Violin Making in the American Heartland and the West Coast

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Moderator: It is my pleasure to introduce Christopher Germain, who will share information today about violin making in the American Heartland and on the West Coast. I also want to take this opportunity on the behalf of the VSA to thank Chris for all of his hard work that has helped create the VSA/Oberlin Violin-Making Workshop. It's the highest-level workshop in the world for many and serves to inspire violinmakers everywhere. Chris is a graduate of the Chicago School of Violin Making and past president of the Federation. Also, he's a past governor of the VSA and a member of the Entente. Chris lives in Philadelphia and came down to share with us today.

Christopher Germain: Recently a number of people, such as our host David Bromberg, have been researching the instruments and lives of American violinmakers in the 19th and 20th centuries. This has long been part of the mission of the Violin Society of America: to encourage and promote the craft of violin making in the United States. I'm glad to say that things are starting to turn around, but for many years American violin making was largely unappreciated. There are a number of reasons for this. Over the years, for example, dealers have mined countries like Italy for instruments and brought them over here. But that is changing. As we go through some of the slides this afternoon, I think you'll see that there's a high level of craftsmanship in some U.S. makers that until recently has largely gone unnoticed.

Before we begin, I want to thank the VSA for its generous support of a project, The American Violin, which took place at the Library of Congress in April 2006. This was the subject of the Federation's 25th anniversary. We wanted to take a retrospective look at American violin making roughly from the period of 1850 until 1950. The VSA was very generous in their support. Part two of that program is going to be the publication of a book called *The American Violin*. We have some great writers, editors, and scholars, such as Philip Kass, contributing to this volume. If you have any other questions about that, please talk to Philip or me sometime this weekend.

My subject today is American making as it occurred in the Midwest, the so-called Heartland, and in some cities on the West Coast. After my presentation, Philip Kass will talk about the early violin making in the United States that took place mostly along the Eastern seaboard, in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and the New England schools.

As we went to tell the story of the American violin, we found there are three significant chapters. The earliest people who crafted instruments in the United States we placed in the category of Yankee craftsman. They were largely untrained in musical instrument making. They were skilled in woodworking and other crafts, but they were not specifically full-time instrument makers. You see their work in more utilitarian instruments, such as church basses that were used in common life and in worship.

In New England and in the Moravian communities of Pennsylvania they largely emulated the types of instruments they had seen in Europe. Without a specific model to follow, they fashioned instruments that we would consider fairly naive, but they were fine craftsmen just the same. They produced a different type of instrument.

In the middle to late 19th century and the early

20th century, there was a wave of violinmakers from Europe. They immigrated to the United States to gain political, religious, or economic freedom, and they brought their skills with them. That's primarily the group that I'm going to be dealing with this afternoon.

The third chapter of the American story began about 1975, when for the first time there was an entire generation of American-born-and-trained makers. Most of them received their training at the violin-making schools in Salt Lake City, Chicago, and Boston, since it was no longer necessary to go to Europe to acquire the necessary skills.

Today I will show you instruments made by some of the major makers who practiced their craft in the American Heartland and the cities of the West Coast.

One of the major centers for making in the United States was, and still is, Chicago, Illinois, where for over 100 years there has been a tradition of new instrument making. Two prominent members of that tradition are Carl G. Becker and his son, Carl F. (Fig. 1). To understand why Chicago became such a leading center for our craft, it's necessary to understand the economic factors that contributed to its rise.

If we go back to 1833 or 1835, Chicago was just a little "mud hole" on the Illinois River up by the lake. There was not much of a settlement there at that time. Due to the completion of a system of canals, Chicago grew at truly an exponential pace, much like that of Beijing or Shanghai in recent years. In just 60 years between 1830 and 1890, the population of Chicago grew from 100 to over a million (Fig. 2). With that huge population growth there was a corresponding increase in commodities, services, and money into that area. And with the increased wealth, the arts, including

Figure 1. Carl G. Becker (1887–1975) and his son, Carl F. (1919-): prominent members of the Chicago violin-making tradition.

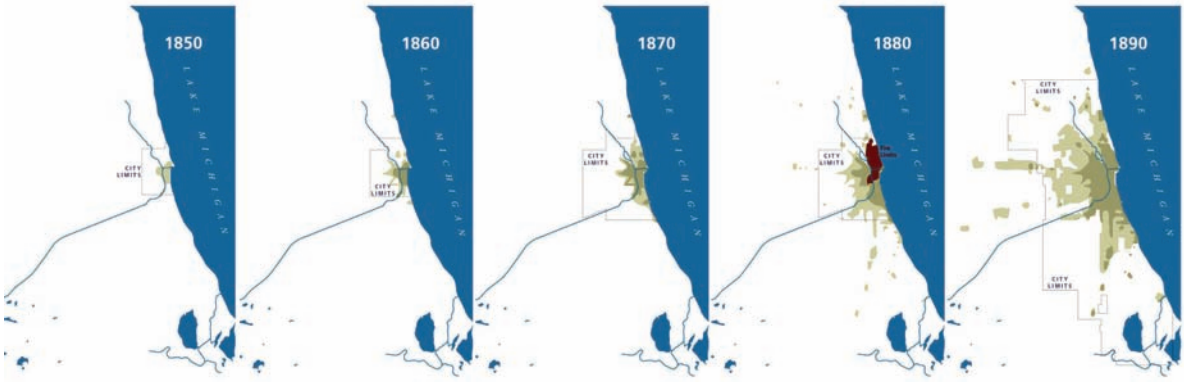

Figure 2. From 1830 to 1890 Chicago expanded rapidly as the population grew from 100 to over 1 million.

music, flourished.

