Visible in the upper left corner are three cottages which Frank Hastings built in 1893 to house some of his factory employees—225-231 North Avenue. To the right of the homes is the Northeast District School #4 at 221 North Avenue—later removed—in which Frank Hastings received his entire formal education. "Hastings Station" is visible in the left foreground.

WESTON'S HOOK-HASTINGS ORGAN FACTORY

In 1827, George Greenleaf Hook (1807-1880) of Salem constructed a chamber pipe organ in the room at the rear of his father's house. This first Hook organ is now on display in the Essex Institute of Salem and is still in use. George soon was joined by his brother, Elias Hook (1805-1881) to form the organ building firm of "E. and G. G. Hook." (Elias and George were the sons of William and Abigail Greenleaf Hook. William Hook (1777-1867) was an exceptionally talented cabinetmaker whose work may be found in the Essex Institute and in the Museum of Fine Arts. The two young Hook boys sang in the choir of the South Church, suggesting an early interest in music. At the age of 16 or 17 Elias was apprenticed to William Goodrich, Boston's leading organ builder. Elias returned to Salem after a year but later returned to Goodrich—probably with his brother, George Hook. George's first organ—the 1827 instrument referred to above—was delivered to the Essex Institute and set up there in 1933 by Edward A. Lahaise of the Hook and Hastings Company of Weston. But that is a different story. Curiously the records of the firm assign "Opus 1" to an organ built two years later in 1829 for the Unitarian Church in Danvers. The brothers may have agreed to count only those organs built after their partnership was formed. Nineteen early Hook organs lack opus numbers! In 1827, the year during which George experimented by building his first organ, Elias opened a music store in Salem. Elias' advertisement in the May 9, 1827 issue of the Essex Register of Salem appears on page six of the Bulletin. Elias' store must not have met with success because the two Hook brothers soon had launched their partnership as organ builders. In later years the firm advertised "1827" as the date of its establishment. Ed.] In 1832 the Hook's business was moved to Friend Street in the North End of Boston and the firm was then known as E. and G. G. Hook. In 1853 the prosperous brothers—now at the head of their profession—moved.
to 1131 Tremont Street in Roxbury, at that time the largest organ factory in the country. "From this extensive and modern factory came organs destined for every part of the country, including some of the century's greatest and most influential churches and concert halls." Wrote a recent historian of the Hook brothers. The Baptist and Unitarian churches of Jamaica Plain both retain three-manual Hook organs of the 1850s. A two-manual organ of 1859 still serves the Congregational Church of Hillsdale, New Hampshire. The organ in the Community Church of Dublin, New Hampshire was the 153rd organ, made in 1853.

Francis Hastings was born in Roxbury, July 13, 1836. There is now 191 North Avenue, the home of Francis Hastings and his wife, Mary W. C. In 1834 his father was a farmer and cordwainer (bootmaker). Mr. Hastings as a boy worked on the farm, but the work was so distasteful to him that when fourteen years old, and not well, he rebelled, declaring he would study and work as a farmer no longer. He left the District School when he was fourteen years old, thus ending his formal education. Apparently, Francis Hastings moved to Boston. Five years later, on May 1, 1851 a Benjamin Dutton of Boston, for whom Hastings worked — as an apprentice making tools in a machine shop — gave him a recommendation, stating that "He has been in my employ for the last ten years and I have found him honest, industrious, skillful, and a good moral character. I would recommend him to anyone who may be in want of such a person." Thus, Hastings was nineteen years old when he went to work for E. G. G. Hook in Roxbury on August 13, 1855. He continued business in the same place for thirty four years, until the factory was moved to Kendall Green. Francis Hastings was successful in his endeavors. He married, and in July, 1862 a son, Francis Warren Hastings, was born. In June, 1865 Francis Henry Hastings became a Master Mason in Washington Lodge in Roxbury, and in May, 1865 the Hook brothers took him into the firm as a partner. In the articles of co-partnership it was stated that "Mr. Hastings has been long in the employment of the factory and acquired a skill in the business, fitting himself to take an interest in the profits and losses of the company and is willing to devote himself to its success." In order to become a partner he gave the Hook brothers a note for $6,000 payable to them, 20,000 or more yearly with semi-annual interest until the whole amount of the note was paid. The amount of the rent which should be paid to the partners — Elias Hook and George G. Hook — after the admission of Francis Hastings into the co-partnership was calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value of the Buildings</td>
<td>$12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of the Land</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest @ 6%</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>$400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent per Year</td>
<td>$2,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On January 2, 1871 a second article of co-partnership was drawn up as agreed in the original co-partnership which was to last for five years under the name of E. G. G. Hook and at an annual rental of $2,200. This 1871 agreement changed the name to "E. G. G. Hook and Hastings" with a rental of $3,000 per year.

