Introduction

This book is a business history of the Ludwig family drum business(es) which can also be used as a guide to identify many of the products they produced. As such, there was bound to be a measure of duplication of the information previously published related to Ludwig, but I have striven to minimize that.

I salute the efforts of the authors listed below... it is a remarkable honor and privilege to join their company as a student of the Ludwig legacy. Every Ludwig fan should have all of these books!

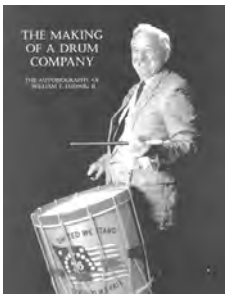
Rob Cook

The History of The Ludwig Drum Company by Paul Schmidt

Paul Schmidt is an artist, musician, historian, educator, and clergyman. His grandfather was the Lutheran Pastor who married Wm. F. Ludwig II and Marguerite. His book was originally subsidized by Selmer/Ludwig, at a time when Pete Ryan was the head of Ludwig. When Ryan left, Selmer backed away from the project which Schmidt was already heavily committed to. (He had conducted extensive interviews with Wm. F. Ludwig II, who was assisting him with the project.) Publication and distribution deals were made through Centerstream and Hal Leonard and in 1991 Schmidt's efforts resulted in the first drum company book to be published. His book includes family and factory photos, catalog cuts, and a great deal of endorser material (particularly from the 1980s).

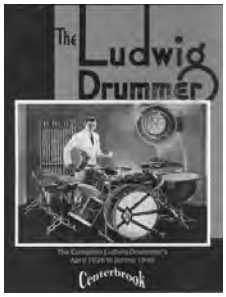
Ludwig: Yesterday And Today by Paolo Sburlati

I first met Paolo when he was building his Ludwig catalog library. He wanted photocopies of every Ludwig-related page in my archives. Several months (and thousands of photocopy pages) later, it was clear to me that this was no ordinary Ludwig collector. Paolo's book features drums from his collection, with an incredible attention to detail. Though he lives thousands of miles from the USA (Turin, Italy), he has amassed one of the most incredible Ludwig collections in the world. Even more significant, to me anyhow, is that he has closely studied every aspect of every drum! The enthusiasm and passion that Paolo brings to everything in his life has made him a successful drummer, collector, businessman, and author.



The Making Of A Drum Company: The Autobiography of William F. Ludwig II

In his mid eighties,"the Chief" finally penned his memoirs. He labored over his manual typewriter for over a year. Published in 2002, this is his family background (family tree included), and whole life story from earliest childhood memories to lecturing in his "retirement", and includes sections on his involvement with the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra, wartime service, starting WFL, plant expansions, Buddy Rich frustrations, 60s heyday production, and the factors that led to the 1981 sale of Ludwig to Selmer. The book concludes with the text from his lecture "A History Of American Drumming" and a family photo album.



The Complete Ludwig Drummer: April 1926 to Spring 1948, compiled by Dr. Calvin Bolton

The Ludwig Drummer was basically a promotional publication, but the back issues make fascinating reading. The pages are filled with playing tips, new product announcements, endorser features, and educational articles. This content, combined with the wide era that the series covers, makes The Ludwig Drummer a publication so significant that is was the subject of Calvin Bolton's doctoral dissertation and is therefore directly responsible for the "Dr." title. For more about this book, see page 68.

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William F. Ludwig Senior

In the 8 years preceding his 1973 death, William F. Ludwig Sr. twice recorded a narrative of his percussion career. A first-person account was first published in 1965 as a booklet titled *75 Years A Drummer... My Life At The Drums*. Slightly edited and/or abridged versions of that booklet were published in the 1991 *History Of The Ludwig Drum Company* by Paul Schmidt and Paolo Sburlati's 1999 *Ludwig Yesterday and Today.* In 1969 he wrote a more condensed version titled *The Ludwig Story* which, although similar, added a few details. The following includes both. It is basically the first account in it's entirety, with original artwork, plus additional details from the second version, in italics.

My life at the drums encompasses years of playing and building drums.