As Chicago prospered, the popular demand for musical instruments increased. Probably the main draw for the immigrant violinmakers who came to Chicago was the rise of the large music houses that needed trained luthiers to restore and maintain their instruments. Two major music houses that were established during the last half of the 19th century were Lyon & Healy in 1864 and William Lewis & Son in 1874 (Fig. 3). The latter did not really gain the prominence that we remember it having until later, about 1898. So they were not really direct competitors. Lyon & Healy was the first dominant house, and Lewis & Son became so some time later. We'll take a look at the size and the services that these two companies had. They were located along "Music Dealers' Row" and downtown and today's Chicago loop. The people who worked for these two houses came from a number of European countries.

Practically all of the workers at that time came from Europe, as is evident in the list of craftsmen in Table 1. At Lyon & Healy there was Andrea Bisiach from Italy, and from France there was J.B. Bredall, their shop foreman for 12 years, as well as the father-and-son team of François and Raymond


PATRICK JOSEPH HEALY

Mr. Healy came to Chicago from Boston in 1864, and immediately joined in founding the firm of Lyon & Healy. He was the active manager of the business from its inception until his death in 1905.


WM. LEWIS

Born, 1835. Died, 1902
With Root & Cady Music Co., 1870
Established Chicago Music Co., 1874 (Lewis, Newell and Gibbs)
Established Wm. Lewis Music Co., 1886
Style Changed to Wm. Lewis & Son in 1898

Figure 3. Two major violin houses were established in Chicago in the last half of the 19th century: Lyon & Healy in 1864 and William Lewis & Son in 1874.

Table 1. Craftsmen employed by the two major Chicago violin shops.

Lyon & Healy	Years with Company	Country of Origin	William Lewis & Son	Years with Company	Country of Origin
Jay C. Freeman	1889–1920	USA	George Einsele	1912–14	USA
John Hornsteiner	1890–1908	Germany	Ernst Carlson	1920s–50s	Sweden
W.T. Lane	1893–96	England	John Emil Carlson	1920s–50s	Sweden
Carl Paulsen	ca.1893–1908	Denmark	Frank Kovanda	1924–ca.1945	USA
Peter Paulsen	ca.1893–1908	Denmark	Fritz Treutzschler	1928–51	Germany
Frank Sindelar	ca. 1900–	USA	Carl G. Becker	1924–68	USA
Hermann Kroeplin	1905–23	Germany	Carl F. Becker	1937–68	USA
J.B. Bredall	1908–20	France	Zenon Petesh	1950–68	Ukraine
Andrea Bisiach	1912–14	Italy			
John Coughlin	1912–	USA			
François Del Prato	ca.1914–20	France			
Raymond Del Prato	ca.1914–20	France			
Max Heberlein	1920–42	Germany			

Del Prato. Then there were some German emigrants. Of course, we've heard of the Heberlein family from Markneukirchen; both Conrad and Max Heberlein emigrated from Germany, as did John Hornsteiner. There were the Danish makers, Carl and Peter Christian Paulsen, who worked in Chicago for a number of years and later relocated their shop to Michigan. From England there was W.T. Lane, who initially worked for Lyon & Healy, and was the first person John Hornsteiner worked with in Chicago. There were Gustav Ferron and Hermann Kroeplin, Jay C. Freeman, who trained in America and became more of an expert and dealer and later worked for the House of Wurlitzer, and Frank Sindelar. There was a whole stable of highly trained and talented luthiers who worked under the roof of a very important shop at a very important time in the history of our craft in America.

Over at the William Lewis & Son shop, there was an equally impressive number of luthiers. Included were John Emil Carlsen and Ernst Carlsen, who emigrated from Sweden. Zenon Petesh, who had come from the Ukraine to Philadelphia and worked for Moennig's shop. Previously, he had studied with Dimitro Didczenko. And then there were the American-born Carl G. and Carl F. Becker, as well as Frank Kovanda, who later specialized more in bow making and eventually moved to the West Coast. There were quite a number of highly skilled makers who worked in Chicago and later traveled to the West Coast to make their work known there.

In addition to the shops of Lyon & Healy and William Lewis & Son, there were many other shops and makers in Chicago at that time (Table 2), and we'll see some examples of their work later on. There was a whole range of European traditions, different skills, different styles, all together in one city, at one time. There was Aagaard from Denmark, Alfio Batelli from Florence, Italy, and the Bischofberger family, who came a little bit later to Chicago from Switzerland. There were a few American-trained makers such as Joseph Copland, Gustav Fassauer Ferron from Germany, and also Carl George. I had mentioned earlier Conrad Heberlein from Germany and Franz Kinberg, who had emigrated from Yugoslavia and later worked for the shop Kagan & Gaines in Chicago. Herman Macklett, the maternal great-grandfather of Carl F. Becker, was born in Germany and moved to St. Louis, and later practiced as an upholsterer in St. Paul in the 1830s. Some time in the 1860s he settled in Chicago as an instrument maker. From Norway there was Knute Reindahl. He initially was a wood carver employed by the Pullman Car Company on the south side of Chicago and later became a full-time violinmaker with a shop down on Van Buren Street in the loop, and then later on he would move to Madison, Wisconsin, where he

Table 2. Craftsmen (mostly from Europe) employed by several Chicago violin shops.

