

October 4, 2012. Our museum has received a gift of a fine 1870 Bradbury square grand piano, connected with Sublimity history, from the Delbert J. Ditter family.

A brief history by Carol Ditter:

"Anna Catherine Trimbor was given the piano in her 16th year, 1870. John A. Ditter and Anna Catherine Trimbor were married November 15, 1877. They came to Sublimity, Oregon in 1890 and established the Ditter's Store; the piano came with Catherine. The piano remained in their home in Sublimity until the 1920's and was then in the Schrewe home until January, 1993 when it was taken to the Delbert and Yvonne Ditter home in Sublimity."

See the **Descendants of Peter Ditter**, including Trimbor, Steffes, Hottinger, Roeser, Leverman, and Susbauer names at <http://www.mppoland.com/dittfam.html>



Left to right:

Anna Catherine (Kate) Trimbor-Ditter, wife of John A. Ditter

Barbra Trimbor (mother)

Mary Trimbor-Ditter (wife of Phillip Ditter)

Now about the piano - It's a beauty. We love it – but what to do with it? Henry Strobel made arrangements for the piano to be moved on Thursday, October 4 to the museum. Carol Zolkoske offered to have it tuned. It has considerable historical and decorative value, and the potential to promote the Archives & Museum. We owe Henry and Carol appreciation for their contributions. But most of all, we want to express our appreciation to Carol Ditter and the Delbert J. Ditter family for this thoughtful and generous gift to the Museum.



It is very heavy. It is 6' 3" wide and 38" deep. Certainly there was no room in the Archives office but just across the hall in the back of the old Sisters' chapel we found the right place for it. If you saw and wondered last Thursday about the white moving van and its crew of four fit fellows, that's what was afoot.

It is a "square grand piano," made about 1870 in New York (about 140 years old). You see the name on it, but that isn't the end of the story. According to the Salem piano technician who inspected it, it seems to have been actually made by Steinway & Sons, which is also borne out by comparative photo inspection of the construction. Apparently this was not an unusual practice.

Certainly it was sold by the Bradbury firm, named for its founder, William Batchelder Bradbury, with his associate and successor, Freeborn Garrison (or Garretson) Smith (1828-1911) who was described as follows in his obituary notice in the New York Times 19 Oct. 1911:

"Mr. Smith was born eighty-three years ago in a log cabin near Baltimore, Md. When a young man he came to this city and worked as a piano maker. He became associated in business with William B. Bradbury, whose interests he subsequently purchased. Since 1867 Mr. Smith had been the manufacturer of the Bradbury piano, his factories being at Fulton and Adelphi Streets, Brooklyn, and near Leominster, Mass. Several years ago he retired from active business, being succeeded by his son, Freeborn G. Smith, Jr. For many years Mr. Smith was

prominent as a Prohibitionist and in church work in Brooklyn. He was several times nominated for office by the Prohibitionists." Freeborn G. Smith had traveled from Maryland to Massachusetts (where he worked for the Chickering Piano Co.) before settling in New York. See more at <http://www.14to42.net/19street2.5.html>

Mr. Bradbury is even more interesting. Not a piano maker so much as a a music editor and publisher, composer and conductor. Among other things he set the popular hymn "Jesus Loves Me" to music. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Batchelder_Bradbury

What is a "square grand piano? These were popular in the latter part of the 18th and throughout the 19th centuries. They were superseded by the grand and the upright. The grand has strings extending horizontally to the back. The upright has strings running vertically. The square grand however has strings running horizontally from side to side, making it more compact than the grand.

Some considerations for our particular piano, serial no. 12738. Fortunately it is in "overall good condition." Otherwise it could cost many thousands to restore. Most squares were made almost completely of wood. Ours has a metal frame, one of the earlier ones, like the Steinways. It is stronger and more stable than wood. It was last tuned several decades ago, and seems to have stayed pretty well in tune, Like most it was not built or tuned to modern pitch, A 440 Herz. It is at about G# or A 415 Herz. When we tune it we will keep it at this pitch, rather than force it up to 440. Even with the metal frame, that would seriously stress the old strings and thousands of other components. A half step makes a big difference. Also the tuning pins are the old style, requiring an old style tuning hammer. We will need a piano tuner who understands all this. Here is an informative reference: http://www.squarepianotech.com/?page_id=253

The original genuine ivory keys are in excellent condition. They have the natural yellowing of age and are somewhat soiled. We will clean them conservatively, using no liquids, especially no water!

Henry Strobel