with black fiberloid and black and white inlaying around soundhole. Fitted with high grade strings, perfectly adjusted. Each.....\$25.00

No. B30—Harwood Custom Made Guitar, Grand Concert Size. Same construction and description as Harwood Guitar B-20 except that it is in larger size. Each .....\$28.00

No. B40—Harwood Custom Made Guitar, Concert Size. A beautiful instrument. Sides and back made in choice quality Genuine Rosewood with hand rubbed polish finish. Selected straight grain white Spruce top. Top and back edge bound with Ivorine. Soundhole and edges inlaid with black and white purfling. Solid Mahogany neck with Rosewood veneered headpiece. Genuine Ebony fingerboard, Pearl position dots inlaid in top and edge. This instrument possesses the true Spanish tone so much desired. Each.....\$45.00


No. B50—Harwood Custom Made Guitar, Grand Concert Size. Same material and construction as No. B-40 but possessing greater volume of tone. Greatest guitar value known. Each.....\$50.00

A c.1926 catalog owned by Jim Garber shows mandolins with the headstock logo and no white block (below). At this point in history, it is nevertheless doubtful that many could have sold – not only due to the incredible amount of competition, but because the mandolin club era was rapidly waning.

202 **J.W. JENKINS**  
SONS MUSIC CO. **MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS**

**MANDOLINS**  
**THE CELEBRATED HARWOOD**  
**LUTE MODEL MANDOLINS**

For over thirty-eight years Harwood Mandolins have been giving complete satisfaction to a discriminating music public. The same care and conscientious workmanship that made them immediately famous thirty-eight years ago, are put into the Harwoods of today. Exceptional in tone and appearance.



**No. B716.**

**No. B730.**

**No. B716. Harwood Artist, made of Especially Selected Rosewood Back and Sides, Finest Straight Grain Spruce Top with Edges Bound with Neat White and Black Inlaying, also White and Black Purfling in Outside Edge and Sound Hole. Finest Mahogany Neck with Rosewood Veneered Head, Full Nickel Plated Patent Head, Ebony Extension Fingerboard Bound with White Celluloid, Pearl Position Dots, 20 German Silver Frets, Compensating Bridge, Nickel Plated Tailpiece with Sliding Cover to Protect Arm from Strings, Perfect Scale, Beautiful Tone. Each .....\$22.50**

**No. B730. Harwood Artist, made of Extra Selected Rosewood Back and Sides, Finest Imported Spruce Top, Perfectly Graduated Edges of Neck, Top and Bottom of Body and Sound Hole Bound with Black and White Celluloid. Top Edges and Sound Hole Inlaid with Marquetry, Large Guard Plate, Beautifully Inlaid with Pearl, Finest Extension Ebony Fingerboard with Pearl Position Dots and 20 German Silver Frets, Beautifully Engraved Patent Head and Tailpiece, Compensating Bridge, Perfect Scale, Wonderful Tone. Each.....\$30.00**

Perhaps another reason Jenkins decided to scale way back on production of Harwoods after 1911 was to concentrate on sales of other, more popular brands like Martin and Gibson. In the 1920's (per the *FJ*) they were one of Gibson's biggest sales outlets. This wonderful image of a Jenkins store window from a Gibson Mastertone catalog of Oct. 1926 doesn't contain a single Harwood, it's given completely over to an all-Gibson display! Note the harp guitar, which was by now already something of a dinosaur.

# The Mastertone

VOLUME I

OCTOBER, 1926

No. 1



## Your Window is Your Best Salesman

Here is an example of an effective Gibson window trim by J. W. Jenkins' Sons, Kansas City, Mo. Windows like this create widespread interest. Foremost merchandisers all agree that care and thought in devising new and original window displays are well worth the effort, as they not only actually increase sales on the merchandise displayed, but also build for the store an impression of quality and progressiveness. There are no limits to what can be done with your window, as it all depends on your energy and originality in working out different effects.



## Final Years:

Even though the guitar and mandolin market was petering out, the Jenkins Co. continued to carry and offer stringed instruments of other companies. They also concentrated on their enduring staples of pianos, orchestra and band instruments and repair services. Numerous catalogs are known from the 1930's into the next decades (a helpful fellow at the NAMM archives kindly checked all of theirs for me), but none have Harwood guitars or mandolins.

Bob Jenkins' father, J. W. Jenkins IV, sold the nearly century-old company in 1972, after which the company was liquidated. The warehouse was sold and later torn down due to hazardous contamination on the site. The store was torn down to build a parking garage for the AT&T Pavilion – though due to its historic status, the art deco facade was retained. Worst of all, there are *no* surviving records – only what scant ephemera happens to turn up. For instance, in the 1960s, mandolin collector Jim Reynolds acquired the estate of an ex-Jenkins employee, with one fascinating drawing shown below.




## CATALOGS & ADS

### Cadenza Advertisements


I'll continue now with the *Cadenza* advertisements, as they may relate to the production and physical location timelines above. Using a nearly complete run and doing a pretty thorough search, I found no new smoking gun bits of evidence, but a few possible clues. The following two pages show each Jenkins ad that includes anything about the instruments (ads for sheet music only are not included). They ran somewhat continuously from May 1896 (soon after they took over production from Haynes) to October 1903.

Readers will have their own observations or analysis of these ads; I didn't find anything too compelling. None of the frequent "Manufacturing" statements gives any real clues about any factory timing. Occasionally they list their bargain brands (Washington and Clifford) and always with "Manufactured by us" or similar text. As I said earlier, this is not proof that they made them, but on the other hand, why couldn't they have? It would better explain the number count. Often their address is not listed (just send a letter to Jenkins in Kansas City and it would obviously get there!) – other times it is. Interesting that for the first several years they advertised themselves as "J. W. Jenkins' Sons, *Mf'rs.*" - perhaps an attempt to alert the public to their new production capabilities, rather than just being known as a large full-service music store.

**If You Know the Harwood**



Guitars and Mandolins, you know they are the best instruments you ever played on. If you don't know them it's time you were becoming acquainted. In tone—beauty—and construction they haven't a rival, and their rapidly spreading fame is proof of the assertion. Call in and see them or send for our Harwood catalogue.




**J. W. JENKINS' SONS, M<sup>rs</sup>.,**  
921 Main Street, KANSAS CITY, MO.

We also manufacture the Washington, Clifford and Standard Guitars and Mandolins. If \$\$\$ and satisfaction count with you, then give us a trial. We know you will stay.


May/June 1896

**Washington and Clifford**

**Guitars and Mandolins**



Have fulfilled every promise made for them. Amateurs and professionals play them and like them. They have proven popular everywhere because they are *good* instruments, sold at very little prices. If you play or want to play you should buy one.




**In Oak, \$10.  
In Mahogany, \$12.**

**J. W. JENKINS' SONS, M<sup>rs</sup>.,**  
921 Main Street, KANSAS CITY, MO.


We are also manufacturers of the famous Harwood Guitars and Mandolins. Send for special catalogue.

July/August 1896

**First, Last and Always**



Get a HARWOOD Guitar or Mandolin if you want an instrument that's worthy of your confidence. Sweetest toned, beautifully finished, and of a strength that defies time and usage, you'll find a Harwood the favorite wherever comparison places a test upon its merits. Send for catalogue.



**J. W. JENKINS' SONS, M<sup>rs</sup>.,**  
921 Main Street, KANSAS CITY, MO.

September/October 1896

January/February 1897


March/April 1897

March/April 1898 (<923


May/June 1898 added) Main

Ads in The Cadenza

**All the Good Things . . .**




Written and told by us about Harwood Guitars and Mandolins would fill a good sized book. If there's one who doesn't think they're the best Guitars and Mandolins made, he's failed to make himself known. Fact is, you can't say anything against the Harwoods because they are as perfect as such instruments can be made. Art catalogue for the asking.




**J. W. JENKINS' SONS, M<sup>rs</sup>.,**  
921 Main Street, KANSAS CITY, MO.

November/December 1896

**ALL MUSICIANS SHOULD KNOW**



Especially those interested in Guitars and Mandolins—that we are doing the largest wholesale and retail business in Musical Instruments, and have the only Guitar and Mandolin factory in the west. Because that knowledge will show this to be the logical place to buy their supplies at a saving. We are manufacturers of the celebrated Harwood, Washington and Clifford Guitars and Mandolins, instruments that have taken first rank through merit and continue there because they deserve to. Write us for catalogues and prices.



**J. W. JENKINS' SONS, M<sup>rs</sup>.,**  
921 Main Street, KANSAS CITY, MO.  
Oldest and Largest Music House in the West.

May/June 1897

November/December 1897


(with 923 Main and "Professionals given special deals" added)

January/February 1898


(")

**WASHINGTON AND CLIFFORD**

**Guitars and Mandolins**



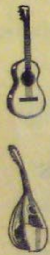
Have fulfilled every promise made for them. Amateurs and professionals play them and like them. They have proven popular everywhere because they are *good* instruments, sold at very low prices. As a teacher you know that pupils can not always afford a "HARWOOD" the best in the world, then the question of what is the best in a medium priced instrument comes up, advise with us at once, the above line are fully guaranteed.



**J. W. JENKINS' SONS, M<sup>rs</sup>.,**  
921 Main Street, KANSAS CITY, MO.  
Manufacture them.

July/August 1897

**HARWOODS.** !!!!!!!



The perfect Guitars and Mandolins—form friendships that never break. Once you play on a Harwood you will have no other kind. Guaranteed in writing for five years.

Write for catalogue and terms. Agents wanted.

Manufactured and sold by


**J. W. JENKINS' SONS,**  
921-923 Main Street, KANSAS CITY, MO.  
*Oldest and Largest Music House in the West.*

Sep/Oct 1897

DID YOU EVER  
FIGURE WITH

**"JENKINS"**

of Kansas City, Mo.,?



Did You KNOW that they are making a wonderful success of their manufacturing of GUITARS and MANDOLINS? They issue a beautiful catalogue, and make exclusive agencies with good standing professionals. Write them today, give them a chance, a trial won't cost anything.

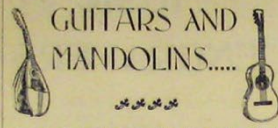
**J. W. JENKINS' SONS' MUSIC CO.,**  
The Hostler B. Co. Manufacturers of  
HARWOOD, WASHINGTON & ROYAL  
Guitars and Mandolins.

Jul/Aug 1898

Sep/Oct 1898

Mar/Apr 1899  
(slightly altered)

**HARWOOD**  
GUITARS AND  
MANDOLINS.....



Are made in Kansas City, U. S. A. And we are proud of the fact that we have given Kansas City the distinction of producing the finest Guitars and Mandolins in the world. Harwoods are guaranteed for five years and are praised by musicians the world over. Write today for special discounts for Holiday Gifts. Manufactured by

**J. W. JENKINS' SONS'**  
MUSIC CO.,  
921 and 923 Main Street,  
KANSAS CITY, MO.  
*Oldest and largest music house in the West.*

Nov/Dec 1898

From January, 1899, just a couple of music ads, then nothing until 1903

**"HARWOOD" GUITARS and MANDOLINS**

Are the VERY BEST that intelligence, honesty, money, material and years of practical experience have produced. Send for catalogue. Every genuine "Harwood" is stamped (burned in the wood) with the name "Harwood." Look for the name when you buy. Each "Harwood" instrument is guaranteed by us for five years from date of purchase.

**What they say of the "Harwood."**

"I consider the 'Harwood' the best instruments of the kind made." E. N. GUCKERT.  
"I cheerfully recommend Harwood Guitars and Mandolins as the very best on the market." NELLIE E. HIGH, soloist and teacher.  
"I consider the 'Harwood' instruments the very acme of perfection—absolutely without a shortcoming." ED. D. THORNE, guitarist, St. Louis. (The famous Prof. Thorne, globe-trotter, gentleman and solo guitarist.)  
"I have always found the 'Harwood' instruments excellent in every particular." EFFIE MARIE POWELL, guitarist, Ashbury Park, N. J.  
"Your instruments are all that could be desired." W. G. BRANDENBURG, guitar soloist, Terre Haute, Ind.  
"I have bought 213 'Harwood' instruments for my pupils in the past ten years." LESTER PAYNE, Spokane, Wash. "Nough said."  
"It is the best instrument on the market." FRANCIS H. ROBERTSON, Minneapolis, Minn.  
"The 'Harwood' does not lack a single point which makes it unequalled." THE MOZART CLUB, Kansas City.  
"We are proud of the 'Harwood' instruments in our orchestra." THE CADENZA MANDOLIN ORCHESTRA, Spokane, Wash.  
"It is a pleasure for us to recommend the 'Harwood' to anyone wanting a high-grade instrument." ZENDA MANDOLIN ORCHESTRA, Arkansas City, Ark.

**Thousands of other endorsements equally as strong**  
Every teacher should have our new catalogue and learn of our special wholesale agency proposition. Exclusive representation.

**J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co., Kansas City, Mo., Manufacturers**  
Write us at once for any possible want musically. In replying mention The Cadenza.

May 1903

June 1903

**HARWOOD** Mandolins Guitars  
Violins Banjos

SEND FOR CATALOGUE



We have been in business since 1878, our father commenced in 1853. We have our own factory. We can save you money and give you protection on the agency plan, selling to you at factory prices. We make all goods and can suit every buyer in price and quality. Ours is a proposition unequalled anywhere in this country. The editor and proprietor of THE CADENZA has used our make of instruments for twelve years.

Write us for everything or anything in the music line.

**J. W. JENKINS' SONS MUSIC COMPANY**  
1013 and 1015 Walnut Street, Kansas City, Mo.

July 1903

Aug 1903

Sep 1903

Oct 1903

Nothing after

## Newspapers

In 1897, Kansas City held a huge "Home Products Show" from June 1st to 14th. Jenkins was well-represented in write-ups, a wonderful feature, and their own elaborate ads. Some nice corroborating history appears in this feature:

**GUITARS AND MANDOLINS.**

**KANSAS CITY INSTRUMENTS HOLD THEIR OWN EVERYWHERE.**

These Manufactured by J. W. Jenkins' Sons Are Standard in This Country—20,000 Made Here Last Year.

Twenty thousand mandolins and guitars were made in Kansas City last year. These instruments from the West found their way to not only all portions of the United States, but to Honolulu, Alaska and other outlying countries, and this in the face of the fact that the East and European countries have been manufacturing mandolins and guitars for years. It is certainly an odd and interesting fact that Boston, New York and other centers of musical culture should send to the supposedly untutored West for their musical instruments, a class of trade which has until a few years since been considered the East's by right of excellence and general priority.

In speaking of this feature last night Mr. J. W. Jenkins of J. W. Jenkins' Sons, whose display of mandolins and guitars is one of the most interesting at the Home Products show, said: "It is a rare occurrence for the East to send West for any article made in the East and especially an article which many people of the West even think can't be made anywhere except in the East. The past year our factory sent instruments right back to Boston, New York, Chicago and St. Louis and they have received universal commendation. Our instruments are also the highest priced of any on the market, so that they must sell because they are best, not because they are cheapest."

The "Harwood" is the name of the best mak of mandolins and guitars manufactured by J. W. Jenkins' Sons, and it is a name which has a stamp of excellence all over the country, the "Harwood" instruments being recognized as standard everywhere.

It was in 1894 that an Eastern firm began to make the Harwood mandolins and guitars for J. W. Jenkins' Sons. They were splendid instruments and soon had an established reputation. Finally the Kansas City firm decided to make the instruments themselves and it was in 1895 that they began manufacturing them. Of course they employed the most skilled workmen from the East and the "Harwood" instruments continued to increase in popularity, even if "made in Kansas City."

From *The Kansas City Star*, Jun 12, 1897

The "Harwood" was the first guitar placed on the market that would stand the use of steel strings and yet lose none of the sweetness when gut strings replaced the steel ones. This was a decided triumph. The largest guitar made is also a "Harwood" and Jenkins's was the first factory to introduce the 18-string harp guitar, now so much in favor.

According to Mr. Jenkins there is no secret in the manufacture of guitars and mandolins. It is simply a question of good material, skilled workmen and plenty of time.

The process of manufacture is one of painstaking care as the work is almost all of an exceedingly delicate nature, requiring niceness of touch. To show what care and pains are exercised it may be cited that the making of a "Harwood" instrument requires the better part of a year, that is from the time the rough board comes into the factory and goes out finished instruments. Rosewood, mahogany and Norway spruce are the woods that enter into the construction of the "Harwood." The wood that is to be used is first kiln dried for six months. Then the backs and tops are put together, and the braces put in. Then the unfinished instrument is put into the kiln again and left in several months. Then comes the final work of polishing up. Oftentimes an instrument comes out imperfect, and when so, is never placed on the market. The rosewood is used for the backs and sides, genuine mahogany for the necks and all blocks and braces and the Norway spruce for the tops.