Craftsmen	Country of Origin	Violin Shops	Years with Company
Larsen Aagaard	Denmark	Francesco Cristofori	1876–83
Alfio Batelli	Italy	Kagan & Gaines	1947–50
Hermann Bischofberger	Switzerland	Kagan & Gaines, Carl George, and Kenneth Warren & Son	1949–55
Joseph N. Copland	USA	Self-employed	1905–56
Gustav F. Ferron	Germany	Hermann Kroeplin	1908–27
Carl George	Germany	Gustav F. Ferron, and Franz Wagner	1898–ca.1905
Conrad Heberlein	Germany	Gustav F. Ferron; Est. own shop	ca.1900–09; after 1909
Franz Kinberg	Yugoslavia	Kagan & Gaines	1949–82
Herman Macklett	Germany	Macklett Violins	1860s–84(d)
René Morel	France	Kagan & Gaines	ca.1950–1955
Knute Reindahl	Norway	Independent maker	1885–1910
Franz Wagner	Germany	Independent maker, and later partnership with Carl George	1898–ca.1940
Hans Weisshaar	Germany	Kagan & Gaines	1940s–1947

lived out the rest of his life and career. And there was Franz Wagner from Germany who became a business partner with Carl George (also from Germany), who we'll look at a little bit later.

To put this in context, let's look at this map of Chicago in 1871 (Fig. 4). That date is very important, of course. That's the date that the city burned down. So it was largely rebuilt north of the loop. Here we're looking at a map of Chicago's loop. The area in green on the right is along Columbus Drive, that's the Grant Park area, right along the lakefront. Three blocks over is Michigan Avenue, and there we have the X along Wabash Avenue. That's one block to the west of Michigan, right below Orchestra Hall in Chicago, and that area from the 1920s up until roughly 1990 or 1995 was known as Music Dealers Row. Along that area, along Jackson and Wabash Avenues, there were probably during its heyday 15 to 20 major music houses, all located within an area of a few blocks.

There was a lot of extra contact between the makers, and I think in that one city, Chicago, a real American school of violin making emerged at that time. It's not unlike Cremona 300 years ago. There was a small area with a large conglomeration of makers, all working together, seeing each other's work, exchanging ideas and information. And as a result, everybody's work grew from that.

Here we have a snapshot of what the workshops were like in Chicago (Fig. 5). Off on the left, a photograph at the Lyon & Healy shop at 243 South Wabash. The shop of William Lewis & Son was only a few doors down the street. Strangely enough, this shop at 207 South Wabash was the first shop I rented in Chicago. I was sitting way back there. For 60 or 70 years, that particular office at Wabash and Adams was used for music stores, musical instrument making, and so forth. There was a very long tradition in Chicago along this area.

Here is an array of snapshots of some of the people who practiced in this area (Fig. 6). On the left is the Rudolph Wurlitzer family. That dynasty began back in Germany several hundred years previous. When immigration to American started, the Wurlitzer family moved to Cincinnati. Eventually, they established an important branch

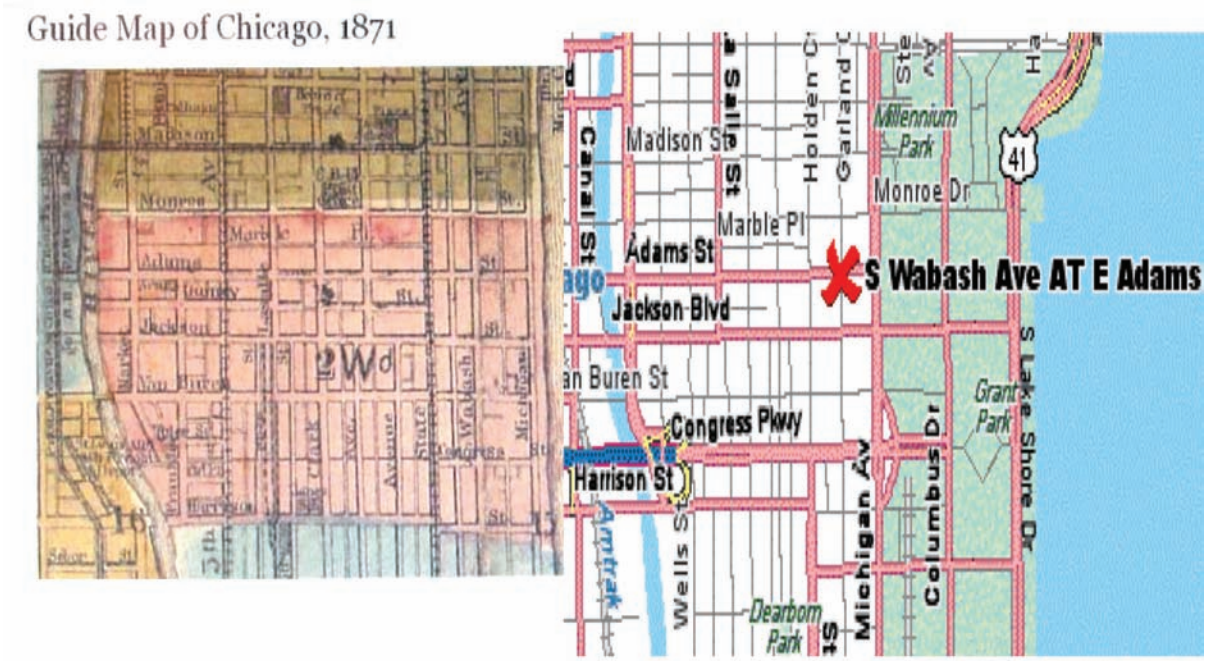

Figure 4. Chicago retail music district in 1871.

office on Music Dealers Row, and I think the address is 329 South Wabash. Along this same block was the firm Voit & Geiger at 14 East Jackson—around the corner from Wabash. On the bottom is the Norwegian maker Knute Reindahl, who was on Van Buren Street about a block away. On the right we have that partnership of Wagner & George, two men who initially emigrated from Hanover, Germany, to Toronto and then to Chicago, where they worked for many years. They were at 17 Van Buren Street.