I was born in 1879 near the Rhine River in Germany and came to America with my parents at the age of eight. We chose Chicago and a small home on the west side to live in. *We had a small apartment in a poor neighborhood, at $8.00 per month.* At the age of eight, my boyish curiosity led me to a political rally in a huge tent erected for the occasion in a neighborhood lot. The torchlight parade was just rounding the corner headed by a drum corps of the First Regiment Illinois National Guard. Twelve drummers, one bass drummer and a drum major wearing a huge shako presented a magnificent spectacle on this warm summer night in 1887. The impression this corps made on me decided my future career then and there!

The corps was 100% rudimental– a tradition which it still maintains. Naturally I had never heard the word "rudiment," but I did recognize the precision, ot the drummers and this fascinated me.

My Dad was a professional musician who played *valve* trombone and baritone. *Jobs for my father were scarce and earnings were very small, even though he had joined the Musician's League (a union before the Federation of Musicians had been organized.)* At times I had overheard discussions at home as to what instrument I was to take up. He was anxious that I play an instrument other than wind to avoid problems he had encountered as a trombonist. I lost no time in telling my Dad of my decision to study drums but he objected on the grounds that drumming did not require classical musicianship. His choice was violin. We finally compromised. I could start on the drum but only if I took up violin as a major instrument. My grandfather, who played violin, was my first teacher on that instrument. That fall, my Dad took me to John Catlin, one of Chicago's foremost drummers for my first drum lesson.

John Catlin, an expert rudimental drummer, prescribed the Bruce and Emmet book as the instruction method, a very heavy practice pad, and an exceptionally heavy pair of black ebony sticks. I say heavy because I carried pad, sticks, and my book two and a half miles to my weekly lessons at 25c each. Teacher Catlin was rather strict and insisted that certain of the rudiments be mastered before I played on a drum. My progress must have been slow, because it took three years for that drum to arrive! The intervening period, however, was well utilized in the study of violin as insisted upon by my Dad for my general musical foundation.

Up to this time I used a three-quarter size violin but now changed to a full-sized violin and a professional teacher. After one year's study with the new teacher I was assigned to play a solo number at the class concert. For this, the teacher loaned.me a violin that he said would be much better for me than the poor instrument I had, but it cost $35.00, a price we could not afford to pay. I was now thoroughly dissatisfied with my poor instrument and refused to practice, devoting all my spare time to the practice pad and rudiments.

My Dad threatened to discontinue the drum lessons unless I took up another instrument, so again a compromise was reached, but this time I had my own choice and I chose the piano. My Dad paid $75.00 for a well-used Bauer piano after refusing the $35.00 violin, but I must have made some headway because I finally got the drum I had waited three years for. It was a brass shell, four inches deep and fourteen inches in diameter, purchased from Norman Henshel, a drummer in the Park Theatre, for $3.00. It was an old drum but in fair condition. It added new life to my dreary pad and I soon paraded all over the neighbor hood.

One of our neighbors was nominated for alderman of the 10th ward. I became the official one-man drum corps to rally up the torchlight brigade. At fifty cents per parade I was able to help pay for that drum in a few weeks.

I now began to broaden my field of operations to include amateur band rehearsals, occasional local picnics and small dances in the winter. Pay for these jobs was both small and uncertain. Two drummers were used. One on bass drum and one on snare drum in the ten and twelve piece orchestras. The foot pedal had not been invented. A few theatre drummers played double drums overhand. The bass drum was placed to the right of the player with the cymbal on the top. They would strike the bass drum and cymbal with the snare stick, then quickly pass to the snare drum for the afterbeat with an occasional roll squeezed in. This seemed too complicated for the dance drummer so two men were always used.

Then came the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Musicians were much in demand and my Dad found no trouble in getting a good trombone job with a twelve piece orchestra for one of the attractions on the

Midway. In this group there was a drummer vacancy so I tramped down for a try-out. When I arrived at the appointed time with my trusty $3.00 drum and my only pair of sticks, I found to my surprise, that I was to play double drums. My Dad had borrowed a bass drum and a cymbal which he had set up on the platform ready for my debut into professional circles. I was a fair reader at the time but scared stiff. I gave one look at the march placed on the stand, and it seemed to move away into the distance. I don't think I played one bar correctly. When the end finally came, I was not surprised when the director told me to pack up and go home for further practice. Believe me, this was a bitter disappointment. But it did fire me with greater ambition and I practiced harder than ever and, at last, I was able to convince my Dad that drums were more important to me than piano. This was a great step forward for now I was able to devote all my time to my beloved drum.