Special features of the "Harwood" are the superior tone and sustaining power, the durability, the wedge-shaped neck, making playing easier, and the bracing, which is extremely substantial and yet has especial reference to the sounding qualities of the instrument.

Mr. Jenkins is very enthusiastic over the Home Products show and the good it will do his factory along with all others in Kansas City.

"Why," said he yesterday, "I have a dozen persons a day tell me that they didn't know we manufactured our own instruments here. They imagined that they were made in the East and that we simply put our names on them."

A visit to the factory, which is above the retail store, 921 Main street, will show the instruments in all processes of construction from the rough board to the finished product, and will convince anyone that they are very much "made in Kansas City."

Note the many important “firsts” for the company:

- “20,000 mandolins and guitars were made in Kansas City last year.”<sup>9</sup>
- Sent instruments east, even to cities that make their own, and despite being “the highest priced of any on the market.”
- “The ‘Harwood’ was the first guitar placed on the market that would stand the use of steel strings...”
- “The largest guitar made is also a “Harwood.”
- “Jenkins was the first factory to introduce the 18-string harp guitar, now so much in favor.”

Half page *Kansas City Star* advertisements published during Kansas City’s “Home Products Show” also illustrate how Jenkins was going full blast by mid-1897.

# CELEBRATED HOME PRODUCTS!

A distinctive feature of the Home Products Exposition is the display of Guitars and Mandolins, in the various degrees of construction, from the factories of J. W. Jenkins' Sons, Manufacturers of

## HARWOOD, WASHINGTON AND CLIFFORD GUITARS AND MANDOLINS.

Following are views from the Kansas City Factory where thousands of Harwood, Washington and Clifford Guitars and Mandolins are made yearly.



### The Harwood

*Guitars and Mandolins are the best in the world. In tone, beauty, construction and durability they show superiority to all other makes. They are being sold all over the world and they are giving perfect satisfaction wherever they are used. Every Harwood Guitar or Mandolin is sold under a five years' written guarantee.*

HARWOOD PRICES:

**\$20.00, \$22.50, \$25.00, \$30.00, \$32.50, \$40.00, \$45.00, \$50.00, \$75.00, \$100.00.**

**TO PLAY OR NOT TO PLAY**

Upon some musical instrument is a question that the people generally are deciding in the affirmative. That so many are choosing Guitars and Mandolins is only the just recognition of the musical merit of these instruments. The ease with which they are learned, and their small cost, make them especially desirable to those taking the first steps in a musical education, while the popularity of this class of music, and its adaptability to all kinds of musical entertainment, retain the guitar and mandolin in favor with all classes of musicians. It is the wide demand for high grade Guitars and Mandolins that has made possible our large factory for their manufacture in Kansas City.



### THE CLIFFORD

*Guitars and Mandolins, in oak and mahogany, are standard instruments, and at our prices—\$10 and \$12—cannot be equalled. They are thoroughly well made, special care being given to neat and durable construction. The scale is correct, necks carefully set, and instruments easy to finger.*

Clifford Guitars and Mandolins sell at.....

**\$10.00, \$12.00 and \$14.00**



### The Washington.

*Having made such a grand success of the Harwood Guitars and Mandolins, we have for years been perfecting a line of cheaper rosewood instruments, and to-day, in the Washington, give the public the finest line of medium priced rosewood guitars and mandolins ever offered. Like the great Harwood they will stand the use of steel strings if desired. They are absolutely correct in scale, handsome in design, easy to finger and are fully warranted for one year.*

WASHINGTON GUITARS AND MANDOLINS SELL AT

**\$15.00, \$18.00, \$20.00 and \$25.00.**

People living outside of Kansas City are specially invited to send for our catalogue of Harwood, Clifford and Washington Guitars and Mandolins, and to write for any information desired. We guarantee complete satisfaction with any purchase made by mail. Instruments sent by express subject to examination and trial before purchasing.

**921-923 Main St.**

*Kansas City's Oldest and Largest Music House.*

# J. W. JENKINS' SONS.

**921-923 Main St.**

*Kansas City's Oldest and Largest Music House.*

*The Kansas City Star*, June 1, 1897

<sup>9</sup> This is impossible to believe. The next year a different article would state “5,000 instruments” a year, which is already hard to swallow.

These particular ads might help us safely date the company catalog that follows to circa 1897. Note the Jenkins-built 18-string harp guitar.

# THE GREAT HARWOOD

## Guitars and Mandolins

Stand absolutely at the head of these string instruments. Merit has placed them there. We started their manufacture in the face of predictions of failure and wreck and ruin. To-day we are employing five times as many men in our factory as we did two years ago, and Harwood Guitars and Mandolins are being sold all over the world. Their success is a monument to their merit and to Kansas City as their place of production.

**What People Say Who Play on Harwoods:**

Los Angeles, Cal.  
**J. W. Jenkins' Sons.**  
 Gentlemen: The "Harwood" special guitar arrived all O. K., and after giving it a thorough test, I am delighted. The artistic design and elegant finish surpass all that I have ever seen. I have used mandolins and guitars of all the leading makes, and am convinced that the "Harwood" is unequalled for tone and mechanical excellence. Yours truly,

*Leola Payne*

Sterling, Kan.  
**J. W. Jenkins' Sons, Kansas City, Mo.**  
 Gentlemen: During the past ten years of my experience as a teacher and performer on the mandolin, I can truly say that in point of tone, perfection of scale and beauty of workmanship, the Harwood takes the lead. I recommend them to my pupils wherever I teach. I wish you the success that your most excellent instruments deserve. I am, truly yours,

*Miss C. Batjes*

Kansas City, Mo., Oct. 26, 1895.  
**J. W. Jenkins' Sons, City.**  
 Gentlemen: The Harwood instruments possess a wonderful combination of quality and quantity of tone as well as a perfect scale. While the general construction and workmanship are faultless in every detail, they stand today without an equal. Very sincerely,

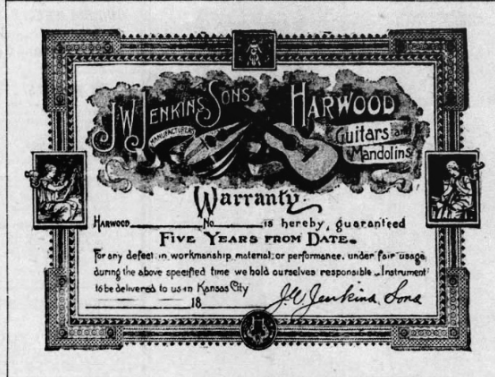
*Edw. Barnes*

**J. W. Jenkins' Sons, Kansas City, Mo.**  
 Gent: After giving the Harwood Mandolin a thorough trial, I consider it to be the most brilliantly toned and artistically finished Mandolin ever used in our orchestra. Respectfully,

*Raymond A. Chast*

Music Director of the Los Angeles Mandolin, Banjo and Harp Orchestra.

Fac simile of the Harwood Warranty furnished with each instrument.



**What People Say Who Play on Harwoods:**

San Francisco, Cal.  
**J. W. Jenkins' Sons, Kansas City, Mo.**  
 Gentlemen: It is nearly three years since I obtained my No. 8 Harwood Guitar of you. During that time it has been subjected to the most severe and sudden climatic changes, having been my constant companion over the deserts of Arizona and New Mexico, in the fogs and damp of winter in the Puget Sound country, and in the high altitudes of Montana and Colorado. It has traveled about 50,000 miles and is as sound today as it was. In my travels over the territory named, I have seen many guitars of standard make, but they showed the effect of atmospheric influences. This is particularly noticeable in high altitudes. I consider the tone of the Harwood Guitar incomparable. Very respectfully yours,

*Edw. Thorne*

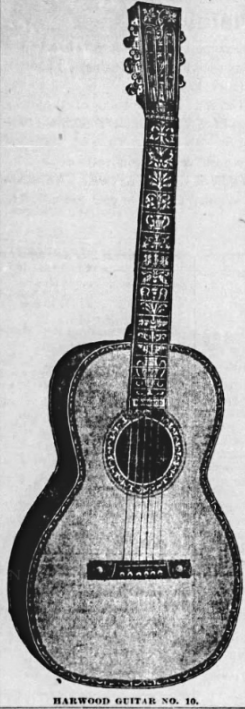
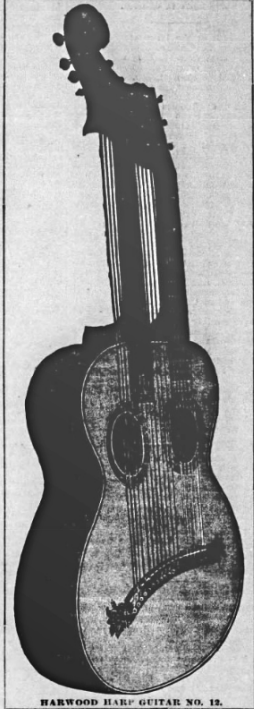
Kansas City, Mo.

**J. W. Jenkins' Sons.**  
 The "Genuine Merit" of the Harwood Guitars and Mandolins has made them the possession they have among both amateur and professional players throughout the United States. My own opinion is that they are the only great instruments.

*E. N. Guckert*

**J. W. Jenkins' Sons, Kansas City, Mo.**  
 Gentlemen: We use and recommend the Harwood Guitars and Mandolins, believing them to be the best in the world for tone, durable construction and easy fingering.  
 M. T. Wright, Prof. L. J. Gisch, W. R. B. Miller, Prof. Frank Johnston, Archie N. Johnson.

"To the Music Loving Public!"  
 We, the undersigned, members of Primrose & West's Minstrel Co., have used the "Harwood" Guitars and Mandolins the past years on and off the stage, and find them for tone and workmanship superior to all others. Yours very truly,  
 Howe, Wall and McLeod, Musical Artists, Primrose & West's Minstrels, Seasons 91-92-93-94-95-96.



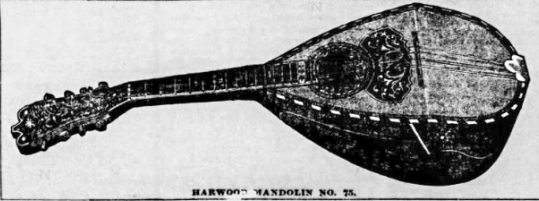
Harwood Prices:			Harwood Prices:		
\$20.00,	\$22.50,	\$25.00,	\$20.00,	\$22.50,	\$25.00,
\$28.00,	\$30.00,	\$32.50,	\$28.00,	\$30.00,	\$32.50,
\$40.00,	\$45.00,	\$50.00,	\$40.00,	\$45.00,	\$50.00,
\$75.00,	\$100.00,	\$150.	\$75.00,	\$100.00,	\$150.



**Harwood Agencies:**

Harwood Guitars and Mandolins have been sold everywhere in the United States and in many foreign countries, and for the better handling of our large business we have established the following Harwood Agencies:

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| WASHINGTON, D. C.    | ROCHESTER, N. Y.   |
| CORRY, PA.           | ELKHART, IND.      |
| REDLANDS, CAL.       | LOS ANGELES, CAL.  |
| HELENA, MONT.        | OMAHA, NEB.        |
| HONOLULU, HAWAII.    | WALLA WALLA, WASH. |
| MEXICO CITY, MEXICO. |                    |



**THE HARWOOD instruments excel in the following points:**  
**FIRST**—The wood used in all parts is of better quality and is seasoned longer before use. HARWOOD GUITARS, MANDOLINS, MANDOLAS and BANJOLINAS never crack or warp through any fault of the material or construction.  
**SECOND**—In consequence of this, the tone is superior and has sustaining power which is simply marvelous.  
**THIRD**—The wedge-shaped neck, which was first used in the Harwood, is the most perfect and easiest to handle of any style yet introduced. A guitarist can play on a Harwood without cramping the fingers, as the finger board is slightly rounding on the top, similar to a violin. This point is appreciated by every guitar or mandolin player, as they can play longer without tiring the fingers or hand.  
**FOURTH**—There is no stained wood of any description used in the construction of the Harwood instruments, every block and brace being genuine mahogany, the backs and sides of solid rosewood, the neck of genuine mahogany, the top of spruce, the same as used in fine violins.  
**FIFTH**—The bracing, a very important point, is peculiar and different from all others, in that the braces and sounding bars are put together with reference to producing the best tone, and in such a manner that the guitar will stand being strung to concert pitch with steel strings, without the neck or sounding board straining or warping, and while left strung to this pitch seldom break strings. Everyone compliments the Harwood on this point.

A special catalogue of Harwood Guitars and Mandolins will be sent upon request, and instruments will be expressed anywhere in the United States, subject to examination and trial before purchasing.

921-923 Main St.

# J. W. JENKINS' SONS.

921-923 Main St.

Kansas City's Oldest and Largest Music House.

Kasba, Vose & Sons, Jewett and Krell Pianos.

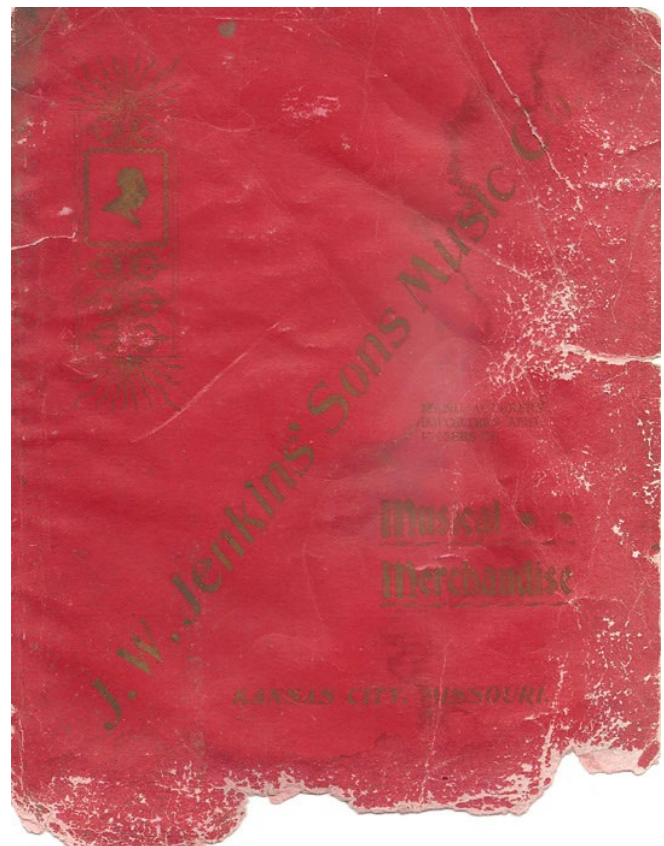
## Catalogs

Early Jenkins catalogs are incredibly rare. We now know of one from 1895-1899 and one from c.1908. Then we jump to c.1918 and others spanning 1925-1930. The NAMM Archives also contain several post-1930, none of which contain Harwood instruments. The first catalog was owned by the late Bob Jenkins, who had previously shared the guitar and mandolin portions of this important document on his own web site.<sup>10</sup>

I won't go into details on all the mandolins and guitars (that's for someone else), concentrating now solely on the harp guitars (what this article was originally supposed to be about in the first place!).

### J. W. JENKINS' SONS Catalog, 1895-1899

This undated catalog includes a facsimile of the then-current warranty card. As Bob Jenkins pointed out to me, the document has a spot to fill in the date of purchase: \_\_\_\_\_ 18\_\_\_. As Jenkins terminated their agreement with the Haynes company at the close of 1894, this catalog *must* have been printed between 1895 and 1899, otherwise the warranty card would have the purchase date 19\_\_ printed on it. Various clues lead Bob to believe c.1895 is accurate, while I question the timeline of taking over from Haynes while working with a small workforce well before the new dedicated factory was set up, as profiled in the 1898 article.<sup>11</sup> The catalog is chock-full of a ready-to-go full line of Harwood mandolins, guitars and harp guitars – how did they prepare all these so quickly?! Note also the “ten years” reference below.



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<sup>10</sup> I've archived a new PDF of the pertinent catalog pages here: <https://www.harpguitars.net/history/harwood/catalog-jenkins.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> As seen on the previous page, I believe that c.1897 is a safe guess for this first full catalog.