Other notable shops in Chicago at the time were those of Kagan & Gaines and Kenneth Warren & Son. The European craftsmen at Kagan & Gaines included Alfio Batelli from Florence and Herman Bischofberger, whose family now has a

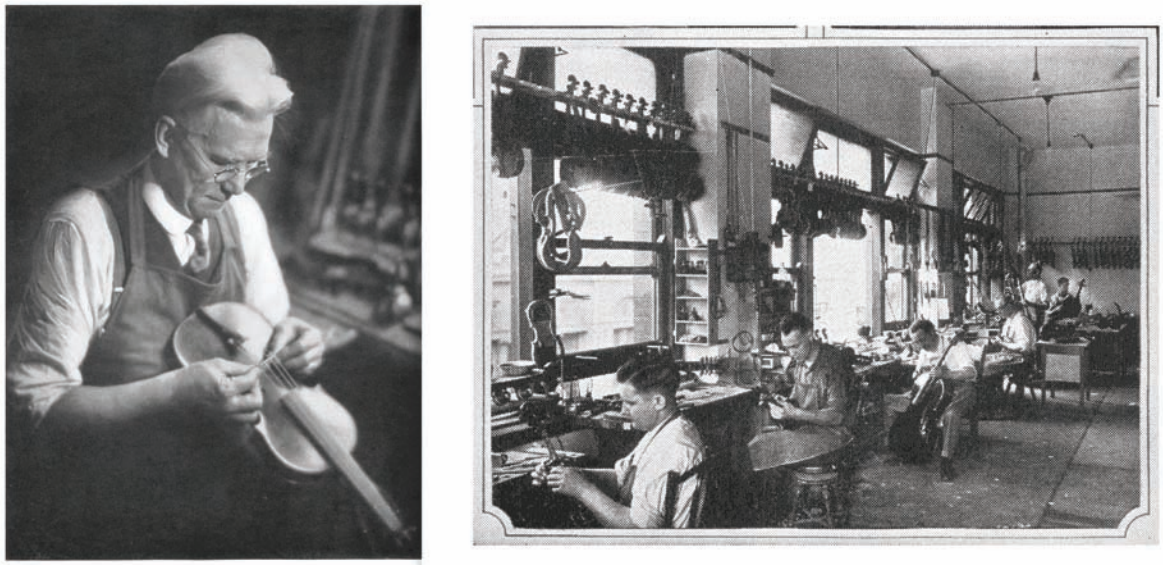

Figure 5. Chicago's Music Dealers Row included the violin shops of Lyon & Healy (243 So. Wabash Ave.) and William Lewis & Son (207 So. Wabash & 30 E. Adams St.).

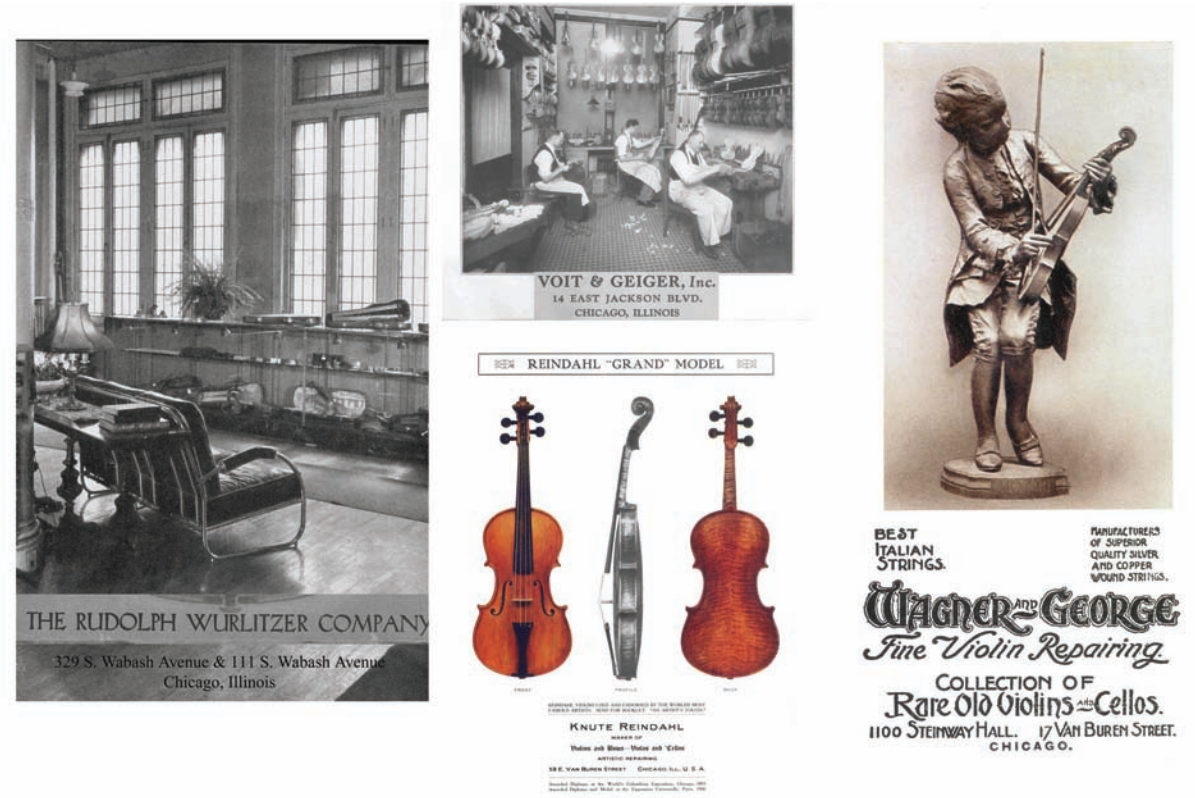

Figure 6. Memorable images from the Chicago violin shops of the Rudolph Wurlitzer Co., Voit & Geiger, Inc., Knute Reindahl, and Wagner and George.