Some of the organs which were built in Roxbury at this time were: in 1872 the organ for the Immaculate Conception Church of Boston; in 1875 the organ for the Boston Cathedral which was the largest and best organ at that time; in 1876 (Opus 828) the organ for the Baptist Church in Philadelphia; in 1876 the organ for the Cincinnati Music Hall which was then the largest organ in the city, and in 1880 thousands more pipes than the large organ which they had built for the Cathedral.

In 1880 Elias Hook — the brother who had guided the business affairs — died and in 1881 G. G. Hook — the musical artist and head-voicer of all Hook organs — also passed away leaving his widow Adeline L. Hook as agent of his estate. Between December 6, 1880 and September 17, 1881 Hastings paid Mrs. Hook her share of the earnings amounting to $20,000. On the 15th of October, 1881 Francis Hastings bought Mrs. Hook's interest and cash in the business for $33,732.43 and at the same time gave her his note for $8,006.46 with interest at 6% payable semi-annually. [Francis Hastings — and his son Warren — moved from their home in Boston at 76 Dudley Street to 93 Warren Street in 1884 for reasons which are not known. Ed.]

Mr. Hastings moved into his new home, 190 North Avenue in Kendall Green, in 1885 at the age of 49. [The stable which he built across the street in 1885 — at what is now 191 North Avenue — was designed to house the horse equipment.] Francis Hastings contributed to the development of Weston's fire department. Weston City Directory as continuing to manufacture organs through 1888 — while the last new factory was being built in Weston. The directory for 1889 lists an office in Weston. We can only speculate why Hasting chose to move the factory to Weston at this particular time. Labor troubles throughout the nation may have been one reason — see article in the January Bulletin. As his parents' history of the factory, and Hastings Hall across Viles Street were built. In 1891 a wing was added to the factory and the gardener's cottage (189 North Avenue) across the street from his home was built, as well as a reservoir in the woods on the west side of Cat Rock Hill to supply water to the three cottages on North Avenue and those on Viles Street as well as Hasting Hall. Later, in 1914, water was supplied to the District 4 school on North Avenue.

Three cottages on North Avenue for factory employees were built in 1893 (now 227, 229, 231 North Avenue) and another, N. 6 on White Lane, now Brook Road. Mr. Hastings' house at 190 North Avenue was enlarged in 1893 by adding a west wing where Mr. Hastings had his office overlooking the factory. The office furniture consisted of a roll-top desk, a safe and a study, and a desk where he drew many of the sketches for proposed organs. There was also a fireplace and a large, comfortable sofa.

In 1893 two cottages on White Lane were completed, and in 1895 the Andrews' house on White Lane and the Gower house on North Avenue were purchased. Thus, by 1895 seven houses on White Lane housed factory employees (now #75, 87 Brook Road). In 1897 three two-family cottages were built on Lexington Street, now #17-29. This property had been part of the Warren farm, a portion of which was sold to George H. Ellis who operated a printing firm in Boston, and printing on the town reports of Weston. In that same year the two Warner cottages were built on Viles Street (#126-134).