Inside, we find an endorsement from E. N. Guckert, "Acknowledged to be Best Guitarist in America." I'm not sure how they determined that, as I have found little on him in the early Cadenzas; there is nary a profile of any kind as they did for most players of note. He did create a guitar chord book that was apparently a big seller, and later a folio of his own compositions, entirely forgotten today. Though he ran his own publishing business and guitar activities in Bucyrus, Ohio, this was from about 1898 on. Interestingly, for a few years beginning in September 1894, Guckert's address in the "Prominent Teachers" Cadenza list was 921 Main Street – Jenkins music store! So, it seems Jenkins did what they could to elevate the status of their store guitar teacher. It is also interesting to note that the Cadenza offices (and home of its editor Clarence L. Partee) were also in Kansas City nearby. Note in the final Cadenza ad above Jenkins' statement that "editor of this magazine (Partee) has used our instruments for twelve years" (i.e., since c.1891).

Catalogue of Musical Merchandise. 89

### HARWOOD GUITARS.

As a proof that the *Harwood* is the best Guitar made, every *Genuine Harwood* is now furnished with a Written Guarantee for FIVE YEARS, insuring against any defect in material or construction, and does not restrict you to the use of gut strings. Please note fac simile. No other high-priced Guitar is warranted for more than one year, and that is only "verbal."

FAC SIMILE TESTIMONIAL.

*Chicago Ill*

*Friends Jenkins & Sons*

*The Harwood Guitars and Mandolins*

*are unequalled in all points of Excellence.*

*I have had 3 different Extensions, above the usual*

*Guitars sent to me lately with Big Inducements*

*offered for the use of my home in recommending them*

*but as I can only use the Best of Instruments in*

*my Recitals I could not comply with their wishes*

*I have used the Harwood Guitars for the last 5 or*

*6 years and they have astonished both manufacturer of*

*Guitars and Expert players throughout the country by*

*their extraordinary quality of Tone and Workmanship.*

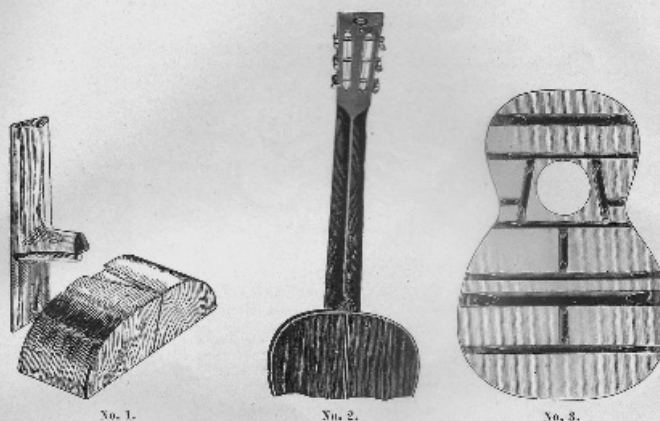
*Yours Truly E. N. Guckert*

Acknowledged to be Best Guitarist in America.

Some of the descriptions about Harwood construction – which apply to harp guitars as well – are worth noting:

The claim their wood is "seasoned longer before use than of any other (manufacturer)," emphasizing that "It is Ten Years since anyone ever heard of a Harwood Guitar splitting or cracking." This claim – if accurate – would imply that the catalog was written in 1899, ten years after Haynes first started building them.

## HARWOOD GUITARS.



### IMPROVED MANNER OF JOINING THE NECK AND BODY OF INSTRUMENTS.

The above cut (No. 1) shows the improved manner of joining the neck and body of instruments by "dovetailing." Every Guitar and Mandolin manufactured by us has the neck set in this manner, making it impossible for it to ever pull out. Cut No. 2 shows the wedge shaped neck, peculiar to the "Harwood Guitars." Cut No. 3 shows our method of bracing the sounding board, where the braces under the bridge, and below, run crosswise the guitar instead of lengthwise. This gives additional strength and resonance of tone. All the side blocks for strengthening the corners of "Harwood Guitars" are put in separately, instead of a strip of wood with notches sawed, as in all other makes.

All Harwood Guitars are warranted (for five years) not to split, warp or crack through fault of wood or construction, in any climate.

Send for Special Catalogue devoted exclusively to the Harwood Guitars, containing lowest net retail prices and the simile testimonials from America's most famous Guitarists.

They also point out their dovetail (was this that rare at the time?), wedge-shaped necks, "slightly rounded" (radiused) fingerboards, and natural, solid wood including spruce top, rosewood back and sides (Brazilian), and mahogany for the neck and all blocks and braces.

Speaking of bracing, they kindly share with us their unique pattern, pointing out that this type of ladder bracing allows that "*the Guitar will stand being strung to concert pitch with steel strings...*" Note their use of separate blocks in place of kerfing. Perhaps Harwood owners should be looking inside for these features – or absence of – for clues as to when and where built. My own 1890's-style "New York" harp guitar has kerfing – does that mean it was built by Haynes? Similarly, my later c.1908 "harp bandurria" has kerfing also, meaning that they must have switched over to it between the two catalogs.

With so many historical treasures found on just these few pages, one lusts to find a copy of the "Special Catalogue devoted exclusively to the Harwood Guitars...!"

... THE ...

**Harwood Harp Guitars**

are praised by all—they are used by the following artists and others:

GIUSEPPE BISTOLFI,  
 LOUIS J. GESCH,  
 H. P. SUTORIUS,  
 W. H. ADAMS,  
 A. MONTINELLI,  
 J. B. GOUGER,  
 E. M. JOHNSON,  
 DON TURLEY,  
 G. W. CAMPBELL,  
 FRANK W. CREASEY,  
 FRANK JIMMERSON,  
 E. N. GUCKERT,  
 SAM. S. OAKFORD,  
 DICK JOHNSON,  
 KING KOLLINS,  
 D. N. MEAGHER,  
 W. J. BRACE,  
 TUXEDO TRIO of N. Y.,  
 WM. C. STAHL,  
 GEO. H. HAWSON.

After years of constant endeavor we have produced a HARP GUITAR which is simply unrivaled in any point by the few manufacturers who have offered any thing of the kind.

“THE HARWOOD” Harp Guitar is practical and braced in a secure manner preventing the instrument pulling apart, as in others. It is just as effective as an Italian Harp, and is altogether preferable.

**HARWOOD GUITARS.**

No. 12.—HARP GUITAR. Eighteen Strings. The above Guitar is of the following Dimensions: Length of Body, 21¾ inches; Width at Large End, 19 inches; Width at Small End, 13 inches; Depth of Body at Lower End, 4½ inches; Depth at Neck, 4¼ inches. Rosewood Back and Sides, Finest Mahogany Necks, Ebony Fingerboard and Bridge, German Silver Frets, Inlaid Purfling around Top, Sound Holes and down Center of Back, the extra (12) Strings produce marvelous Harp effects.....Each \$140 00

Every Harwood Instrument is Warranted in writing for Five Years.

This image (at left) represents one of several variations of the large-bodied, 19" wide, 12 sub-bass Harwood harp guitar. Surviving specimens are shown below.

Though this catalog represents the very beginning of the period that Jenkins built their own instruments, and thus these harp guitars (as seen also in the shop engraving above), the dated Cadenza photograph below proves that this same harp guitar had been built previously by Haynes in Boston.

Amazing that Jenkins already lists *twenty* men who play Harwood *harp guitars*! These are not just a list of guitarists – *those* get an entirely different list elsewhere, with only a few

of the names common to both!<sup>12</sup>

Prominent names include Guiseppe (Joseph) Bistolfi, who in a year or so would order a harp guitar from Orville Gibson, and W. C. Stahl, who would eventually offer his own line of instruments – including various harp guitars – built by the Larson brothers of Chicago.<sup>13</sup>

This list of otherwise long-forgotten testimonial names includes several that will help corroborate the incredible story in the next chapter.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.harpguitars.net/history/harwood/catalog,p-49-jenkins.jpg>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.harpguitars.net/blog/2015/08/orvilles-harp-guitars/>

## HARWOOD GUITARS.

### THE No. 9 HARWOOD GUITAR, (New Model.)

ARTISTS' GRAND WITH SUB-BASS ATTACHMENT.

Popularly Known as the HARWOOD  
Harp Guitar, Resembling the  
Italian Harp in Effects.



#### HARWOOD ARTISTS' GRAND WITH SUB-BASS ATTACHMENT.

No. 9.—The above Guitar is of the following Dimensions; Length of Body, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches; Width at Widest End, 14 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches; at Smallest End, 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches; Depth, 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Solid Rosewood Back and Sides, Genuine Mahogany Neck, Solid Ebony Bridges and Fingerboard, German Silver Frets, Pearl Position Dots, Inlaid Purfling around Sound Hole and Edges, Improved Plan of Braces and Blocking, (all of which are Genuine Mahogany); the Scale is the same as our No. 6 or No. 2 Guitars, making it very easy to finger. The Sub-Bass Strings are very effective in Club playing and resemble an Italian Harp in quality and power. Each \$72.50

All Harwood Instruments are Warranted for Five Years from date of sale.

#### SPECIAL HARWOOD CATALOGUES.

Send for Special Catalogue of Harwood Instruments, giving testimonials from the most celebrated Artists, and net retail prices.

This curious instrument is a standard parlor guitar with "sub-bass attachment." Below you'll see the sole surviving specimen. When it turned up some years ago, no one believed it to have been an original, unmodified instrument. When Bob shared the catalog with us in January 2012, we then learned that it was completely authentic!

While it is undoubtedly a quick and inexpensive way to create and market a harp guitar, I believe it may also represent a "missing link" between "America's first harp guitar" shown in a following chapter and more standard harp guitars.

Prior to this find, we assumed that it was Gibson who first coined the term "sub-bass" for floating basses in 1903; I now strongly suspect that Jenkins first introduced the term.

## J. W. JENKINS' SONS advertisement, 1902

Between the late 1890's catalog and the next, this news clipping (at right) appeared. Up until this point, the Harwood harp guitars had only friction tuners for the sub-basses (and probably piano pins for the "neck slab" style), and even simple friction tuners for the neck strings. This rare ad introduces a "new 14-string" instrument.

Since they had already built Harwood 8-sub-bass harp guitars (shown below), the "new" probably refers to the new design and/or a switch to geared tuners for the sub-basses. Note in this "transitional" instrument that the elaborately carved bridge remains from the earlier large 12-bass models. This is the last time it will be seen.



**A NEW 14-STRINGED GUITAR.**

The J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co. Have Just Manufactured a New Instrument Which is a Beauty.

The accompanying cut illustrates the J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co.'s new 14-stringed guitar, which they have just perfected. They have been working for several months to bring this instrument out, and they now believe that they have today one of the most perfect guitars that has yet been put on the market.

This instrument is made of the very finest of rosewood, which they have had on hand for more than five years, and which has been in their own dry-kiln for more than two years. The necks of the instrument are made of the very best straight grain mahogany, and in building the instruments the necks are dovetailed into the end blocks to prevent them from pulling out. This feature, they believe, is one that is original with their house, claiming that they made instruments in this manner before any other manufacturer adopted the idea. The instrument is strengthened throughout with mahogany braces. There is not a single piece of material used in this instrument that has not been through their own dry-kiln; consequently, when they send a guitar out with a five years' guarantee, they do so feeling confident that it will not come back.

They feel confident that their new 14-stringed guitar will become immensely popular, as well as a big seller, and they propose to exploit it with much vigor from now on.



**NEW 14-STRINGED GUITAR.**

The advertisement features a detailed black and white illustration of a 14-stringed guitar. The guitar is shown from a three-quarter view, highlighting its body, neck, and headstock. The body has a classic acoustic shape with a sound hole and a bridge. The neck is long and has 14 frets. The headstock is angled and has 14 tuning pegs. The illustration is positioned to the right of the main text block.

## J. W. JENKINS' SONS Catalog, c.1908

This catalog (at left) contains an "1908 model" guitar and harp guitar, so was probably produced in 1908 or at the earliest, during the transition into that year. These pages are courtesy of collector/historian Lynn Wheelwright.

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE CATALOGUE. 107

**GUITARS.**

**THE CELEBRATED HARWOOD 1908 MODEL.**



**GENUINE HARWOOD TRADE MARK REGISTERED**

**THE "HARWOOD"**  
Harp Guitar is not only the greatest achievement in the past and present history of Guitar manufacturing, but is a near approach to perfection. The full, rich tone of the bass, combined with the pure, clear tone of the treble, makes the instrument invaluable for orchestra, club and concert work. The construction of the "Harwood" Harp Guitar has been worked out on scientific principles, and instruments as now built combine the strength and tone which has made the "Harwood" famous.

**THE "HARWOOD"**  
Was the first Harp Guitar on the market. Imitators have tried to duplicate it, but the tone and durability of the "Harwood" have never been equaled. When considering the purchase of a Harp Guitar, quality should be the question, not price.

Harwood Style Harp Guitar. No. 1914.

No. 1914. New Century, 1908, Perfected Model, Twelve Strings. Similar in Size to the Great No. 1908 Artists' Grand "Harwood." The New Improvement for Tuning the Bass Strings is as Simple as Tuning the Fingerboard Strings. Extra Fine Rosewood Back and Sides, Ivory Celluloid Bound Edges, Ebony Fingerboard and Bridge, Mahogany Neck, Braced by a New System with Genuine Mahogany Braces. Wonderful in Tone. . . . . Each \$29.00

Every Harwood Instrument Warranted in Writing for Five Years.

“The Celebrated Harwood 1908 Model” (at left) is likely meant to imply that the Harwood *brand* was by now “celebrated” – otherwise, “celebrated” would have to be referring to an already-popular instrument, putting this catalog sometime later.

The “New Improvement for Tuning the Bass Strings” may refer to the switch to geared tuners for the sub-basses, even though this had first occurred six years earlier, as seen in the 1902 ad for Jenkins’ “14-string guitar” above.

Also note the text “The ‘Harwood’ was the first Harp Guitar on the market. Imitators have tried to duplicate it...” I’ll return to this very interesting and bold claim in a following chapter.

As first described in my 2015 blog, Jenkins’ fascinating “Harp Bandurria” is neither a bandurria, nor a “harp-something.”<sup>14</sup> It is, in effect, a “lyre quint guitar.” Its six double courses are tuned a fifth above a guitar.

Interestingly, Jenkins had also built a true standard bandurria (shown below), so the misnomer is curious.

138 J. W. JENKINS' SONS MUSIC CO.

**THE HARWOOD MANDOLA AND HARP BANDURRIA.**



**GENUINE HARWOOD TRADE MARK REGISTERED**

Mandola. No. 146. Bandurria. No. 22.

**MANDOLA.**  
No. 146. HARWOOD. 21 Selected Mahogany Ribs, Rosewood Border, Mahogany Neck, Oval Rosewood Fingerboard, Edges Bound with Celluloid, Sound Hole and Edges Inlaid with Colored Strips of Inlaying, Orange Colored Top, Rosewood Veneered Head, Patent Sliding Tailpiece and Sleeve Protector, Pearl Position Dots, Harwood Patent Heads. . . . . Each \$37.50

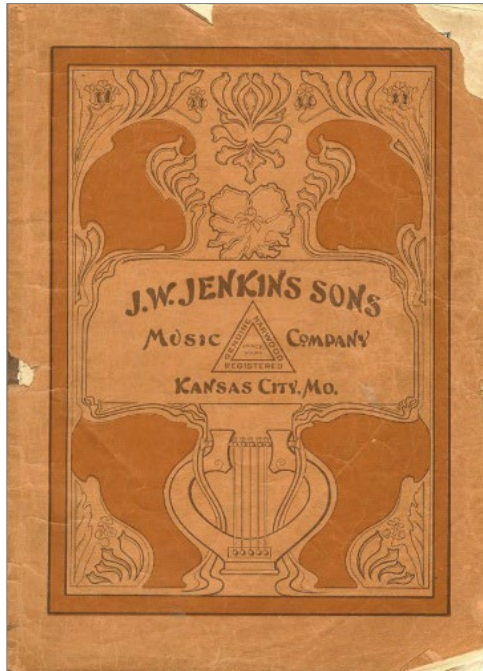
**BANDURRIA.**  
No. 22. HARWOOD. Selected Mahogany Back and Sides, Norway (Imported) Spruce Top, Top Edges Finely Bound with Ivory Celluloid, Colored Wood Inlaying Around Sound Hole, Edges and Down Center of Back, Perfectly Potted Fingerboard, Best German Silver Treble, Improved Bridge, Finest Half Plate Patent Heads, Braced Throughout with Mahogany Braces After the Harwood Plan. This is the Most Perfect Bandurria Ever Manufactured. . . . . Each \$42.00  
The BANDURRIA has twelve strings tuned in unison one-fifth higher and fingered same as the Guitar, but is played with a Mandolin Pick on account of the strings being close together, to enable the player to trill the tones the same as on a Mandolin.