shop in the Seattle area. Franz Kinberg worked at Kagan & Gaines from about 1949 to 1982. René Morel initially came to Kagan & Gaines in Chicago. Most people think René spent his entire career in New York, but he worked first in Chicago before moving back to New York, when he went to work for Rembert Wurlitzer. Hans Weisshaar also worked at Kagan & Gaines for a number of years; his son Michael was born in Chicago. This was sort of his halfway stopping-off point before his move to Los Angeles, where he opened up what would become a major West Coast shop. The shop of Kenneth Warren & Son also was active prior to 1930.

Let's look at some photographs of instruments made by Chicago makers. This first violin was made by Herman Macklett (Fig. 7), the maternal great-grandfather of Carl F. Becker (better known as Carl Becker, Jr.). There is no connection between Carl, Jr. and Macklett—they never met. But if you talk to Carl Becker today, he will tell you that he feels a very strong connection between Macklett and the Becker family. Stylistically, if you look at this instrument, you don't see a lot of similarities between the work of Macklett and either Carl G. or Carl F. Becker. One thing that they share in common is very fine workmanship. We don't know exactly where Macklett learned his craft. He was born in Germany and came to the United States, where he worked initially as an upholsterer. Obviously, he studied under someone very good in order to produce an instrument of this quality. We know that he was in Chicago prior to 1871 when the Great Fire occurred. Apparently he lost quite a bit of his workshop at that time, but was able to continue. He produced the instrument made in 1879, which you saw this morning from David Bromberg's collection, as well as this one made in 1897.

Here's a violin by Nicolaus Uhlen, a maker who worked for Lyon & Healy (Fig. 8). Very few examples of his work are known and that brings a question to my mind. Here you have the work of a highly skilled, highly trained, mature maker who must have done a fair amount of making at that time. Unfortunately, we haven't found many

Figure 7. Violin by Herman Macklett, Chicago, 1897. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 8. Violin by Nicolaus Uhlen, Chicago, 1903. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

instruments by him, so I'm trying to seek out more of his work.

This violin by Carl George (Fig. 9) is in David Bromberg's collection. When you go to view the collection at his house, pay particular attention to this instrument, a bench copy of a later Guarneri *del Gesù*, a very fine and interesting instrument, but stylistically quite different from his typical work. I have another slide (not included in this presentation) of his using the same Guarneri *del Gesù* model, but done in a much straighter, cleaner style than in this example. A very talented maker, Carl George produced over 400 instruments in Chicago.

Next we have a violin by Peter Christian Paulsen in Chicago in 1910 (Fig. 10). The Paulsens emigrated from Denmark and are associated with the emergence of a real school in Chicago. If we can put one name as being the founder of this school, it would be John Hornsteiner, who after his training at the Mittenwald School came to Chicago and had a working career of about 60 years. He took many makers under his wing, such as the Paulsens and Frank Sindelar, whom we will see later. He was very instrumental in bringing them along as makers in their own right.

Here we have an early violin by Carl Becker, Sr., who with his son Carl F., were the central part of the William Lewis & Son shop in Chicago (Fig. 11). This violin also was made along the Guarneri *del Gesù* pattern. It's more common with Becker instruments, and between father and son they produced in excess of 800 instruments. Every summer they took time off from the William Lewis & Son shop and went to their place up in Pickerel, Wisconsin, out in the woods. It's a violinmaker's dream to be out in a camp during the summertime, and they would work together, enjoy nature, and produce a large number of instruments that they would bring back to Chicago to finish up during the year and sell. Again, this violin is a very fine, typical example by Carl G. Becker from 1917.

Next is a violin made by François Del Prato, who came from France back in the teens and became a Chicago mainstay (Fig. 12). His son Raymond also worked in Chicago for a long time. I haven't seen many instruments by Del Prato in Chicago, but as we saw with the Nicolaus Uhlen example, it's a fine instrument. It shows very good training. He had a connection to Emil Laurent who had a shop in Brussels that furnished instruments to Lyon & Healy for many years, which they sold through their mail order house.

Here we see the John Hornsteiner violin

Figure 9. Violin by Carl George, Chicago, 1904. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 10. Violin by Peter C. Paulsen, Chicago, 1910. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 11. Violin by Carl G. Becker, Chicago, 1917. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 12. Violin by François Del Prato, Chicago, 1917. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

from David's collection (Fig. 13). This is sort of the missing link in Chicago violin-making circles because so much has been heard of Hornsteiner and yet so little of his work is found in the United States. When you visit David's house, pay close attention to this because stylistically it's a very pure Mittenwald fiddle. It doesn't really share the stylistic similarities that you see in one of his students, like Frank Sindelar, Peter Christian Paulsen, or Carl Paulsen. David also has a Neuner & Hornsteiner violin, I think it's a three-quarter-size instrument. When you look at them side-by-side, you can see the distinct similarities between this 1924 violin by John Hornsteiner from Chicago and the Neuner & Hornsteiner.

Next we have a violin by Frank Sindelar (Fig. 14), who was a prolific maker in Chicago from the early 1900s into the 1950s and perhaps a little bit later. I believe he produced in excess of 300 instruments, all of very high quality and mature style. He was really brought along by John Hornsteiner, but you can see Sindelar's very distinct style. He needed some training, a little advice, and a little push, but he developed as an artist in his own right. He made violas and cellos as well as a large number of violins, and they are always first-rate instruments. David mentioned this morning that we don't know where Sindelar was born in 1883. It might have been in the Czech Republic or in Chicago. In any event, by the time he was one or two years old, he was living in Chicago, so I would certainly consider him a Chicago maker through and through, and one of the best.

