

A Steinway piano is wood, iron, ivory, glue; it is form, weight, stresses, balance, action, tone; it is metallurgy, physics, chemistry, mechanics, acoustics; it is all of these things moulded together by the hands, minds, and hearts of five Steinway generations. In their first American headquarters, an old Varick Street (New York City) barn, where old Henry fumed and fussed over every piece of lumber—was he engaged in work, art, or science? And in 1859, when Henry Jr. made piano history by combining the single-cast metal plate with the overstrung scale—a feat that set the pattern for all pianos to come—was he contributing to the art of music, or to the science of piano-making, or both?

Consider Patent No. 1,826,848. In 1932, Josef Hofmann, already an ardent admirer of the Steinway's perfection, asked, "Can't you make it still more sensitive, still more responsive?"

Frederick A. Vietor, great-grandson of Henry, accepted the challenge, just as sixty years earlier his Uncle Theodor had accepted a similar challenge from the great Liszt. Vietor studied the problem for a year, and then decided to abandon the hitherto accepted notion that keys had to sit flat. Instead, he proved that the keys could be balanced sensitively on small curved fulcrums, and thereby produced a keyboard which is more responsive to the touch. Thus was born Steinway's Accelerated Action, the popular name for Patent No. 1,826,848. Because of an artistic need, Vietor,