I now realized the importance of proper equipment and preparedness. The following winter I met Fred Zietz who played double drums at Hooley's Theatre and had just started to use a pedal. This was the same Fred Zietz who years later wrote that great tympani method and who we later called "Pop Zietz" in the Chicago Grand Opera Company because he was so generous with his help and advice to all who came to him. Fred Zietz sent me to Mr. Stone, a bass player in Sam T. Jacks burlesque house who was also a wood worker and had made a few pedals. I purchased one of his home-made pedals for $2.00. It was made entirely of wood with a wood knob as the beater ball. This was a heel-pedal as were all the first models because it was assumed that the toe pedals would not have enough force for accents.

That winter I also bought a bass drum, tripod wood snare drum stand, and a few other necessary accessories and set out to do some real trap drum practice. Many of the old timers will remember this hard winter of 1893-4. Following the World's Fair, things were really bad. However, there were some open air skating rink jobs to play: the admission was ten cents per person. The band played two hours each evening and received fifty cents an hour. These odd jobs provided excellent opportunity for pedal practice. The younger drummers began using pedals while the old timers refused to use the "bloomin' contraptions."

When the summer of 1894 rolled around, I felt advanced and immediately landed a very good job at $12..00 per week with a concert orchestra which played twice a day at E1ectric Park that later became the famous Riverview Park. This was followed by jobbing around the city during the Fall and Winter playing dances and other odd jobs.

In the Spring of 1895, Dad and I joined the Wood Brothers Circus– a 10-20-30 cent wagon show playing the smaller lots of the city and moving south by wagons in the Winter. The red coats and the red wagons, the constant moving about and the gala carnival atmosphere strongly appealed to me– I felt I was seeing the world. The salary was only ten dollars per week and "cakes," but this was standard for that day. The routine was stiff– two shows, one parade, and one evening after-show concert each day, but I enjoyed the experience thoroughly.

At this time I was still using the old heel pedal. We had sixteen acts– seven of them "gallops"– today I often wonder how I did it in the eleven piece brass band, but to a kid of sixteen it was fun.

In the Fall, the show took the road west to Iowa and then moved south. Here was real trouping and many exciting events were encountered of which I would like to mention a few.

Every trouper knows the cry of "Hey Rube!", which means a free for all fight when the local rowdies decide to break up the show. This happened occasionally either because the performance was not satisfactory to the audience, or the shell game artists proved once more that the hand is quicker than the eye. Every show, especially wagon shows in that day, had the shell game. It was a natural part of the revenue but, of course, a pity to see the farmers try to beat the game. When the rope cutting started and the "Hey Rubel" cry sounded, it meant pack up for the band and a club for the canvass men to save the big top.

As the show headed south and night rides became necessary, it was the custom for someone to ride a pony ahead of the wagon train with a lantern tied to his back. The pony held the trail in the black darkness of the Ozarks and the heavily wooded roads of that day. I was the lighest, so the road boss decided that I should ride the lead pony and, believe it or not, I found it quite possible to be tied to a Western saddle with a lantern on my back and sleep soundly while the pony automatically stayed in the center of the road, going no faster than a walk, of course, because the heavy wagon train followed.

As we moved further south, we used river boats rather than drag the heavily laden wagon,train over the corduroy swamp roads.

On December 21, 1895, the show was loaded on a 'dinky side wheeler plying on the Red River in Arkansas. The band wagon reached the boat at 6 A.M., the show having been loaded during the night and the boat promptly shoved off. There was a light drizzling rain so everyone on board got under shelter except myself. The side wheeler was a new experience to me and I had to see the wheels go around.

Looking over the edge to the rear of the boat, I lost my balance and went overboard into the murky current with a terrific "belly-flop"–rain coat and all! There is hard water and there is soft water but to understand how hard water really is, one must fall into it. It felt as if someone had hit me with a plank! But, to my surprise, I did not immediately sink. Soon, however, the rain coat pulled me down. I came up and shouted but no one was in sight. There was nothing to do but swim. Fortunately, I had learned to swim in the old mud lake at home. I quickly removed my rain coat and tried to reach my shoes which was impossible. My only thought now was to stay above water regardless in which direction I swam. After what seemed like hours, but was probably not more than half an hour, I finally struck shore and laid in the muddy bank exhausted while the steamer slowly rounded the bend several miles away.