The next violin was made by Carl G. Becker in 1946 (Fig. 15). It is Becker's typical model, patterned on a Golden Period Stradivari. This instrument is important because 1946 is the year when he was joined by his son Carl F., who had just been discharged from the Air Force, and also began working at William Lewis & Son. After 1946 the Becker instruments are labeled Carl Becker & Son; they are working as a unit.

Franz Kinberg made this next violin modeled on a late-period (1740-41) Guarneri *del Gesù* (Fig. 16). He was the shop foreman at Kagan & Gaines, also along Music Dealers Row. Kinberg was born in Yugoslavia and immigrated to the U.S. We are trying to get an exact date on it. I would say it's roughly post-World War II, and he worked in Chicago through the 1970s. Kinberg had quite a cult following, particularly in Chicago. Many musicians played on his instruments and raved about them. He was noted for his fine craftsmanship and the outstanding sound of his instruments. He was another important Chicago maker. He is a little late chronologically for our

Figure 13. Violin by John Hornsteiner, Chicago, 1924

Figure 14. Violin by Frank Sindelar, Chicago, ca. 1925. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 15. Violin by Carl G. Becker, Chicago, 1946. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 16. Violin by Franz Kinberg, Chicago, 1960. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

study, but he still should be mentioned.

This next violin was made by Carl F. Becker in 1982 using the same model as we saw earlier, but crafted in Becker, Jr.'s absolutely flawless style (Fig. 17). This instrument was made for and commissioned by Robert Bein, and it's a stunning instrument in every respect.

Those were the main Chicago makers to whom I wanted to draw your attention. Pittsburgh has some similarities to Chicago because as transportation and commerce developed in the United States, so did these cities. Once the steel town got humming, there was a lot of money going through there and a lot of culture and a lot of arts. As a result, in Pittsburgh, just as in Chicago, there was a lot of immigrant talent, people who were trained in Europe who decided to come to the United States for economic/social freedom, more opportunity.

If we can say that there's a head of the Pittsburgh school, it would be Gabriel Marc François (Fig. 18). François emigrated from France back in the early 1900s. Little is known about his violin making as we don't have too many examples of his work. So I am happy to be able to show you an example in the next illustration. He is regarded as the founder of the Pittsburgh school who influenced other makers such as Joseph Kaye, Benjamin Phillips, and Frank Barstow who worked in Philadelphia.

I want to share a quote that I have from a letter that spoke about François and his work. This is a letter written in July 1917 by Johann Blaus to his friend, a Mr. Rothwell, in Atlantic City. Rothwell had asked him for advice about whom he could trust for varnish work on his violin, and Blaus replied: "About varnishing, I would advise you not to send the violin to New York to have it varnished. You do not want any of your fine work daubed with the material, which I am well acquainted with. I have not made any recent discoveries in varnish. The question of varnishing is a serious one. There are two men whom I know that can varnish a violin." So he's saying there are only two guys in the country he would trust. "François in Pittsburgh and Gemunder in New York. I would trust either of them with the varnishing of the finest product." So we know he was held in high regard among musicians in his day. He trained a number of makers around Pittsburgh.

Let's take a look at François's work. This is a very interesting copy of a J.B. Guadagnini violin (Fig. 19). He probably had access to an original Guadagnini and was making a copy

Figure 17. Violin by Carl F. Becker, Chicago, 1982. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 18. Portrait of Gabriel M. François, violinmaker of Pittsburgh.

for a client. This violin has a very mature style, first-rate varnish, and first-rate workmanship in every regard. I just wish there were more François instruments we knew of because he was obviously a very talented man.

Also of the François school in Pittsburgh is the work of Joseph Kaye, who was quite active as a maker up until about 1940. This violin (Fig. 20) from David's collection shows Kaye's maturity and skill.

Next is a violin by Benjamin Phillips made in Pittsburgh in 1928 (Fig. 21). As David mentioned this morning, Phillips emigrated from Poland, so we're not sure what his original name was, but it's likely it was changed at Ellis Island. There might be a relationship between him and the later Phillips family, including Daniel Phillips in Pittsburgh.

Minneapolis had a number of very important makers. Let's start with H.H. Heskett and the violin dated 1887 we saw this morning from David's collection (Fig. 22). Heskett emigrated from England. We don't know where he worked, but it's obvious from this instrument that he had formal training and a lot of skill. Not often do we come across his work in America.

Figure 19. Violin by Gabriel M. François, Pittsburgh, 1919. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 20. Violin by Joseph Kaye, Pittsburgh, 1925.

Figure 21. Violin by Benjamin Phillips, Pittsburgh, 1928.

Figure 22. Violin by Harrison H. Heskett, Minneapolis, 1887.

This very beautiful violin was made by Matthias Dahl (Fig. 23), again in David's collection. Dahl was a significant maker in the Twin Cities who produced several hundred instruments and was a very spiritual man. At some point he held a séance where he claimed to have been in touch with the spirit of Stradivari who handed him his varnish recipe. I have been told on good authority that once Dahl changed to "Stradivari's" recipe, his varnish went straight downhill. So maybe something was lost in the translation! However, this violin has a very beautiful varnish—perhaps pre-séance varnish. Here is a viola made by Dahl in 1952, apparently also with pre-séance varnish (Fig. 24).