**MANDOLA CASES.**  
No. 71. Canvas, Leather Bound, Flannel Lined, Best Quality. . . . . Each \$2.25

**BANDURRIA CASES.**  
No. 23. Best Canvas, Bound Edges, Flannel Lined. . . . . Each \$ 3.50  
No. 24. Leather, Bound Sewed Edges, Flannel Lined. . . . . Each 12.00  
Every well organized Mandolin Orchestra should have these instruments. They are very effective and easy to play.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.harpguitars.net/blog/2015/01/the-harwood-lyre-thingy/>

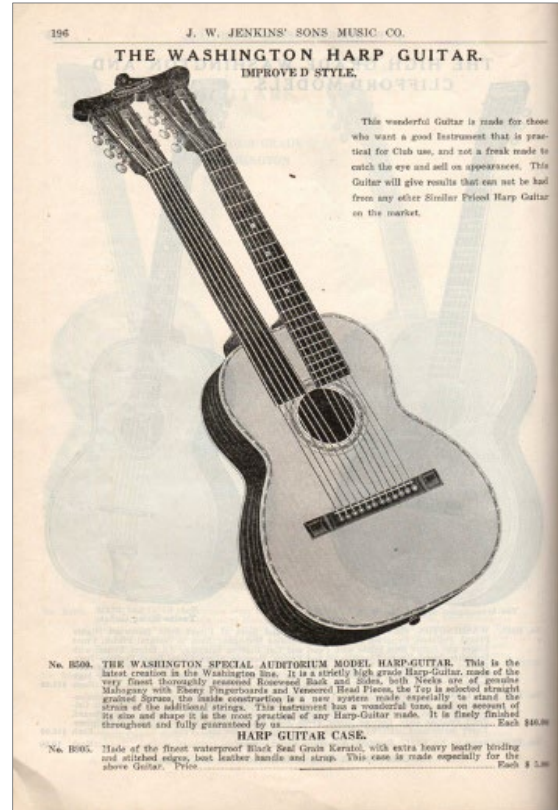
**J. W. JENKINS' SONS Catalog, c.1918**



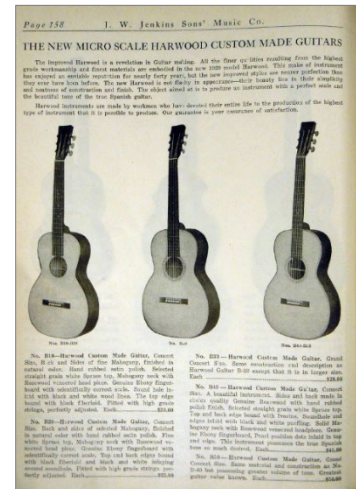
This catalog, again generously shared by Lynn Wheelwright, includes Harwood bowlback mandolins with different features and model numbers than those in Bob's early catalog.

It also contained not a Harwood harp guitar, but one from their budget "Washington" line.

It is of a common design copied throughout the early 1900's by many different manufacturers. It's possible, if not likely, that one of those factories simply supplied the instrument for Jenkins to re-brand.



Other catalogs from c.1925, 1926 (left), 1929 (right) and 1930, owned by Lynn Wheelwright or Jim Garber, include Harwoods, but no harp guitar offerings, as its heyday was then over.



## ICONOGRAPHY

Fortunately, some of these next incredibly rare historical images can be dated, which helps tremendously with Harwood harp guitar chronology. Note that in most cases, I am making an educated guess that the instruments shown are in fact Harwoods from the telltale white block in the fingerboard and other features.



A spectacular full-page image from the Jan/Feb 1895 issue of *The Cadenza* magazine. Note the unique harp-banjo! A Jenkins experiment?

The instruments seen above are *all* Harwood guitars and harp guitars, plus a mandolin or two. The giveaway is the white ivoroid block between the last frets. Of course, we also now realize that all these Harwood instruments must have been built in Boston by John C. Haynes & Co.

And there is a classic Harwood harp guitar on the right, with 12 chromatic sub-basses, a single soundhole, and that distinctively shaped slab headstock.

On the left is what may be the earliest Harwood harp guitar style created, which will be fully discussed in a later chapter.



At first glance, I mistook it for the c.1898 Wulshner "Regal" harp guitar (shown at left), but it appears that Wulshner later copied theirs from Jenkin's Harwood!

Right and below: Two more undated photos of anonymous ensembles with early "slab-neck" Harwoods.





The most recent cabinet card discovery (above) includes not only the Harwood “slab-neck” harp guitar, but a clue for it reaching the eyes of the Wulschner firm in Indianapolis, whereupon they would create their own larger version.

As a musical program with the same image came with the cabinet card, we are lucky enough to learn the names of our two guitarists/harp guitarists: B. H. Chappell and H. Carpenter. I was hoping that one or the other might have been a professional named in Jenkins’ catalog testimonials, but no such luck. Nor did any newspaper searches turn up anything.

What I *did* find was that the “Wheelway League” where the quartet gave their concert in June 1897 was in Indianapolis, Indiana. A year later in that city, Emil Wulschner & Son would introduce their own “Regal” harp guitar based on this particular Harwood. Hardly a coincidence, I think?

But way more interesting than that is how one of the group members (who apparently couldn’t afford his own Jenkins instrument) created his own copy! It even survived to the present day!<sup>15</sup>



<sup>15</sup> See: <https://www.harpguitars.net/2024/04/17/knocking-off-jenkins-harwood/>



Yes, it is the very instrument in the c.1897 image! It had long ago lost its original tailpiece and bridge, and someone had converted it to a six-string, but all the other elements remain, including the inlays and sub-bass slab with its distinctive routed carvings and small holes which once contained tiny decorative jewels or similar.

Did the builder not have the funds to obtain his own Harwood? Perhaps he was tinkerer and wanted to have fun with his own take on his quartet partner's instrument? We can never know; we can just enjoy this example of "folk art" meets "fine harp guitar artistry." Also interesting is that by 1897 neither harp guitarist felt the need to upgrade to any of the more current harp guitar offerings with longer, more logical sub-bass strings, Harwood or otherwise.



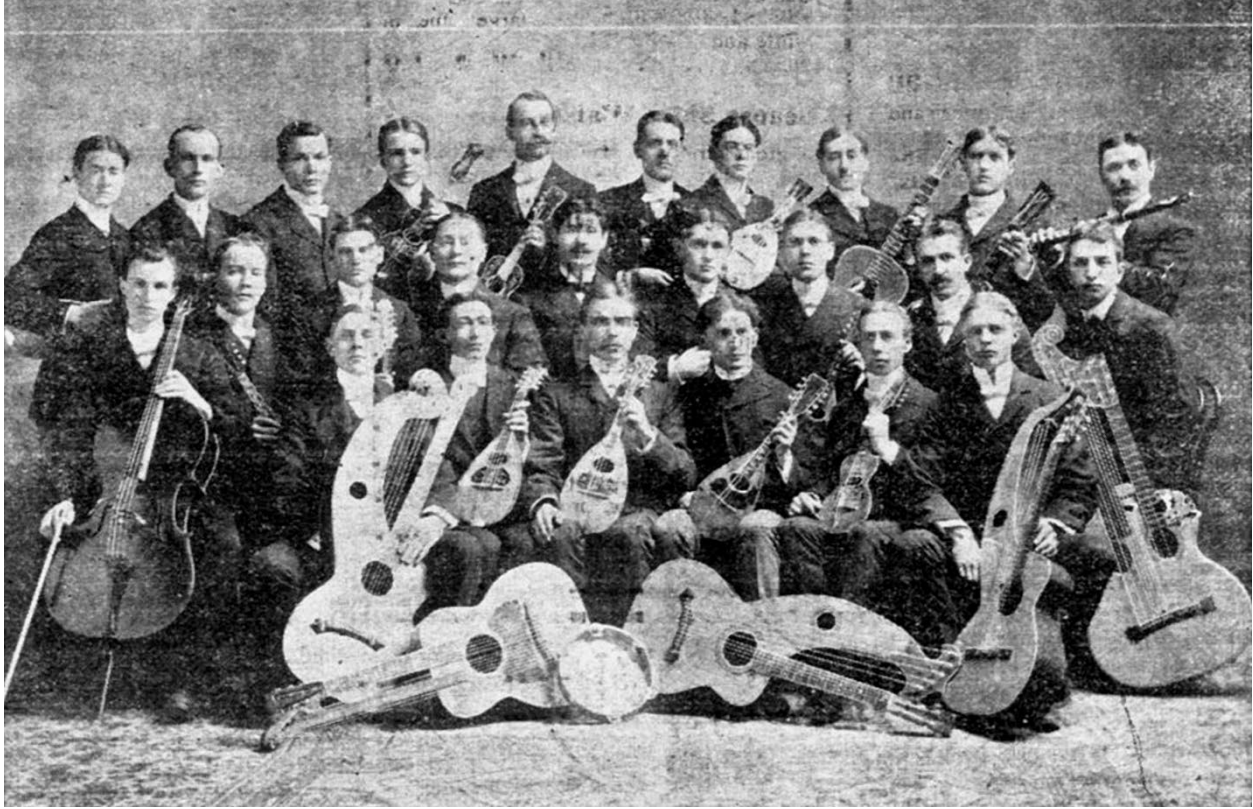
Left: This important Harwood playing gentleman will be discussed in the following chapter. His harp guitar is also an early 6 + 6 design, but with a *much* more logical longer sub-bass string length. I believe it probably immediately followed the slab-neck invention, appearing before the 1890s had ended.

Continuing our Iconography study, it's remarkable how many Harwood harp guitars have appeared!



Above: The Aeolian Mandolin Orchestra features the 19" wide Harwood with twelve sub-bass strings, but now with the distinctive double soundholes. Image taken in Guthrie, OK in 1898 (thanks to Barry Trott).





On March 23, 1902, the St. Paul Globe featured this image of the Dilettanti Mandolin Orchestra who were giving a public concert. The group – partly composed of students in the University of Minnesota Mandolin Club – includes not only some beautiful high-end mandolinettos (guitar-shaped mandolins) but a veritable bonanza of rare harp guitars! There are three different models by Chris Knutsen and at bottom left what looks like a rare Muncie, Indiana instrument by Cochran. At far right is a unique Harwood with double soundholes – but this time, oval! It also features just nine sub-bass strings.

It's interesting – and still rather mysterious – how many of these Harwood-player images come from Minnesota, including the above and the next three images.



Right: Minneapolis photographer's studio, undated.



Minnesota college ensemble, 1897



Minnesota college ensemble, 1900

## AMERICA'S FIRST HARP GUITAR?

Now that you're familiar with what we know of the Jenkins Company and some of the instruments through historical evidence, I'd like to tell you a fascinating story, as originally told in my blog of January 2014.<sup>16</sup>

Remember the c.1908 catalog blurb that claimed "The 'Harwood' was the first Harp Guitar on the market"? Normally I would ignore such statements, chalking it up to marketing hyperbole. But when I saw this catalog page in early 2015, it cemented a conclusion I had recently come to. Though we've known of many earlier harp guitars, including c.1890 instruments from Hansen and Bohmann in Chicago and Dahlman in Minnesota, I believe that it *was* in fact the Jenkins Co. that produced America's first commercial harp guitar, under their "Harwood" brand. **In fact, it is entirely possible that it was someone at the Jenkins establishment who first called these instruments "harp guitars" (i.e. the organological term we all use today)!**

What did this first Jenkins harp guitar look like, and what was the impetus behind it? I believe that it came – not from the expected European immigrants, nor the custom Martin 10-string guitars of c.1860 – but from a new "novel invention" by a young guitar player by the name of J. Hopkins Flinn. Remember that name, as he'll certainly be going into the history books.

Until discovering it in 2013, Flinn's short and cryptic story had long lain buried in the August 1917 issue of *The Crescendo* (along with *The Cadenza*, one of the two leading BMG [Banjo, Mandolin & Guitar] journals of the early 1900's).

Mr. Flinn's photo (of unknown age or date), with this short article appeared under the "Professional Teachers & Players" column:

### **J. HOPKINS FLINN Redlands, Cal.**

"While on a business trip in Kansas in 1885, Mr. Flinn, having purchased a very good home-made guitar to play accompaniments for the harmonica, thought that a low C was very necessary for good harmony in that key, so he nailed a wooden block on the neck of his instrument, about midway between the body and the head, and used a violin peg and an extra bridge to add the desired tone (*string-GM*). The result was so satisfactory and the dimensions of the block being so generous, a low D and a low G were added.

Being quite proud of such a novelty and being able to demonstrate the value of the tones, he went to the J. W. Jenkins Sons store, in Kansas City, and showed his new idea to the "boys," who were at that time "Dan" Polk and "Dunk" Collins (the original Polk and Collins Banjo Team), Ed. Guckert, Lew Geisch, Prof. Best, and later

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.harpguitars.net/blog/2014/01/j-hopkins-flinn-americas-first-harp-guitarist/>

PROMINENT TEACHERS and PLAYERS

A short biography and photo of some well-known teacher  
or player appears here monthly



J. HOPKINS FLINN  
Redlands, Cal.

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After a time the Jenkins Co. made one of their grand concert-size instruments and added six bass strings, after a design which Mr. Flinn furnished them. Mr. Flinn has used this instrument for years all over the country. It is still in his possession and in fair condition. He now uses a 19 string harp-guitar, 7 strings on the fingerboard and 12 sub-basses. He has also used low E or octave string below the little E string, and he believes that a great deal of good work can be done with the guitar and concert harmonica by one person, not meaning on the simple idea of blow and make a tone but with the careful consideration of the artistic and musical.

Mr. Flinn is undoubtedly one of the first players in our fraternity to handle a harp-guitar, and, as will be noticed by the above, the first being the one which he made himself.

showed it to Wm. C. Stahl, then at St. Joseph, MO. The first demonstrations were quite amusing, but the extra string attachment did not meet with a very cordial reception.

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Mr. Flinn is undoubtedly one of the first players in our fraternity to handle a harp-guitar, and, as will be noticed by the above, the first being the one which he made himself."

Fascinating, isn't it?

Is it *true*? I believe, yes. It all rings true and sounds entirely plausible, inasmuch as we can decipher the timeframe and sequence of events – which I believe I have done. Here's how I break it down:

First, it's interesting how the article reads like a "time capsule" – as if written much earlier (about even earlier events), and in fact, his photo seems to show a youngish man (for example, if he was 20 years old in 1885, he would have been 52 at the time of the Crescendo article).

It may simply be that Flinn supplied an old photograph with his story, written or supplied by himself, and edited in 1917 by the small Crescendo staff. I'm going under that assumption.

Let's move on to Flinn's invention – his crude, but sufficiently effective, sub-bass string attachment. It's described as "a wooden block" nailed to "the neck of his instrument, about midway between the body and the head," with a "violin peg" and "an extra bridge."

Here is my "artist's rendering" of the simplest way Flinn could have constructed his instrument (with its single, then three, sub-basses):

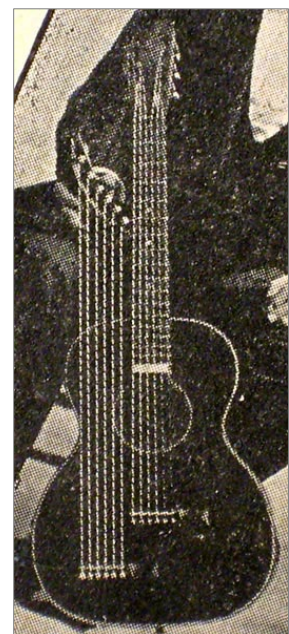


Silly?

Perhaps (clearly, Flinn played only in first position and/or wasn't a thumb-wrapper!) – but we then have the testimony that he showed it to the Jenkins Co., who later *built him a better, 6-bass version of Flinn's own design*. This is provenance handed to us on a silver platter!

It doesn't take much imagination to propose that Flinn's crude creation was the prototype of the "neck slab harp string attachment" style of Harwood harp guitar.

At right is an original "neck slab" Harwood that I propose was designed or suggested by J. Hopkins Flinn (a total of three are shown below). His original harp guitar could easily have been one of the first Harwood instruments built by Haynes in 1889, or it could have even been built in the 1885-1889 timeframe by builders unknown.



And what of Flinn's "name dropping"?