I climbed the bank and walked down stream not knowing how far our next jump was to be. I had no money and prospects of ever catching up with the show made my legs move as fast as possible. About I I A.M. I reached a small river settlement boasting of one general store and a few houses. I suddenly realized how hungry I was and persuaded the somewhat reluctant storekeeper my story was true and he gave me a hunk of cheese and a handful of crackers, and showed me a water pump with a tin cup, in front of the store to wash it down. I finally caught up with the show just as the matinee was over. I expected Dad to be very happy to see me but instead he was very angry and then and there decided the Circus business wasn't doing either of us any good. So we left the show at New Orleans, Louisiana, January 9th, 1896 and returned to Chicago.

After this circus experience, I felt qualified to turn professional. I joined the Chicago Federation of Musicians, Local No. 10, which was just organizing, for the small sum of $1.00.

The balance of the Winter was taken up by playing occasional dance jobs that paid $4.00 and 10 chips per night. Practically all Saturday night dances ran to 4 A.M,. but rather than go home on the "night owl horse car," the crowd more often than not insisted on running the dance to five or six when the day cars started.

The Wood Brothers Circus had, by this time, continued its round and opened in Chicago for a second season. Dad and I joined up again but left in mid-season to join an Uncle Tom's Cabin show under canvas at $12.00 per week. We finished the summer with this outfit

Then my Dad went back to his old job at the Park Theatre on State and Congress Street while I struck out with a minstrel show that Fall at $12.00 per week and "cakes." We lived in cars– that is, one car called a "sleeper"– if you could sleep, and one a combination diner and baggage. Most of the jumps were made coupled to the end of a freight train. We stayed out 12 weeks, lost four weeks pay but the show at least brought us back to Chicago. The Union made no attempt in the early days to govern road shows.

Then came the "Lost in Egypt Company." We had to double on brass instruments for a one hour concert in front of the Opera house, then play the Overture with the orchestra and hurry back stage to make up and help out in the cast. All this for $16.00 per week! Out of this amount we paid our own hotel and eating expenses. We played week stands in Wiscon- sin. Instead of "lost in Egypt," we got lost in Wisconsin when the manager skipped owing us three weeks salary out of eight!

Barnstorming wasn't very good. But the next road show was really a "humdinger!" It was the New York Concert Company. This was more of a vaudeville show than a concert orchestra. We opened in Bloomington, after one week's free rehearsals. The first week's business in Bloomington was good– we played to full houses. But instead of salaries, the manager gave us a good excuse and promised to pay all in Springfield. The next week in Springfield was also very good. Saturday (pay day) the manager was suddenly called to our next week's stand, Galesburg, on urgent busi ness but he promised to pay off immediately upon our arrival there. After the first matinee in Galesburg, the manager disappeared.

Practically everyone was flat broke and all of us owed hotel bills. A meeting was called and all the members agreed to finish the week on a cooperative plan. The trombonist of the orchestra was elected manager. Additional advertising was distributed and everyone helped by passing out handbills. The band made daily parades and, in addition, rented a hand wagon to reach outlying factory gates at closing time each day. As a result of this extra effort, we packed them in and it seemed everything would go well after all.

Saturday night the trombonist-manager skipped off with the week's receipts! This left the show flatter than flat! In fact, we were all in very deep as we had incurred extra printing and other bills on the strength of our new combine. The town constable was up against a new problem. He didn't know just who to hold. In the midst of the argument about attaching not only the show, but our personal property as well, I managed to get my two trunks out of the theatre and dragged them four blocks to check them on railroad property. But I didn't have money for tickets. An "S.O.S." was sent home to bail me out of the hotel.

I decided definitely against further barnstorming and made up my mind to try for a Chicago theatre job. At this time, there were nine dramatic house's with orchestras ranging from eight to twelve men. There were also three vaudeville, two burlesque and a number of other houses and beer gardens which were sometimes called concert halls.

Additional coaching seemed necessary, so I sought the assistance of Joseph Schumacher, one of.Chicago's best theatre drummers. Bells were used sparingly, but I wanted to be modern and invested in a set of bells made of blue steel bars mounted in a case. I also bought a three octave xylophone made by Mr. Schumacher of maple bars mounted 6'h straw instead of felt and without spacer pegs. Resonators were unknown as far asbells or xylophones were concerned. An occasional gallop or polka played on this maple bar xylophone between the acts was a novelty. This feature alone secured my first Chicago theatre engagement at the "Criterion" on the North side. The "Criterion" was an old fashioned blood and thunder stock dramatic, with an added feature of one hour's dancing for. the patron's after each evening performance in a hall adjoining the theatre.