Here's a violin by Frederick Rowe in Minneapolis (Fig. 25). Rowe did not start out as a violinmaker per se—he was a professional photographer—but he did produce several hundred instruments. He also photographed many of the sales catalogues for Emil Herrmann from 1926 to 1930, so he learned the art of photographing instruments as well as making them.

Since we're talking about the Heartland, we also want to look at the Midwest a little bit. There were a significant number of makers there, not as many as in Chicago, but some that are certainly worth mentioning. First, let's take a look at the work of Louis Lyeki who was in St. Louis in 1921 when he made this violin (Fig. 26). Again, this is in David's collection. Lyeki was an emigrant from Hungary and worked in St. Louis, I think originally for Hunleth Music. This is the same sort of scenario that we find in Chicago with a large music house bringing in a European-trained luthier who later on had a business of his own. This is an interesting fiddle.

Robert Buckley, son of violinmaker Frederick Buckley, also made violins. This violin is a nicely made Guarneri model with a higher pinched arch than you'd normally find (Fig. 27). Obviously, he had access to some good instruments, and he copied a lot of their details that are well done.

Conrad and Max Heberlein emigrated from Markneukirchen to Chicago. Apparently, things were a little full in Chicago so they moved down the river to St. Louis and practiced their trade for about 20 years. This is a nice instrument that was

Figure 23. Violin by Mathias Dahl, Minneapolis, 1928.

Figure 24. Violin by Mathias Dahl, Minneapolis, 1952. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 25. Violin by Frederick D. Rowe, Minneapolis, 1928. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 26. Violin by Louis Lyeki, St. Louis, 1921.

Figure 27. Violin by Robert Buckley, St. Louis, 1938.

produced in St. Louis back in 1940 (Fig. 28).

Here is a violin made by Joseph Rodier in Kansas City in 1920 (Fig. 29). Rodier was in Kansas City from the 19-teens until about the mid 1950s. In addition to instrument making, he started a school in Kansas City after World War II (1946) and trained people, including ex-GIs who were supported by the GI Bill.

Let's move on to Cincinnati. Actually, Cincinnati should come before Chicago, but I put Chicago first because I like that school. Cincinnati has some similarities to Chicago as it had a truly exponential population growth during the early 1800s. It was incorporated as a village in 1811. There might have been 100 people living in town then. By the 1820s, they started to get a little industry. They didn't call it Cincinnati then; it was Porkopolis, the place where they brought all the hogs to butcher, and things start growing. After the completion of the Miami and Erie Canal, Cincinnati was incorporated as a city, and by 1850 there were 120,000 people living there.

There was a huge influx to the population of Cincinnati, mostly Germans. This included the relatives of Rembert Wurlitzer, who was born in Cincinnati (Fig. 30). Members of the initial Wurlitzer family in Cincinnati were trained as instrument makers back in Germany. During the Civil War they opened up an important music house where they furnished all sorts of musical instruments for the troops, and after the war band instruments, horns, you name it. The House of Wurlitzer produced everything. Many of you probably are familiar with The Mighty Wurlitzer organ, made by the same family. If it was musical, Wurlitzer produced it.

Figure 28. Violin by Conrad Heberlein, St. Louis, 1940. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 29. Violin by Joseph Rodier, Kansas City, 1920.

The Rudolph Wurlitzer Company began in Cincinnati and branched out throughout the country during the mid-20th century. With offices in 32 cities, it had a huge influence. They brought in many skilled workers, including Andrea Bisiach, who worked there for a number of years before returning to Milan, and Giulio Degani from Venice, the son of Eugenio. Another important aspect of the Wurlitzer business is that they were one of the first companies to appreciate American violin making on its own terms. Makers such as James Reynold Carlisle and Robert Glier were local guys and Wurlitzer sought them out, promoted them, and sold their instruments to the American public. That was a departure from the typical American dealer who would seek out European-made, perhaps factory-produced instruments from Markneukirchen and Mirecourt, and promote them.

The first maker on that list, Albert Krell, was one of the earliest makers in Cincinnati. He emigrated from Germany, and by 1876 was producing very nice instruments, such as the violin

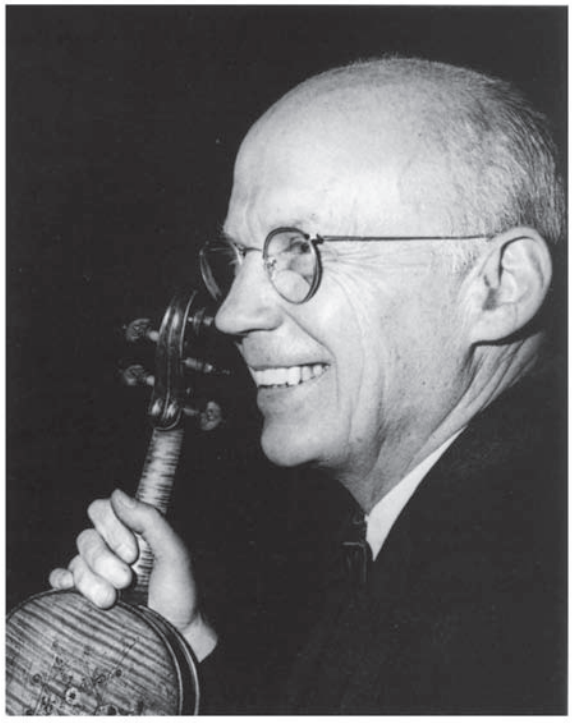

Figure 30. Portrait of Rembert Wurlitzer, 1904–1963.

shown here (Fig. 31). He worked independently, not connected with Wurlitzer's, and kept quite busy for a number of years. He was a prolific maker and received a fair number of accolades from local musicians.