Catalogue of Musical Merchandise. 49

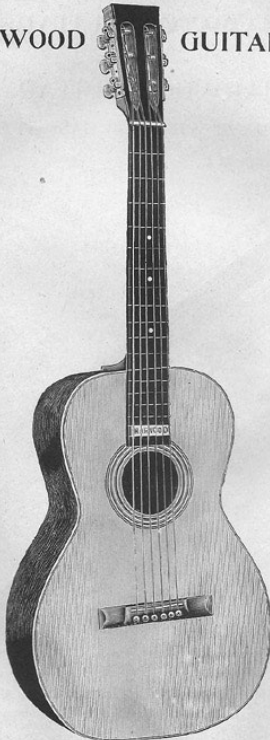
## HARWOOD GUITARS.

NOTE SPECIAL.

THIS IS THE  
IDEAL Instrument  
for the use of Artists and  
Teachers. . . . .

No Club of Three or  
More is Complete Without  
One. . . . .

THE MOST POWERFUL  
TONE Ever Produced by  
a Guitar of any make.



THIS TRULY GRAND  
INSTRUMENT is used by  
such Artists as

Miss Theo. H. Jewell  
THE MUSICAL GLEE'S  
Nellie High  
Victoria Dorsey  
Elizabeth Stark  
E. N. Guckert  
W. T. Best  
L. J. Gesch  
Guiseppe Bistolfi  
Chas. A. Funk  
J. Earl Rabe  
Fred C. Meyer  
W. H. Adams  
T. W. Reamer  
Geo. Einhauser  
A. D. Collins  
H. S. Buffum  
J. E. Wilber

And all the Leading  
Artists in America.



No. 8.

**ARTISTS' GRAND MODEL AND SIZE.**

No. 8—Solid Rosewood Back and Sides; Genuine Mahogany Neck; Length of Body, 19½ inches; Width at widest end, 14¾ inches; at smallest end, 10¾ inches; Depth, 4½ inches. Sound Hole and Edges Beautifully Inlaid with Colored Wood. Top Edges Bound with Celluloid, Fancy Strip of Colored Wood Inlaying down Center of Back, Oval Ebony Fingerboard and Bridge, German Silver Frets, Pearl Position Dots, Movable Bone Fret and Bridge, Ivory Bridges Pins, Fines: French Polish. . . . . Each \$ 60 00

No. 8½—Artists' Grand Model, Inlaid and Finished like No. 4 . . . . . " 85 00

8¾—Artists' Grand Model, Inlaid and Finished like No. 5 . . . . . " 115 00

Interestingly, while virtually none of the names of "the boys" at the "Jenkins store" are known today, four of the five are listed as Harwood endorsers in the 1895-1899 Jenkins catalog.

- "Dunk" Collins = A. D. Collins
- Ed. Guckert = E. N. Guckert
- Lew Geisch = L. J. Gesch
- Prof. Best = W. T. Best

Nice corroboration there!

As discussed in the catalog chapter above, before Guckert became a music publisher in Bucyrus, Ohio (after 1897) he was Jenkins' in-house guitar teacher. The very first issue of *The Cadenza* of Sep/Oct 1894 lists him there under "Prominent Teachers," and of course he could have been there for some time. None of the other "boys" turn up in *Cadenza* or elsewhere, possibly because their heyday had already passed. All this points to earlier than later.

Far more interesting is that Flinn “later showed it to Wm. C. Stahl, then at St. Joseph, MO.” St. Joseph was just 50 miles north of Kansas City, where Jenkins Co. was located, and Stahl was teaching mandolin (and later guitar) there by 1885 at the tender age of sixteen.<sup>17</sup> As most harp guitar fans know, Stahl would soon become a successful music publisher and also a prominent “maker” (actually only distributor & marketer) of fretted stringed instruments, most (all?) of which were built by the Larson brothers of Chicago.<sup>18</sup> Stahl relocated to Milwaukee, Wisconsin about 1898, well after his encounter with Flinn and his harp guitar prototype, which *could* have occurred as early as 1885.

This seems wonderfully coincidental. Was the first harp guitar Stahl ever saw Flinn’s prototype? Surely, he either saw that or Flinn’s better, Jenkins-built instrument. Either way, it’s likely that Stahl was ultimately aware of the latter. It’s thus easy to imagine Stahl possibly being the person who then suggested to the Wulschner Company in Indianapolis to give this “new invention” a try (this article and my Regal section demonstrate that the Regal was clearly inspired by – or copied from – the earlier Harwood).<sup>19</sup> Note that Bob Hartman believes that the Regal harp guitars could have been built by the Larsons (a Stahl referral?). This purely hypothetical event would have transpired about the time Stahl relocated to Milwaukee (*Hmmm...with some research trips to Chicago and Indianapolis first? Seems likely – and there were certainly easy train routes connecting all these cities.*).

Meanwhile, Flinn kept playing (“all over the country”) and eventually upgraded to a *19-string* harp guitar, with twelve sub-bass strings descending to a low E and *seven* strings on the neck. This could have been made by a number of builders, but I’d imagine that he stuck with the Jenkins firm. Perhaps it was one of the familiar Harwood 12-bass models (certainly by then he must have graduated to their full-length bass strings and not the silly mid-neck set up!).

Before stumbling upon this story, I would have imagined that many immigrant builders in America were already familiar with the harp guitar concept through its various European examples and began to sporadically explore the idea. But aside from the brief Martin examples (discussed below) they seem to have been completely absent and/or forgotten...until they virtually exploded in the Midwest and then quickly in a few other major and minor population centers.

And so this begs the question: Did Flinn’s harp guitar idea (and the subsequent Jenkins Sons “Harwood” models) *pre-date or influence other Midwest builders* like Joseph Bohmann and so many others?<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Source: Paul Rupp’s Mandolin Orchestra thesis.

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.harpguitars.net/PDFs/Walter\\_Boehm\\_and\\_the\\_Gibson\\_Harp\\_Guitar-Gregg\\_Miner.pdf](https://www.harpguitars.net/PDFs/Walter_Boehm_and_the_Gibson_Harp_Guitar-Gregg_Miner.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.harpguitars.net/history/regal.htm>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.harpguitars.net/history/bohmann/bohmann1.htm>

The answer seems to be yes! Appearing in *Vintage Guitar Magazine* in October 1996, we didn't discover the incredible image below it until nearly thirty years later.<sup>21</sup> I immediately realized that a youngish Joseph Bohmann was not holding one of his own harp guitars, but another one-off Jenkins "Harwood"!



Though it hasn't a white "Harwood" block inlay, it features a similar scroll headstock (which looks like it has a carved recess in the bass scroll), along with the distinctive bridge – this time made for just six sub-basses. Though difficult to date, Bohmann expert Bruce Hammond and I place the photo at the very beginning of the 1890s. The instrument fits this c.1890 timeline as well; or more precisely, the latter 1880s, since Bohmann presumably hadn't built his own instrument yet. Indeed, we don't find the first mention of a Bohmann-made harp guitar until March 30, 1890.<sup>22</sup> I believe we are looking at the next iteration of the Flinn "slab-neck," now with logically lengthened bass strings, but keeping the same string count (the twelve chromatic sub-basses coming next).

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<sup>21</sup> Its original source/owner remains unknown.

<sup>22</sup> *The Omaha Daily Bee*.

Bohmann's background – including when and where he learned his craft and when he emigrated – remains cloudy. We deduce that he was building at least violins and zithers (and probably guitars) and know that he was in America by the mid-1870's. It is entirely possible that he was already familiar with *bass-* or *kontra-*guitars in Bohemia. Even if he had not yet been exposed, he would have learned of the harp guitar through his client Calamara, who originally played an Italian-looking instrument (of unknown make) before commissioning one from Bohmann. However, we can't know if Bohmann got a look at Calamara's instrument before 1890 (the evidence points to later). Regardless, I always left it open that Bohmann might have created his harp guitars on his own, from earlier European influence.

With the smoking gun image above, I'm now convinced that young Bohmann may have unaware of the "harp guitar" concept – or at least, completely disinterested – until he saw and obtained his own Jenkins instrument. He would then immediately begin building his own harp guitars (which he would also immediately refer to as "harp guitars" rather than "bass guitars" or "*kontragitarres*"). Additionally, Bohmann's first harp guitar experiments used his own wholly original ideas and, while surprisingly crude (by Jenkins standards), they did have designs and configurations much closer to Harwoods than Austro-German-style or Italian instruments.

The realization that the non-descript Mr. Flinn not only "invented" America's harp guitar but influenced Jenkins, Bohmann, and likely many many more just blows my mind. But before I end by awarding Flinn the "Earliest American Harp Guitarist" and "American Harp Guitar Invention" prizes, alert readers may well point out that these honors technically go to C. F. Martin's earlier (c.1859-1860) ten-string harp guitars and their players/customers. True, those appeared well before Mr. Flinn; but I look at those more as Martin's "early American" versions of the original Viennese-style instruments – even though Martin's instruments were by 1860 well on their way to becoming the quintessential "American guitars" (in fact, Flinn's own original 6-string might have been a "Martin copy"! ). However, I suspect that these few rare instruments remained in private hands and were completely under everyone's radar.

Martin's surviving 10-string harp guitar (at right) shows his own unique design. According to *Inventing the Guitar*, they were custom ordered by one Olaf Ericson, a music teacher in Richmond, VA, who received "at least 4" ... "10-string" or "2-neck" guitars in (or about) 1860. Nothing further is known about Ericson, but we can imagine that he was presumably familiar with 10-string guitars from his native Sweden (see luthier Selling and others) and perhaps wanted to explore their possibilities with his guitar students. Concerning these rare early Martin 10-string guitars, *whatever* their instigation, I consider them more like continuations of then-familiar European ideas. And I have found *no* connecting thread from Martin's c.1860 harp guitars to other American makers; indeed, the next Martin harp guitar models wouldn't appear until c.1900 and clearly *followed* the 1890's harp guitar vogue rather than leading it.



Flinn's invention, on the other hand, *appears to have been a wholly original idea to him and the musicians and manufacturers he shared it with.* In my speculative scenario above, it was soon adopted and adapted into several different Harwood models by the Jenkins' Sons Music Co., copied by Regal and likely inspiring others, and – *quite possibly* – could have been responsible for jump-starting the 1890-1900's harp guitar craze in at least the central part of the United States – all just before the hollow arm instruments of Knutsen started popping up.

The Cadenza article ends by saying "Mr. Flinn is undoubtedly one of the first players in our fraternity to handle a harp-guitar" ...and in the Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar world of early American music, he certainly *was!*

You may recall my earlier allusion to Jenkins quote in the c.1908 catalog; "*The 'Harwood' was the first Harp Guitar on the market.*" Could this have any connection to the Flinn story?

Quite possibly. Again, this is all speculation, but their claim could mean that Jenkins built and publicly offered their neck-slab Flinn model Harwood before Bohmann, Hansen or Dahlman came out with their respective harp guitars between 1890 and 1892.<sup>23</sup> The time frame points definitively to the early 1890s. Not only is the "Flinn model" neck slab harp guitar seen in the 1894/1895 Cadenza photo, but so is the more advanced full-size 12-bass model. It's hard to imagine Flinn's "novelty" *so quickly* advancing to the way-ahead-of-its-time large 12-bass instrument. There *must* have been some significant development time in between, not to mention performer experimentation and feedback. Of course, if Bohmann or others *had* beat them "to market" without Jenkins learning of them until some dated advertising material from these competitors crossed their desk, they might have still brazenly made this claim.

The neck-slab Harwood may indeed have been the very first production harp guitar in America. Not only that, but someone at Jenkins *may have actually christened the instrument with the very name "harp guitar" that it goes by today.* Evidence shows that it was either Jenkins, Bohmann or Hansen.

It strikes me that Jenkins' 1895-1899 catalog harp guitar model consisting of standard parlor guitar with "sub-bass attachment" could be related to Flinn also. It could even be representative of the first instrument they built for him; after all, it is similar in concept to Flinn's premise (a quick experiment of attaching a piece of wood to hold sub-basses). But the subs are full length, so I suspect it was – at less than half the price of the full-size harp guitar – more of a way to offer an inexpensive option. I still find the weird model with the short sub-basses on the neck slab matching the description of Flinn's experiment much more closely.



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<sup>23</sup> Hansen: [https://www.harp guitars.net/history/month\\_hg/month-hg-7-07.htm](https://www.harp guitars.net/history/month_hg/month-hg-7-07.htm)  
Dahlman: <https://www.harp guitars.net/history/patents/469,548.pdf>

## HARWOOD HARP GUITARS

Below are all the Harwood harp guitar specimens I am currently aware of. Most extant specimens appear to be made with stunning Brazilian rosewood back and sides. Amazingly, my specimen has a perfectly flat top, strung with 18 steel strings, yet is only ladder braced. Perhaps this is helped by the fact that amongst the evenly spaced braces (~ every 2-1/2"), one is situated directly above the bridge, and the bridge plate itself appears to be a solid thin piece that completely fills the space between the braces and from side to side.

I'll start with all the Harwoods I've identified from historical photos. In some cases, I am "attributing," i.e. making an educated guess that these are Harwoods, either from the white rectangle at the end of the fingerboard or other similar features.

### **From Historical Photos and Catalogs:**



Left: The Regal-style "neck-slab harp string attachment" model, with six short sub-basses on separate bridge, built before 1895.

Right: Basically identical to the instrument at left, from a different, undated photograph. It has a smaller soundhole, no binding, and a slightly less pitched sub-bass scale. Note that the first sub-bass string is not installed.





Above: A third "neck-slab" model with details obscured, from an undated photo and (seen in perspective) a light top model from the 1897 Indiana concert program.



Above left: From the pre-1895 photo. 12 sub-basses on a bass headstock with faint inscribed scroll, one soundhole with the main neck centered over the soundhole, and straight continuous bridge.

Above right: Joseph Bohmann's late 1880s instrument, with six long sub-bass strings and fancy Harwood bridge. Note the deeper scroll in carved relief like the first slab-necks.



Above: From the 1895-1899 catalog.

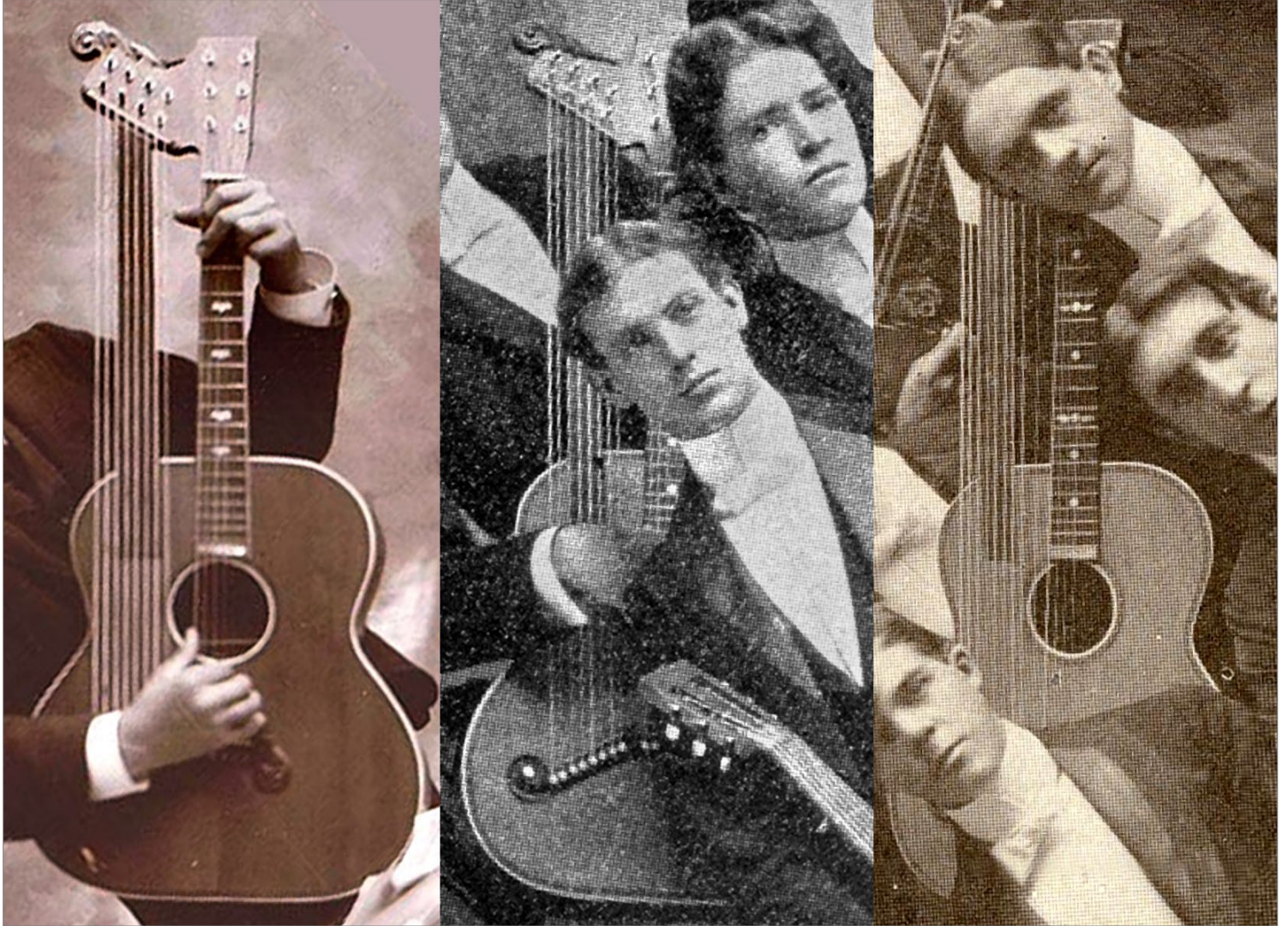
Left: 12 sub-basses, same headstock and tuner configuration as on the previous instrument, but with two symmetrical soundholes, the main neck centered over the right hole, two neck logos, and a fancy curved bridge.