We played fourteen shows a week consisting of matinees every day and seven evening shows with a one hour dance after each evening show. The salary was $12.00 per week. A few of the boys insisted that we should have more-at least one dollar per performance totalling $14.00 a week. Me? I wanted to be a big shot and joined them because I felt I was a soloist playing the simple concert polkas on my maple xylophone. The desire for more money caused a strike. There was no picketing in that day. The management simply installed a new orchestra and we lost both the strike and our jobs!

After the ten weeks of the "Criterion" job, there was an opportunity to substitute two weeks for the regular drummer at Sam T. Jacks burlesque. I took the opportunity and that led to a steady vaude ville engagement to play the short show at the Olympic. At that time the vaudeville theatres ran continuously f rom 11 A.M. to 11 P.M. Two orchestras were required, one for the short show and another for the long show. The short show ran from 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. and from 5 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. relieving the regular orchestra. The salary was $10.00 per week, but the experience made up for the small sum, and of course, we could pick up at least a Saturday night dance job easily enough. I was the youngest drummer (seventeen) in a down-town theatre and felt that I was gaining both in prestige and experience. But, remembering the fie advice of my teacher, Joseph Schumacher, to always prepare for a better job, I accepted an opportunity to join the Salisbury Concert Orchestra which opened at Boulder, Colorado, at a summer teachers' camp. This orchestra went on tour that winter, olaying Chautauqua dates in schools, colleges and churches.

The summer of 1898 1 played at the Omaha Exposition in a concert hall called "Pabst on the Midway". The orchestra was led by William Thomas from Nashville, Tennessee. This engagement afforded me an excellent opportunity to hear many of the great bands of that day who played at the Exposition.

The Iowa State Band, later known as Phinney's Band, and the lnnes Band conducted by Innes, who was a trombone soloist, afforded me excellent opportunity to watch the big drummers at work. But most important of all was the Washington Marine Band led by John Philip Sousa which-perniitted me to hear and see the finest drummers in the country, Sims and Johnson, who were drumming for Sousa at that time. They proved to me conclusively the value and flexibility of the rudiments which my first teacher John Catlin stressed so forcefully. "Sempre Fidelis" was the popular march and had to be played at almost every program. These two fine drummers, Sims and Johnson, played alike as two peas in a pod. At one concert, I was on the bandstand near the drummers and was amazed at their precise interpre- tation of the Sousa drum parts. I was now imbued with a new ambition– I wanted to be a band drummer.

Returning to Chicago, I added a set of tympani and a suitable band drum to my outfit and took tympani lessons from Joseph Zettleman, the great tympanist of the famous Theodore Thomas Symphony Orchestra which later became the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The help and advice of this great artist proved extremely valuable. His wealth of inexhaustible knowledge of percussion instruments inspired me greatly. Mr. Zettleman had played in many famous European Orchestras and also spent two seasons as snare drummer with Liberati's Band when the band was on a par with the generally conceded finest in America– Gilmore's Band in 1890.

The coaching from Mr. Zettleman led to a few concerts that winter with the Chicago Marine Band, Thomas Preston Brooke conducting– (Brooke's Band). That spring I opened with this band at San Souci Park at 61 st. and Cottage Grove Avenue, Chicago. This was the first amusement park in the city. I played with this band four years during which we traveled to New Orleans West End Park, Cincinnati's Zoo, and the Buffalo Exposition in the summers and went on tour in the winters as a concert band throughout the New England states playing often two towns a day.

One of these engagements at the Buffalo Exposition proved to be a turning point in my career. We augmented the band for the Exposition and drew on some of the Sousa Band men. Among them was Tom Mills who John Sousa acclaimed the best drummer he had ever had. Tom used an all-metal drum of European make. It was separate tension and the first all-metal separate tension drum I had ever seen. I marveled at its tone and power. I saw immediately that, as crude and clumsy as it was, the principle was there so I tried to buy it from Mills. It took a year of pestering but I finally got it from him and, from this drum, the seed was sown in my mind which later grew into

my first all-metal separate tension drum which I was to build in later years.