Robert Glier made this violin in 1901 (Fig. 32). You see all different grades of these. His son, Robert Glier, Jr., was also a violinmaker, and I believe that there was a larger family producing instruments. Some are more commercial in quality. This one is a little bit better grade, but the family produced a large number of instruments, and they were important in the Cincinnati school.

Here we have a violin made by James Reynold Carlisle in 1929 (Fig. 33). After Glier started to wind down his career, we see Carlisle emerging. He is one of the few U.S.-born-and-trained makers. He was originally from the Kentucky side of the Ohio River and later moved over to Cincinnati. He was an interesting maker, very prolific, but a bit idiosyncratic. He didn't have the same type of European training or sensibilities as did some of the Chicago makers we have talked about. Carlisle made a silent movie about his violin making in the late 1920s called *The Violin Speaks*, which is very interesting. We had it on display at the Library of Congress.

One of Carlisle's first pupils was Rembert Wurlitzer. Although Rembert Wurlitzer made his first few instruments under Carlisle, his fourth instrument, shown here (Fig. 34), thanks to Jim Warren, was made in Mirecourt in 1924 when he was working for Amédée Dieudonné. Stylistically this violin is purely a Dieudonné. It doesn't look like Wurlitzer at all, but it shows the skill of the man in his fourth instrument to be able to make something so similar to his maestro. It is a very pure Mirecourt instrument. And after he left Mirecourt, of course, he went to the Hills for a number of years, where he trained under Alfred Hill and became America's greatest violin expert.

Let's move on to the West Coast. We don't want to forget California, and other western cities that had great making, but I want to hit upon some of the big themes.

In San Francisco, there were some fine makers. First was Ignaz Lutz. Born in Austria, he became an important character in violin making in the Bay Area. He owned a Stradivari—you can see that he had access to fine instruments. This is one of the

Figure 31. Violin by Albert Krell, Cincinnati, 1876. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 32. Violin by Robert Glier, Cincinnati, 1901.

key themes we have seen. The instruments made by the earliest American violinmakers—the ones that were making the church basses and those that didn't have access to fine instruments—can be quite naive looking. For those makers who came to the United States and had access to great instruments, we see them making fine things. And that was the key. Along with economic prosperity in the United States came a flow of great Italian instruments and things for makers to study and reproduce. Lutz had access to some good instruments, as is evident in the first-rate work in his 1925 violin (Fig. 35).

This next violin was made by Carl Rothammer in 1938 (Fig. 36). Rothammer was from Hungary and a student of Paulus Pilat. He was a real wanderer. After leaving Hungary he moved to Austria, Germany, and Holland, and in 1907 he came to New York. At age 26 he had already lived in all of those countries. He found his way to California in 1912 and was working in San Francisco in 1913. Then he went to Australia for a little while and joined forces with Arthur Smith. In 1913 they founded the Rothammer & Smith Co. in Sydney and were listed in the directory at 335 George Street in Sydney. But Rothammer didn't stay long in Australia. He came back to New York and went through San Francisco again. I think he made stops along the way in Omaha and Cleveland as well. I don't know why he did all that moving, but obviously he was a classically trained maker doing great work.

Here's a violin made by Helmuth Ellersieck in Los Angeles in 1928 (Fig. 37). He was a German-trained luthier who initially came to New York

Figure 33. Violin by James Reynold Carlisle, Cincinnati, 1929. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 34. Violin by Rembert Wurlitzer, Mirecourt, France, 1924. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 35. Violin by Ignaz Lutz, San Francisco, 1925. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 36. Violin by Carl Rothammer, San Francisco, 1938. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

and then found his way out to Los Angeles. He had a shop there for many years. His violin displays beautifully done work on a classical model, following a good pattern. Everything is first rate.

Mario Frosali was born and trained in Italy before coming to New York and then Chicago, where he worked for Kagan & Gaines. His final home was Los Angeles, where he made this violin in 1946 (Fig. 38). Not surprisingly, it has some Italian style and character. It has a little more adventurous spirit and going off on your own model rather than trying to slavishly copy one particular instrument. We include here a second violin by Frosali also made in 1946, but based on a Stradivari model (Fig. 39). Although it has a plain maple back, this violin has a very refined appearance, very nicely done.

The last violin I will show you was made by Hans Weisshaar in Los Angeles in 1965 (Fig. 40). Weisshaar was one of what I consider the contemporary generation of U.S. makers. He was a real force, both from his work in New York, Chicago, and later in Los Angeles, and by bringing along a whole generation of makers, some of whom are here today and worked and studied under him. Although his work as a maker was not the most influential (reportedly, he made about 100 instruments), he did train many of today's leading makers, both in their making as well as in their restoration style. Along with Sacconi, he was a pioneer with his restoration techniques, which are documented in the landmark book he published with his student and colleague Margaret Shipman.

I want to thank Pam Anderson, Tucker Densley, and Sam Payton for all their work in preparing this presentation.

Christopher Reuning: When's the book *The American Violin* coming out?

Mr. Germain: Although we assembled a fine collection of instruments for the American Violin Exhibit at the Library of Congress in 2006, we're still looking for other examples, maybe some slightly better examples or of different periods for certain makers. Now we are assembling the bibliographical material and the photographs and hope to have the book published about this time next year, with your help and cooperation, too.

If you have some information you'd like to share with us for the publication, be sure to talk to Philip Kass, Chris Reuning, or me some time this weekend.

Figure 37. Violin by Helmuth Ellersieck, Los Angeles, 1928. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 38. Violin by Mario Frosali, Los Angeles, 1946. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)

Figure 39. Violin by Mario Frosali, Los Angeles, 1946.

Figure 40. Violin by Hans Weisshaar, Los Angeles, 1965. (Photographs by Tucker Densley.)