Right: A "missing link" model, utilizing a 6-string parlor guitar with a longer "sub-bass slab" added on.



Above left: The exact same catalog model from a dated historical photo of the Aeolian Mandolin Orchestra, so we know it was built in or before 1898.

On the right, a similar model with a shorter bridge (as it has just nine bass strings) and narrower, oval soundholes.



Above, Left to Right:

- An 8-bass instrument with a different type of bass headstock, a different scroll-end bridge, with fancy fret markers and a squatter body.
- Seemingly the same carved 8-bass headstock, and now we see the other side of the same (?) bridge. A different specimen, due to the two dot markers showing.
- The same model as the previous instrument. In fact, it could be the very same *instrument*, as it appears in another Minneapolis college glee club three years later. Note that it has *nine* basses, the "extra" one is nearest the fingerboard, as if the player later added it.

## A NEW 14-STRINGED GUITAR.

The J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co. Have Just Manufactured a New Instrument Which is a Beauty.

The accompanying cut illustrates the J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co.'s new 14-stringed guitar, which they have just perfected. They have been working for several months to bring this instrument out, and they now believe that they have today one of the most perfect guitars that has yet been put on the market.

This instrument is made of the very finest of rosewood, which they have had on hand for more than five years, and which has been in their own dry-kiln for more than two years. The necks of the instrument are made of the very best straight grain mahogany, and in building the instruments the necks are dovetailed into the end blocks to prevent them from pulling out. This feature, they believe, is one that is original with their house, claiming that they made instruments in this manner before any other manufacturer adopted the idea. The instrument is strengthened throughout with mahogany braces. There is not a single piece of material used in this instrument that has not been through their own dry-kiln; consequently, when they send a guitar out with a five years' guarantee, they do so feeling confident that it will not come back.

They feel confident that their new 14-stringed guitar will become immensely popular, as well as a big seller, and they propose to exploit it with much vigor from now on.



NEW 14-STRINGED GUITAR.



Left: 8 sub-basses, 1 soundhole with symmetrical necks, geared tuners, 2 neck logos, from 1902 Jenkins ad.

Right: 6 sub-basses, 1 soundhole with symmetrical necks, geared tuners, 2 neck logos, from c.1908 Jenkins catalog.



## Surviving Specimens:



Left: 12 sub-basses, one soundhole and main neck centered over soundhole, bass neck terminates at body, friction tuners, no neck logo, from American Lutherie Journal #29, Spring 1992. Owned by William Cumpiano (in need of major restoration, he said).

Below: Another single soundhole with main neck centered over it. The bass neck was removed and patched to turn it into a 6-string. The bridge (if original) looks simpler than the previous instrument.





My own specimen appears to exactly match the illustration in the 1895-1899 catalog but has only one fretboard logo.

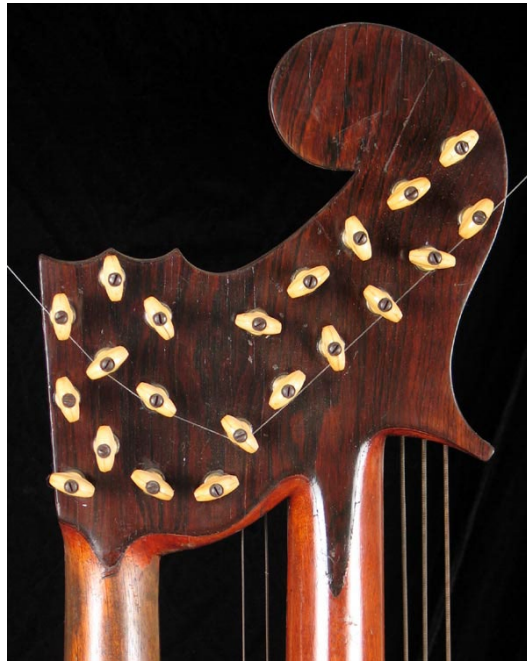
It has the same 12 sub-basses, the same headstock and tuners, two symmetrical soundholes, and the main neck centered over the right hole. It's a hefty 19" wide.

On this and the next two specimens, note that the main neck is centered over its soundhole, but the bass "neck" is not (i.e.: the soundholes are symmetrical on the body but the necks are not quite centered on the body; however, the *strings* almost are).

Other than the unbelievably annoying *eighteen* friction tuners, this is a great instrument.



Below, a specimen basically identical to the previous, except that it has *nine* strings on the *neck*. The top three strings are doubled; though the tuners all match, the three additional strings seem to me a later add on.



Below, an unusual specimen with the same headstock but with only 9 sub-basses, and *oval* soundholes. It seems to match exactly the one in the 1902 historical photograph above.



Below: Initially, this instrument's owner (and I) thought that this was someone's later modification to a Harwood parlor guitar. It's *not* – it's an all-original late-1890s "Artists' Grand with Sub-Bass Attachment" from the catalog! Only the two bridges are non-original.





Above: A parlor size (14-1/2" lower bout) specimen, 6-sub-basses, geared tuners.



Left: Essentially the same model as the previous, with replaced bridge and added pickguard. Note the Inlaid headstock lettered logo instead of fingerboard logo and slightly different shaping to the headstock array.

A third model of this 6+6 parlor size instrument is in another private collection.



## OTHER HARWOOD INSTRUMENTS



Above: A presentation guitar owned by David Jorgensen. Below: An incredible jumbo 6-string.





Left: A Kansas gentleman with a nice Harwood parlor guitar.

Below: Another anonymous player with a jumbo Harwood guitar, with inlaid fretboard marker and "Harwood" inlaid on the headstock.

(Courtesy of Michael John Simmons)





A mandolinetto owned by Bob Jenkins.



A rare "New York" stamped Harwood bandurria.



The c.1908 so-called "Harp Bandurria,"  
actually a lyre quint guitar.

Then there are the dozens of surviving Harwood mandolins - nowhere near the tens of thousands I estimated above, but common enough and with enough variety to keep a potential Harwood mandolin historian plenty busy!

Here are just a couple of fancier ones:

Below, a "No. 60" that sold for \$80.00 in the 1895-1899 catalog:



Below, an odd mix of plain and very fancy:



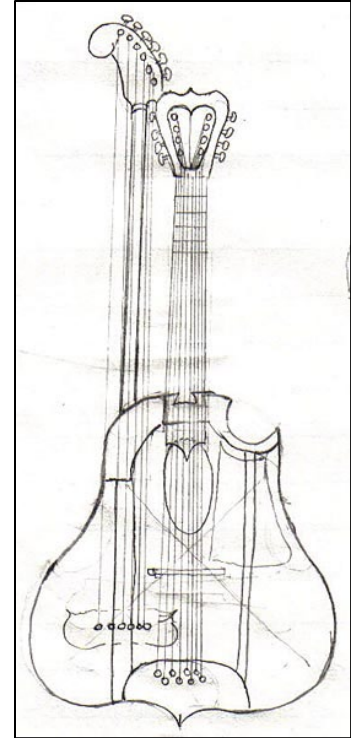
At right, a "lute model" mandolin somewhere between the two shown above in the 1926 catalog



And a final intriguing bit of history!

In the 1960s, collector Jim Reynolds acquired the estate of an ex-Jenkins employee. Amongst the files was this unique design for a true 6-bass harp mandolin (at right).

It's unlikely that one was built and frustrating to imagine how close we came to a Harwood harp mandolin!



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## Other Harp Guitars Influenced by the Harwood

Besides Wulschner, who stole the original Jenkins “slab-neck sub-bass string attachment” idea, other U.S. makers noticed the even more distinctive large 18-strings, especially the double sound holes and carved bridge. Two examples are shown below.



At left: Philadelphia’s Weymann firm built large harp guitars (left) similar in size and shape to the large Harwood (right). In the center is an attributed early Weymann that is a unique hybrid of both, having copied the Harwood’s double soundholes and general sub-bass head design.

Right: Wm. Stahl went even further for this custom instrument designed and built by the Larson brothers, his “secret” luthiers. While Stahl decided to offer a flat-top alternative to the Gibson harp guitar, using ten sub-basses on a similar support arm, the Larsons borrowed the double soundholes and bridge ends of the Harwood. This wasn’t their first or last double-hole harp guitar either.



## LESTER PAYNE



And finally, we can't leave our Harwood study without discussing our friend Lester Payne, seen above with his beautiful presentation Harwood guitar.<sup>24</sup> He's been a recurring part of my harp guitar research from the very beginning, always popping up in conjunction with Harwood instruments – though curiously, never with a Harwood *harp guitar*, only other brands.

Lester Payne wasn't a harp guitarist, so I couldn't ever really feature him as a player. Nor was he a builder, so no entry there. Yet he has multiple direct and indirect *links* to harp guitars, specifically three brands associated with his various ensembles: Harwood (Jenkins & Sons), Washburn (Lyon & Healy) and Chris Knutsen's harp guitars.

Throughout his teaching and performing career across America Payne put together club after club, whose members played mostly Harwoods supplied by Payne. His story peaks with the meeting of Chris Knutsen, when he added almost a dozen Knutsen harp guitars into the mix!

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<sup>24</sup> From *The Cadenza*, Mar-Apr, 1898.

Lester Payne (born in California in 1867) was very active in the turn-of-the-last-century BMG (Banjo, Mandolin & Guitar) movement. He was one of the very earliest to lead small, then larger, then *really large* groups of mandolin and guitar players. For nearly two decades Payne's forte was being a local (somewhat roving) independent organizer of mandolin and guitar groups. He would teach students, share his repertoire which included his own compositions, and perform with the groups.

Payne's 1890s and early 1900s travels took him back and forth between Southern California and Arizona before making his way to Seattle, then Spokane, Washington for most of the remainder of his professional music career.<sup>25</sup> His earliest notice, performing in a quartet with his wife, was in Riverside, California in late 1891.<sup>26</sup> From other newspaper notices, we know that Payne-led mandolin clubs are known to have existed in Redlands, California beginning in 1892 where he lived and gave lessons from 1892-on. He also led a mandolin group in the Salvation Army during this period.

Very shrewdly, he quickly realized that he was in an obvious position to also help with procuring instruments for his students and group members – and so, he became a part-time instrument dealer.

Lester Payne, special coast agent for "Washburn" guitars, mandolins, banjos, and zithers, starts early next week on a big commercial trip.

By mid-1892 he was supplying stringed instruments for his students and ensembles.<sup>27</sup> By August 1894, he had become a west coast dealer for Washburn instruments shipped from Chicago's Lyon &

Healy).<sup>28</sup> Finally, just eight months later, "'Lester Payne & Co. (became) sole agents in Southern California for the unequalled Harwood guitars and mandolins, 555 South Broadway."<sup>29</sup> This was soon after Jenkins expanded their own production facilities after terminating a contract with the John C. Haynes & Co. of Boston, who had built them prior to January 1894.

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<sup>25</sup> Lester Payne's timeline highlights were originally put together by Jean Cammon Findlay, Darrell Urbien and Paul Rupp for my 2008-updated Knutsen Archives article "*Lester Payne's Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra*." See: <https://www.harpguitars.net/knutsen/payne.htm> I later found a few additional clues after combing through my digital Cadenza archives, and the four of us (along with Jim Feroe) brainstormed further. Finally, I again scoured Newspapers.com and other sources for this 2026 article re-write. My favorite random bit of information (uncovered by Paul) was the "famous 'Baby Payne' story" that took place in the summer of 1890, in which Payne kidnapped his own 2-1/2-year-old daughter (from his wife), with his parents as accomplices. Though it made news in several states, Payne got off (as did his folks) since kidnapping one's own child was then not considered a crime. He *did* get beat up by his wife's brother but then pulled a gun and shot the poor guy a few times (since the brother A) lived, and B) started the fight, Payne got out of that one too!).

<sup>26</sup> *Riverside Daily Enterprise*, Nov 07, 1891.

<sup>27</sup> *The Citrograph* (Redlands), Jul 09, 1892: "Lester Payne has opened a stock of banjos, guitars, mandolins, etc., in a portion of the W. C. T. L. reading room."

<sup>28</sup> *Redlands Daily Facts*, Aug 02, 1894.

<sup>29</sup> *The Daily Journal* (Los Angeles), Apr 27, 1895. Curiously, he was also listed in the 1895 directory as a "dealer in musical instruments" at 453 S. Spring in Los Angeles. Payne's simple and logical idea was the same ingenious business model that the Gibson company would re-create ten years later with their aggressive, infamous Teacher-Dealer program.

Payne was so pleased with the Jenkins “Harwood” instruments that he immediately named his new Los Angeles ensemble after the brand.<sup>30</sup> From this point on, every Payne group we’ve seen images of contained Harwood instruments almost exclusively. The instruments are easily identifiable by their white rectangular marker in the last fret position (they are believed to be the only instruments with this feature at the turn of the previous century) or the occasional engraved “Harwood” headstock inlay.

Despite Lester Payne’s dedication to the Harwood instruments, he still needed to make a living, and while he appreciated high quality, he was always on the lookout for a better deal. He undoubtedly contacted all the major and minor American manufacturers in pursuit of his goals.

In 1897, for example, he wrote the Martin company (twice) in hopes of a free evaluation mandolin and a good discount. The letters<sup>31</sup> read:

*Los Angeles, Cal. 8/10/97 (Received and answered Aug. 16 by Martin)*

*C. F. Martin and Co. Gentlemen*

*Your small catalogue showing four styles of mandolins has been received. Please quote prices to the trade. It is our desire to handle the best in the market. We have done a good business with the Harwood instruments, but if your prices are satisfactory we will give you a trial.*

*Promptness will greatly oblige [sic].*

*Yours Truly, Lester Payne and Co.*

*If we send money enough to pay express charges both ways will you send an instrument subject to examination?*

And a month later:

*Phoenix A. Z. 9.3.97 (Received Sept 8 and answered Sept 9 by Martin. Quoted {illegible % discount back})*

*C. F. Martin and Co. Gentlemen*

*Since writing you concerning your mandolins we have opened business in Phoenix and Tucson Arizona. As to the amount of business done in this line I will send you some of our correspondence [sic] and our latest bill which is only a small one as we had a good supply of instruments left over. We have done more business in high grade instruments than any other dealer in Los Angeles and get as low prices as anyone as a rule.*

*Please quote us your best and perhaps we can do business.*

*Yours truly, Lester Payne*

*P.S. Please return the enclosed letters and bill to me at once.*

The fact that he remained a Harwood dealer demonstrates that Martin’s terms were not as generous as Jenkins’!

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<sup>30</sup> June 1895 was the first appearance of “The Harwood Mandolin and Guitar Club.” *Los Angeles Evening and Sunday Herald Examiner*, Jun 15, 1895.

<sup>31</sup> From an anonymous source.

Curiously, while we see Harwood mandolins and guitars in every single Payne-led group we know of, we never see any of the Harwood *harp* guitars, which is especially surprising since nearly every one of Payne's pictured groups *utilized* harp guitars. Perhaps Payne simply never requested these instruments and/or his group members chose to use their own preferred instruments.