After four years of the Brooke's Band, the long hoped for opportunity arrived, to play tympani in Grand Opera. The opening was with Henry W. Savage English Grand Opera Company which opened in Brooklyn in the Fall of 1904. The repertoire consisted of Wagnerian and Italian operas. I stayed on as tympanist with this company for six seasons. This included four seasons of Grand Opera repertoire and two seasons of Madame Butterfly on the road. With this company we played in every state in the union, practically every principal city, and made three transcontinental tours.

In the spring of 1906, while with the Savage Opera Company, I received a telegram from Herbert Clark to join the Sousa Band for their European Tour. I reluctantly declined because of an existing contract with the Opera Company.

From 1904 to 1909, my steady engagement with Savage Grand Opera Company was interspersed with off-season summer engagements with many of the day's outstanding military bands such as Phinney's Band. Arthur Pryor's Band, Ballman's Band, John Hand's Band, and a number of Chicago theatres.

In the spring of 1909, Henry Savage disbanded the company and I spent the summer playing tympani with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Chicago under Max Bendix. That fall, I played the Auditorium Theatre in the Ziegfield Follies of 1908. This was the first of a series of musical shows to come to Chicago on a grand scale. The orchestra played sixty-two special arrangements and compositions for that production. Many of them were in ragtime which was just begin ning to rise in popularity.

The show in New York City had used two drummers–one for bass drum and the other for snare drum and bells. But in Chicago, I was to play double drums. I used a 14" x 30" bass drum, my 6 1/2" x 14" all-metal snare drum and a pedal which swung from the top of the bass drum hoop to the center of the head. A leather strap connected the foot pedal with the over-hanging beater rod. Many of the old timers will remember the swing pedal.

This pedal was not powerful or fast enough for the fast rag-time tempos and our leader, Morris Levy, called for faster tempos and stronger accents. In vain I tried to supply what he wanted, but it was useless with that slow overhanging pedal. Then I secretly set to work on an idea which had long been tossing through my mind– why not have a shorter beater rod connected close to the beating spot? Several rough experimental models were cobbled together and I took one down to a rehearsal for a practical test. *With this crude model I went to a cabinetmaker to make up a few working models that I might try on the job.* Crude as it was, it worked and satisfied the director. Word quickly spread about town that a new pedal had been born. Soon I was deluged with requests to make the same pedal for other drummers. Under much pressure, I decided to do this. *After making a few more pedals, I showed a model to my brother-in-law, Mr. Robert C. Danly, who was a professional designer and had charge of the tool room of the International Harvester Company in Chicago. Mr. Danly was impressed and asked permission to make ametal model instead of wood. He also suggested that it be modified but still maintain the original basic design. This was all done and I then tested the pedal on the job and applied for and received a patent. Mr. Danly then suggested that we produce these pedals in larger quantities. I agreed and Danly brought his brother, a tool and die maker, to Chicago to help us in this new venture.*

My brother Theobald, then 20 years old, was also a drummer and had just returned from a summer's engagement with Innes' Band. Together we decided to open a small drum shop in the old Omaha building, calling it LUDWIG & LUDWIG. Between shows, Theo and I made pedals and as fast as we made them, drummers bought them. We took out patents and this first crude floor model pedal became the famous Ludwig Pedal which in later years was used universally from coast to coast.

With the success of this new business venture assured, both Theo and I determined to devote all our spare time to building pedals. Theo played the HofBrau Cafe while I accepted the long awaited opportunity to play tympani in a Symphony Orchestra. The famous Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under Emil Paur offered me the position as tympanist, which I immediately took. To me this seemed the climax of my career. The tympani parts were very interesting, yet extremely difficult on the three hand tympani I had to work on. After months of work on the hand tympani in the Pittsburgh orchestra, an idea crept into my mind that all timpanists should possess the advantages of pedal tuned tympani. Gradually, my plan to build a practical pedal tuned tympani in America took shape. The demand was there–I was determined to fill that demand. At this time all pedal-tuned tympani came from Europe.

While thus engaged in the Pittsburgh orchestra throughout the season of 1910-1911, my sister entered our small business in Chicago to take care of the books while Theo made the pedals and I helped sell them in Pittsburgh and other eastern cities in which the orchestra happened to play. At the close of my first season in the spring of 1911, I hurried back to Chicago and found our business beginning to show