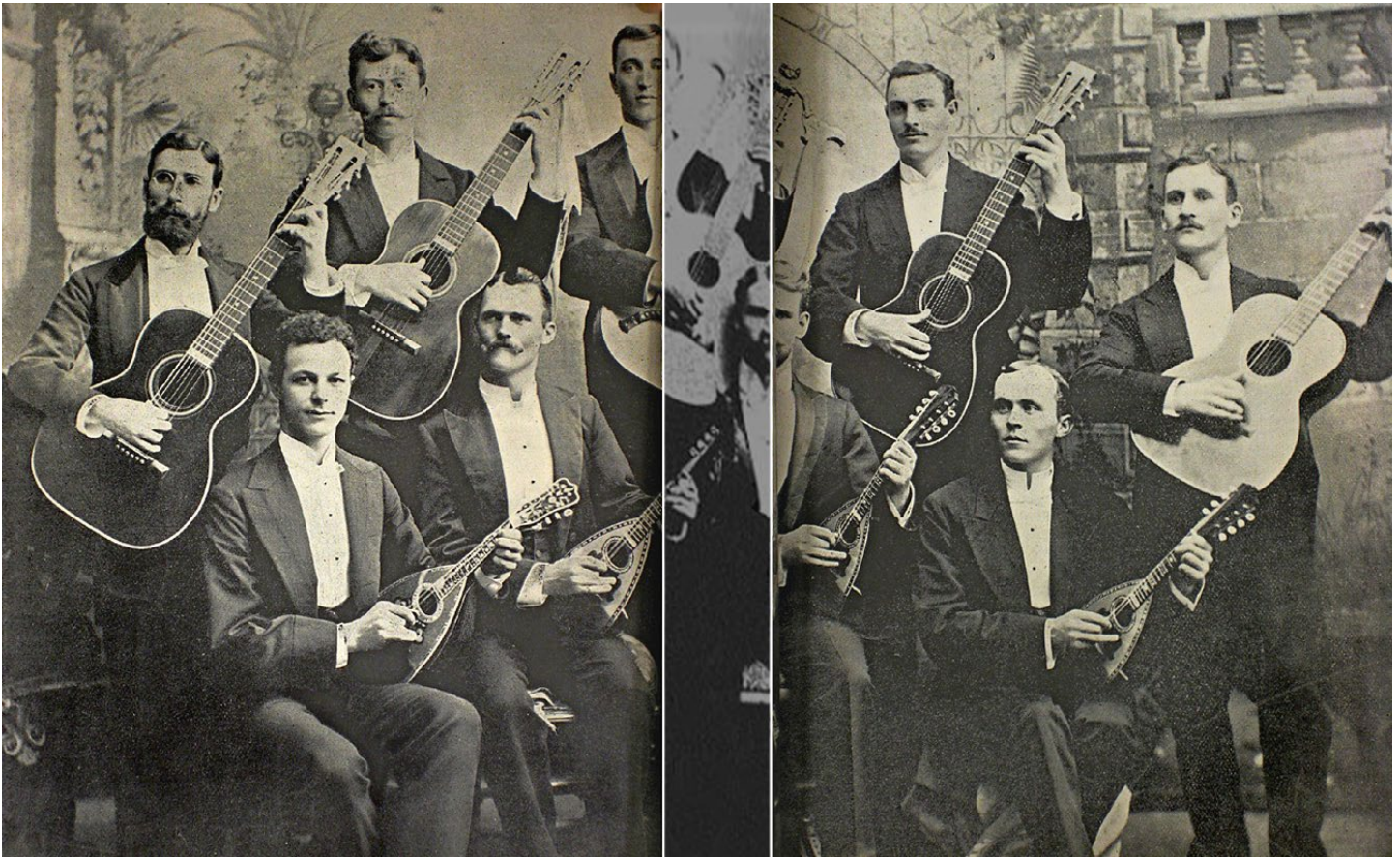
The Harwood Club of Los Angeles, Lester Payne seated on the left (from *The Cadenza*, May-June 1896).

The above photograph, taken between mid-1895 and early 1896, is the earliest image of Lester Payne that we know of, showing him with his Harwood Club of Los Angeles. Note that Payne does not yet wear his distinctive moustache. The short accompanying text states that the “group was organized on May 7, 1895” (just five weeks before their first public performance).

#### **The Harwood Mandolin and Guitar Club.**

The Harwood Mandolin and Guitar Club, of Los Angeles, Cal., of which we print a splendid large picture as a supplement to our current issue, was organized for amusement and social purposes on March 7, 1895, a little more than a year ago, and the development of the club has since been rapid. It is a significant fact, and highly complimentary to the ability of the director and members, that the Harwood Club is already recognized as one of the best and most successful clubs in the southwest. The club consists of nine performers, four mandolins and five guitars being used. The members are Lester Payne, director; Read W. Rogers, president; Ira H. Seehorn, secretary; Joe R. Rogers, treasurer; W. B. Parker, R. N. Barrow, Louis E. Wilen, Leon L. Carey and S. B. Keeney.

Right: I found the original published image while photographing the BMG magazine collection at IGRA several years back, but it was unfortunately in one of their bound copies, so I couldn't flatten it out. However, it does show much better details than the small half-tone we originally had (below).



All the members save one are playing Harwood mandolins and guitars. Note the gentleman in the center with a Lyon & Healy-built "Washburn Lyre Guitar." Unlike its catalog listing and the few surviving specimens (below), he holds the even rarer *harp guitar* version, with three additional sub-bass strings.



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The  
**GUITAR**  
QUARTET.



THE HARWOOD GUITAR AND MANDOLIN CLUB, LOS ANGELES, CAL.

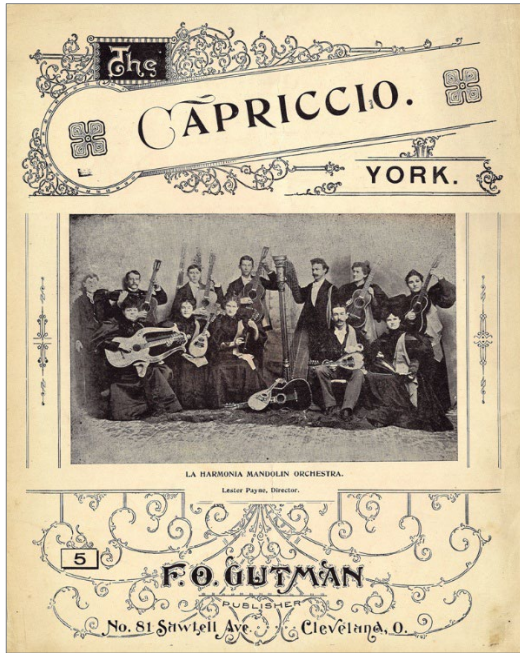
LESTER PAYNE, Director.

5

**F. O. GUTMAN**  
PUBLISHER  
No. 81 Sawtelle Ave. Cleveland, O.

This ensemble was also featured on the cover of a piece of c.1896 sheet music title written by F. O. Gutman.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> From the International Guitar Research Archives at CSUN.



More Lester Payne sheet music titles, these featuring the "La Harmonia Mandolin Orchestra." Left title dated 1896, Right title undated.

The boyish, clean-shaven Lester Payne of c.1895 sported a new look for 1896: tousled hair and moustache. In this spectacular image, used on the two sheet music titles, he stands in a dramatic pose at the harp. Did he also play that instrument?



Once again, every guitar and mandolin in the ensemble is a Harwood. Only the harp guitar is not. It is the same distinctive Washburn lyre harp guitar seen previously. Payne likely owned the instrument himself, as we see it in California, Arizona and finally Washington.

We first thought that the above photo was taken in Los Angeles, and soon after the original Harwood Club of Los Angeles session first shown (time at least to grow and groom that spectacular mustache).

I now think there were some additional months between photo sessions, and that this group was from Arizona. First, it is listed among Payne's Arizona groups (below), and second, the same woman here playing the Washburn lyre harp guitar is seen in his Prescott, AZ group below (she is standing on the left).



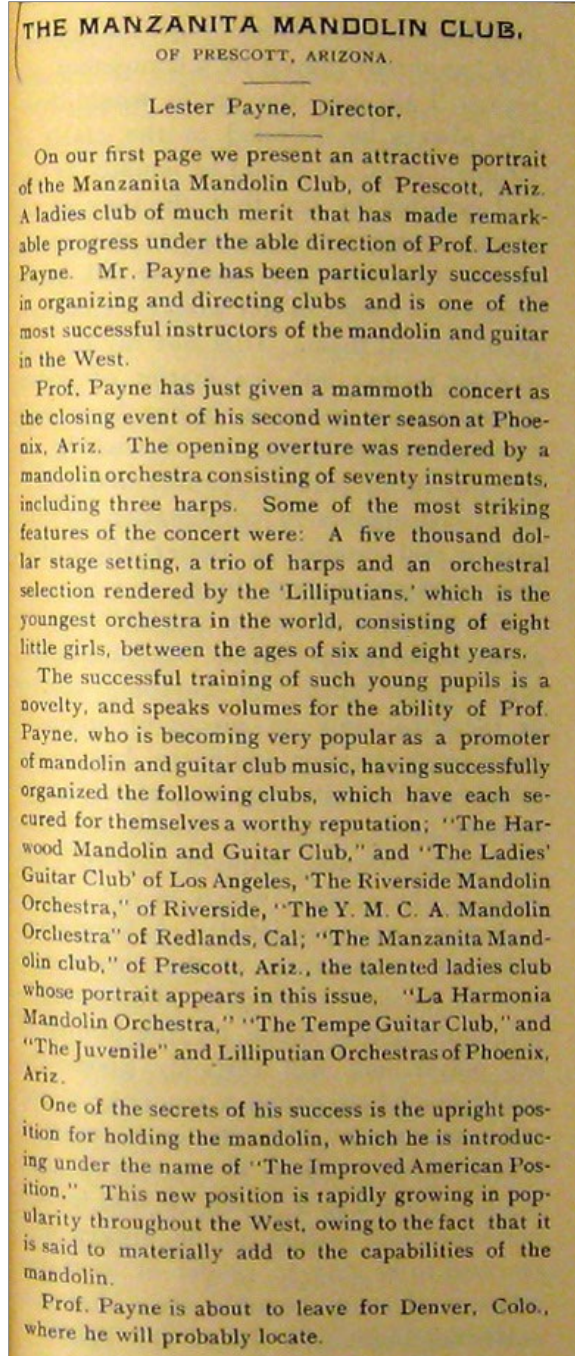
THE MANZANITA MANDOLIN CLUB, OF PRESCOTT, ARIZONA.  
LESTER PAYNE, DIRECTOR.

The Manzanita Mandolin Club, of Prescott, Arizona. Lester Payne, Director (from *The Cadenza*, May-June 1897)

It may be irrelevant, as Payne was traveling back and forth between various cities in California and Arizona throughout 1895 to 1898. The accompanying *Cadenza* blurb at right mentions Payne having just completed “his second winter season at Phoenix,” implying that he had spent a few winter months there in both 1895-96 and 1896-97. I imagine him spending his initial time in each location forming new clubs, selling the members Harwood instruments, and teaching them to play them. The previous image includes his picture accompanying the (Ladies) Manzanita Mandolin Club. Some of the other women could also be from the La Harmonia group, but it’s hard to tell.

Lester Payne also created the occasional “super group” to put on a spectacular show. Note the mention of the 70-piece mandolin orchestra<sup>33</sup> that played in his closing concert! The article also provides a handy list of the specific ensembles Payne had organized up to that point. The names and locations of the eight entities are quite helpful in piecing together his activities (*italics means State was not given*). They appear to be organized by area (if not consecutively) and include:


- The Harwood Mandolin and Guitar Club (of Los Angeles, CA, pictured first above)
- The Ladies’ Guitar Club (Los Angeles)
- The Riverside Mandolin Orchestra (Riverside, CA)
- The Y. M. C. A. Mandolin Orchestra (Redlands, CA)
- The Manzanita Mandolin Club (Prescott, AZ, pictured above)
- La Harmonia Mandolin Orchestra (*no town given, but I believe AZ*)
- The Tempe Guitar Club (AZ)
- The Juvenile and Lilliputian Orchestras (Phoenix, AZ)



<sup>33</sup> The lineup included three harps, so I assume Payne often included harpists but did not play himself.

The *Cadenza* article concludes with the announcement that Payne is “about to leave for Denver, Colo., where he will probably locate.”<sup>34</sup> Two issues later, the Sep-Oct 1897 *Cadenza* mentioned in their “Personal” column that Payne had been engaged as a mandolin teacher at the Phoenix Academy of Music. In fact, he had already returned to Los Angeles in June 1897. While there, he received a nice profile in his next *Cadenza* appearance in the Mar-Apr 1898 issue (below).<sup>35</sup>

12 THE CADENZA.



LESTER PAYNE, OF LOS ANGELES, CAL.

LESTER PAYNE,  
OF LOS ANGELES, CAL.

News Notes, ✧  
✧ Concerts, Etc.

Mr. Lester Payne, guitar and mandolin artist, of Los Angeles, Cal., whose portrait we publish with this sketch, is, perhaps, one of the best known western teachers of these popular instruments, and is a performer of well known ability. Mr. Payne has had a wide experience as a teacher and has been connected with several prominent music schools as instructor in the guitar and mandolin departments. He was formerly located at Phoenix, Arizona, but removed to Los Angeles, where he has established himself favorably, and is sure to prosper as he deserves.

Mr. Payne has done some good work, also, in the field of composition, his productions having been issued by various Eastern publishing houses, and his name is thus well-known to music lovers. The readers of *THE CADENZA* who are not otherwise familiar with Mr. Payne's attainments will no doubt recall our previous notices of this artist in connection with the Harwood Mandolin Club, and the Ladies' Manzanita Mandolin Club, portraits and sketches of both these organizations having appeared in former issues.

The Haydn Mandolin Club Concert Company, of Allegheny, Pa., which has been so successful under the direction of Mr. Albert D. Liefeld, solo mandolin artist, gave a concert to a crowded house at Carnegie Hall, Allegheny, January 20th, the occasion being a benefit for the G. A. R. relief fund.

The Ella Carr Concert Company, consisting of Ella Carr, banjoist; Mabel Bashore, pianist, and the Orpheus Male Quartette began an eastern tour March 21st under the management of Mr. Albert Patterson. The artists of this company are all excellent entertainers and they present a delightful program at their concerts.

Miss Ella M. Fagin and her pupils gave a very enjoyable musicale at Pittsfield, Ill., Dec. 29th, many pleasing solos and concerted numbers being rendered by Miss Fagin and her pupils on the mandolin, guitar, banjo and violin. Among the assisting talent were Miss Blanche Scott, vocalist, Miss Kittie Smith,

<sup>34</sup> No notices have been found in Denver, and Payne didn't remain there, though it was soon mentioned that he had been on a "two-years' trip through Arizona and Colorado." *The Los Angeles Times*, Jun 13, 1897.

<sup>35</sup> An older photograph was used; he retained his moustache.

Payne's last notice in Los Angeles was in October 1898. He had also remarried during that year.<sup>36</sup> Restless, or just looking for greener pastures, he next moved to Spokane, Washington, where he joined the faculty of the Columbia College of Music.<sup>37</sup> There, he "reorganized" the "Cadenza Mandolin and Guitar Club."<sup>38</sup>



The Cadenza Mandolin Orchestra (from *The Cadenza*, May-June 1900)

The following year, the group's studio portrait (above) appeared under the name "The Cadenza Mandolin Orchestra" in *The Cadenza's* May-June 1900 issue, and again later on a piece of 1901 sheet music ("Suwanee River," the group then titled simply "Prof Lester Payne's Orchestra.")

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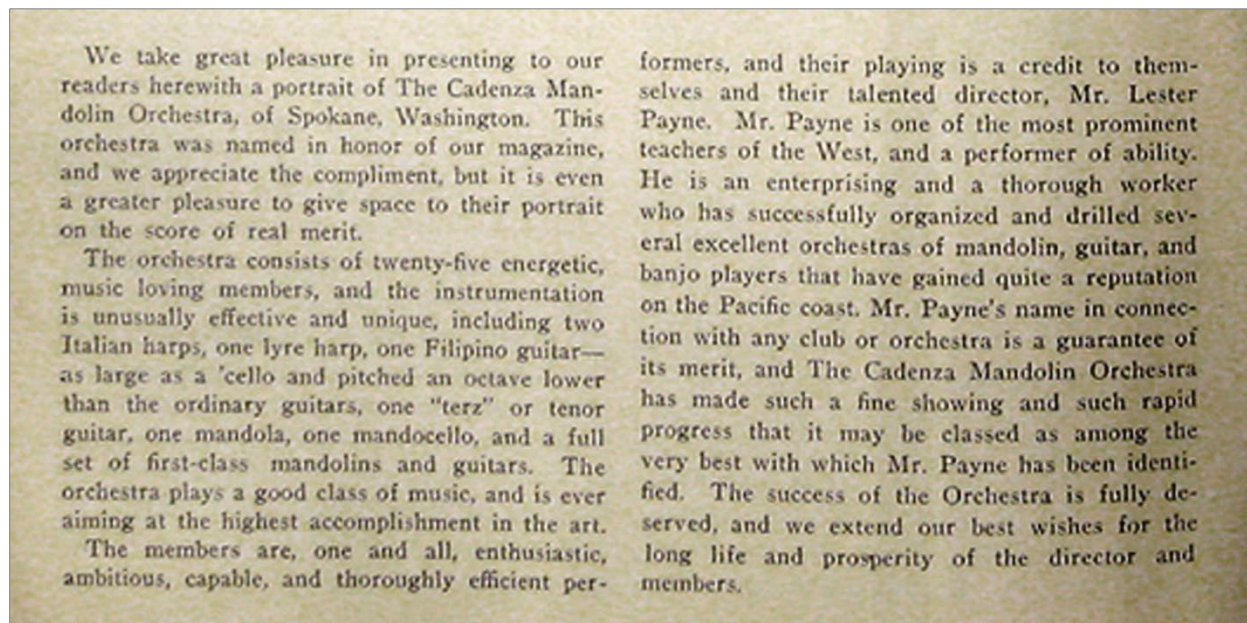
<sup>36</sup> His new wife Janie M. was likely a member of one of his many ensembles, as there is an 1898 Los Angeles newspaper notice of her performing with him. Years later, she would run his music school during his long absences.

<sup>37</sup> *The Spokesman-Review*, Jan 29, 1899.

<sup>38</sup> *The Spokesman-Review*, May 02, 1899.

In the photograph, Payne is seated just left and above the center bassist. Once again, we see the Washburn lyre harp guitar (held by the same woman four years later). Besides the usual Harwoods, there is also a large Waldo mandocello in front (though I highly doubt the little girl played it!).

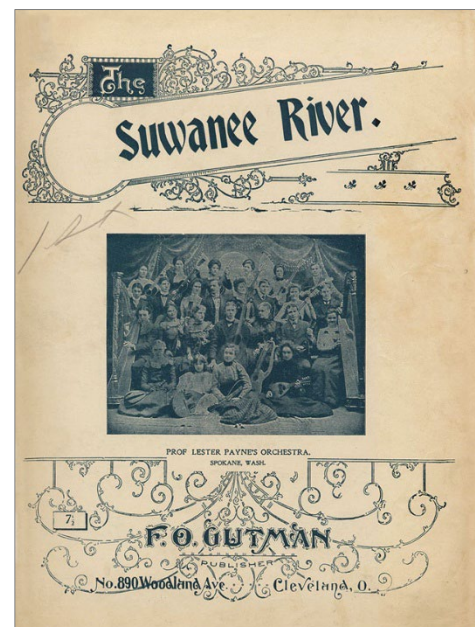
The “Cadenza” appellation was an interesting choice – an homage to *the Cadenza*, as the editor wrote:



For reasons unknown, at the same time the spring 1900 *Cadenza* profile appeared, Payne was living across the state in Seattle with his parents, his wife of two years their child.<sup>39</sup>

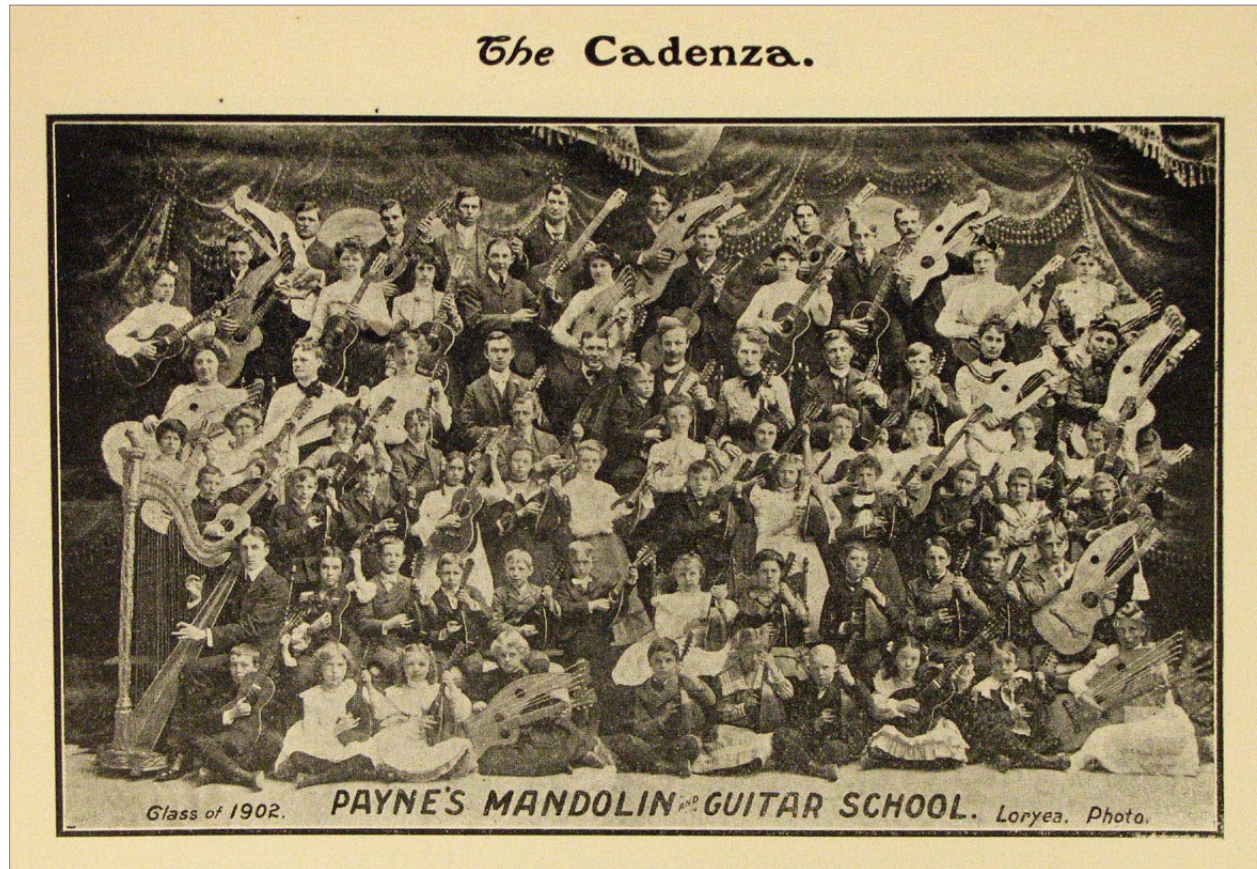
The re-use of the *Cadenza* image a year later for the sheet music demonstrates how photos may pop up months or even years after they were taken, making Timeline research difficult!

By the way, pay particular attention to the photo studio backdrop...



<sup>39</sup> The Seattle census was taken on June 4, 1900. Living as roomers at 805 Madison St. were Lester's father Joseph M. Payne, a bookkeeper (born 1829 in England), mother Cynthia (born 1847 in Illinois), wife Jennie (Janie), and their one-year-old daughter Lyra Paloma, born in May 1899.

We're now up to 1901,<sup>40</sup> with Lester Payne still promoting Harwood guitars and mandolins, but curiously still no Harwood *harp guitars*. And then a new member showed up at Payne's Mandolin and Guitar School to join his Orchestra and put the kibosh on that idea for good!



Class of 1902 – Payne's Mandolin and Guitar School (from *The Cadenza*, August 1902)

Yes, the prize of Knutsen fans everywhere and still arguably the most impressive historical harp guitar image ever found. For in fact, it's not actually a single photograph, but *four* approximately 8"x12" original photographs meticulously hand-cut around the players' heads and glued together to form one huge composite image. This was so that they could include all 75 players, shooting them 15 to 24 at a time on the small risers in the studio. It was this cleverly created super-photograph that was printed in *The Cadenza* journal in August 1902 (accompanying a short piece about the group's June 17 concert in Spokane, WA). We figured this out after a years-long "search and rescue" operation of what, impossibly, turned out to be the *original framed photograph*.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Payne soon left Seattle and (curiously) relocated briefly to Eureka, CA on the northern coast (*Ferndale Enterprise*, Apr 16, 1901) before returning to Spokane in September to reopen his school, which included "musical kindergarten work" (*The Spokesman-Review*, Sep 18, 1901).

<sup>41</sup> The surviving treasure was initially discovered by my friend and restorer Kerry Char; we told its story in our exhaustive article: <https://www.harpguitars.net/knutsen/payne.htm>



The original giant composite photograph, discovered and owned by Dirk Vandenberg of Guitar Safari in San Pedro, California. © and courtesy D. Vandenberg.

Once the 4-part composite trick was discovered, Paul Ruppia immediately noticed that the painted curtain backdrop was the same studio used for Payne's 1900 "Cadenza Orchestra" photo! In our detailed Knutsen article we went on at some length trying to figure out if the studio sessions took place in Seattle or Spokane, and now that it looks to be Spokane, it still leaves questions unanswered (mainly how – and why – did nearly a dozen Knutsen harp guitars show up in Spokane).

Paul also spotted that same Washburn lyre harp guitar woman, (but now with a Knutsen), along with additional members from the previous shoot – including the mandocello soloist, and of course Payne himself. But the real stars for us are Chris and Anna Knutsen themselves!

The original *Cadenza* caption (see next page) describes an elaborate concert with 75 instrumentalists and a light show! The *Cadenza* piece starts out quoting a review in the *Spokesman Review*, then segues into obvious commentary from *Cadenza*. Nowhere is Knutsen mentioned. It's hard to believe *Cadenza* would single out the mandocello soloist but

leave out any mention of the near dozen bizarre new harp guitars and that the wacky inventor/builder himself was onstage!

Especially when Knutsen himself opened the show with a harp guitar solo!<sup>42</sup>

Forty of Miss Pauline Dunstan's pupils will present the three act play, "Remember," at the Spokane theater, Tuesday, June 17. Between acts the members of the Payne guitar, mandolin and harp school will render the following program:  
Overture, 75 instruments, "The Golden Chimes;" symphony harp solo, selection, C. Nutson; mandolin solo, (a) "An Autumn Evening Serenade" (Samuel Stegel), (b) "Alice, Where Art Thou?" (arranged by Arling Schaffer), Miss Anna Petersen; "Manzanillo" (A. G. Robyn), Cadenza Mandolin orchestra; "Battle Scene" (descriptive), arranged by Lester Payne, club of 20 guitars; "Hunters' March" (Hellner-Gutman), juvenile mandolin orchestra with Italian harp accompaniment; mandocello solo, H. Louis Schermerhorn; "Serenade El Caballero," C. E. Pomeroy; "Darkies' Dream" (G. L. Lansing), Mandolin and Guitar quintet.

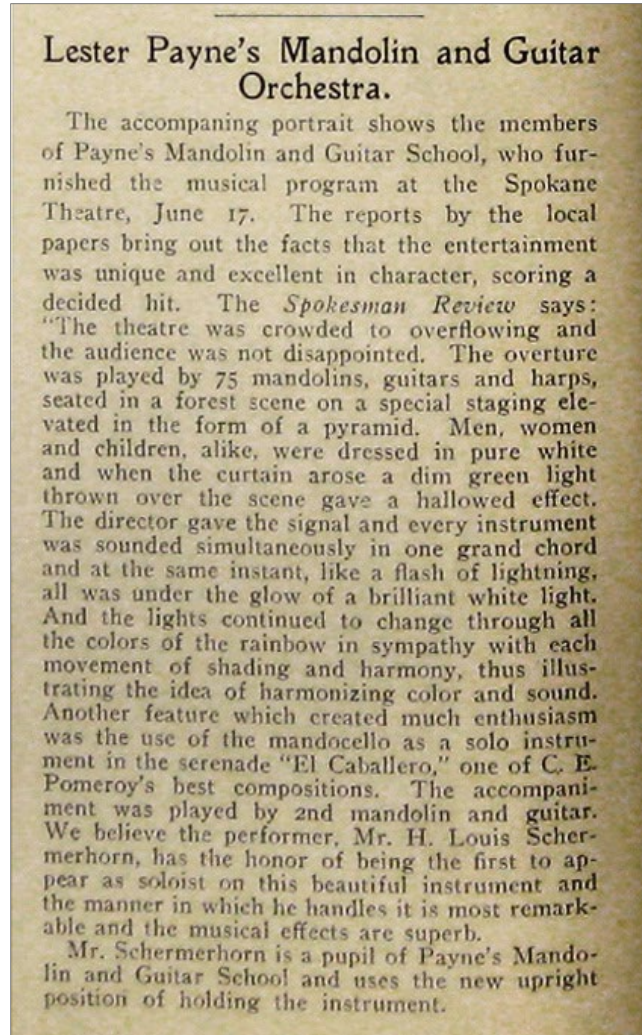
At right, the August 1902 Cadenza caption.

Above, a June 6<sup>th</sup> *Spokane-Review* announcement of the upcoming concert.

By the way, the mandocello was the same Waldo from the previous 1900 Payne photo. Undoubtedly, Payne had acquired the recent instrument to help keep his group "cutting edge" (Jenkins not having anything but standard mandolin sizes available).

Which reminds me: what was the status then of Lester Payne the "Harwood teacher/dealer"? Apparently still going strong for at least eight years now. The Harwood mandolins and guitars are still present – at least 21 in fact – but he still has nary a Harwood *harp* guitar. Instead, his members are now playing 10 or 11 brand new Knutsen harp guitars (or, I should say, "posing with").

Darrell Urbien suggested that this was an attempt at a new distribution deal between Chris Knutsen and Lester Payne. It certainly would have been an ideal situation for both Payne *and* Knutsen. Coincidentally, Knutsen's distribution deal with Dyer ("in all states except Washington and California") likely ended c.1902, when Dyer licensed the design and formed a



<sup>42</sup> Knutsen given as "Nutson," one of his many misspellings. His guitar was named the "Symphony harp guitar" – here, the reporter was confused, leaving off "guitar" (perhaps because there *was* a harp in the orchestra?)

new association with the Larson brothers in Chicago. So, the time frame fits. And the sudden appearance of almost a dozen new Knutsen instruments in Payne's orchestra strongly hints at something more than a casual get-together. However, no other evidence has surfaced involving either Knutsen or Payne to suggest that this potential partnership went any further. Perhaps it *was* simply something innocuous...like Chris and his wife deciding to join this large new music school guitar ensemble and then bringing a batch of his harp guitars for the several dozen students and players (and captive audience) to try out. Or maybe Payne said "Hey, Knutsen – you've got all those crazy guitars – why don't we use some for the photo shoot...?" Whatever the scenario was, it must have been an elaborate plan, as Knutsen was then in Tacoma, and Payne's school and orchestra were in Spokane. We may never know the details, but it sure is fun to imagine all the "historical possibilities."



Payne's June 1904 Spokane concert was his largest yet, with 150 instruments!

Around 1905, Lester Payne started taking long late summer respites near Lake Chelan in the middle of the state, up to four months at a time. Spokane concerts would then continue in October-December upon his return. These trips years "in search of health" continued for years, while his wife would keep the school running back in Spokane.<sup>43</sup>

By 1920 he was out of the music business and back in Los Angeles (though city directories would still list "Payne's Mandolin and Guitar School, Lester Payne, Principal" in Spokane until 1922<sup>44</sup>). He moved through several occupations until his death in San Gabriel on February 1, 1944, at age 76.

From Kidnapper to Harwood Dealer and Mandolin Club Organizer to Knutsen Kollaborator to Poultry Farmer, Lester Payne will always hold a special place in the annals of Harpguitars.net and our hearts.



<sup>43</sup> Was Payne unhealthy, or just burned out? He took one full year off alone at Lake Chelan, created apple orchards, and was listed as "Fruit Grower" there in 1914. Taking a more serious break, he moved back to San Bernardino, CA in 1915 to become a poultry farmer (winning many prizes). 1916 saw him back running the school in Spokane, until the year 1922.

<sup>44</sup> His wife was "Assistant Director" at the school from 1913-1922. Perhaps he had become only a figurehead, and she had fully taken over. They may even have divorced, as he seems to have left her behind and would later live with his daughter in San Gabriel.

## Acknowledgements

Robert Jenkins, Bill Graham, Jim Garber, Lynn Wheelwright, Barry Trott, Paul Rupp, Darrell Urbien, Michael John Simmons, Dustin Miller and the dozens of collectors who have shared information with us!

**Image credits:** In the captions and body of text; please contact me for any missing credits.



**About The Author:** Gregg Miner is, at various times of the day, a plucked stringed instrument collector, scholar, recording artist and performer. He is widely considered the world's leading authority on harp guitars. His web sites include Harpguitars.net, Harpguitarmusic.com and Minermusic.com.

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