On October 7, 1893 the first meeting of the editors was held to vote on an article of agreement for the foundation of a Corporation to be known as the "Hook & Hastings Co." Francis Henry Hastings was elected Treasurer and his son, Francis Warren Hastings, was elected President. [The editor Hastings was known to family, friends, and the Boston City Directory as "Frank." His son was known as "Warren." Ed.] Francis Warren Hastings was born at Roxbury July 10, 1862 and entered Harvard College in July, 1881, having graduated from Roxbury Latin School. He spent three years at Harvard. His failing health caused him to leave college early in 1884, but he always retained a lively interest in the school and his friends whom he left behind. He retired to Weston, the family home. There he purchased, in 1885, both the old Hastings house and farm on 10 Lexington Street and the old Warren house and barn on 10 Lexington Street which had been in one branch of the family since 1639. Francis Warren Hastings hoped, in an out-of-door life, to regain health. He was told to hold a hand in the family business, but his health became steadily worse. The hard winters of New England were very hard on his health, and he spent them in the warmer climate of Bermuda. In 1893 Warren Hastings sold the Warren house to George H. Ellis, resided from the Board of Health, and ceased to be a year-round resident in Weston.
Ed.] From 1895 he had to make Bermuda his permanent home and there he died of consumption on May 11, 1903.

Upon the death of Francis Warren Hastings, Mr. Arthur L. Coburn, who had been Secretary of the Corporation and Superintendent of the Factory was elected President, Mr. F. H. Hastings, Treasurer, and Mr. Alfred R. Pratt, Secretary, of Hook & Hastings Co.

Some of the more interesting organs built by Hook and Hastings have been recorded in the various trade magazines. For example, an article in the May 1892 issue of Organ relates: “In 1756 an organ was built by Adrian Smith of London for Kings’ Chapel of Boston. It is said to have been played upon and approved by Handel and cost £500. It continued in use in the church until 1860, 140 years, when it was reconstructed and enlarged. In 1884 Hook & Hastings of Boston, in building a new organ for Kings’ Chapel, retained some of the old stops and pipes, the new organ being built within the old oaken case, which with the gilded crown and mitre, presents to the eye the same appearance as when originally put in the church. Additions and improvements are now being made in the organ by Mr. Hastings, which are to be completed for use when service is resumed in the fall.”

Other famous organs were installed in:

1862 - The Immaculate Conception Church in Boston, four manuals, 80 registers.

1875 - Boston Cathedral, which at the time was the largest and one of the best organs made, three manuals, 83 registers.

1876 - The large organ (Opus 828) four manuals, 59 registers, displayed at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia was recommended by the United States Centennial Commission for an award. This organ, special in its day, apparently is the only large organ from the 1876 Centennial to survive through the 1976 Bicentennial. It was moved from Philadelphia to Buffalo, and has remained in use for 107 years in Old St. Joseph’s Cathedral. The stairway for viewers and glass windows for peering inside the organ remain as originally constructed. In 1876 the judges wrote, “We can recall no organ of equal size and power that could be played with so much ease and satisfaction to the organist, or so much gratification to the listener.”

1878 - Cincinnati Music Hall which was the largest in the country at the time, four manuals, 96 registers. It had 1,000 more pipes than the great organ in the Boston Cathedral.

An article in the Cincinnati Courier, April 1892, cited a list of 100 “Monster Organs” published by the Rev. George P. Mains D.D., Pastor of the New York Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church. These were considered as thoroughly representative by the builders themselves. The Hastings organs were: 80 stops, Music Hall, Cincinnati; 70 stops, Cathedral Roman Catholic Church, Boston; 66 stops, St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic, New York; 54 stops, Shadrach Congregational, Boston; 52 stops, Plymouth Church, Brooklyn; 51 stops, St. Joseph’s Roman Catholic, Hartford.

The Organ of May 1892 announced a series of recitals in the Central Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island on a three manual Hook & Hastings organ and a series of recitals on the large three manual Hook & Hastings organ in the Beneficent Congregational Church also in Providence. Over the years the firm trained some of its own competitors! Emory W. Lane organized the “Waltham Church Organ Factory” after two years as a Hook and Hastings employee. George S. Hutchings of Salem worked for the Hook & Hastings then with Lane and Fred J. Flaherty — another Hook & Hastings employee — built the “Hutchings Organ Co.” factory in Waltham in 1911.

On March 3, 1904 there was a banquet and organ recital at “Hastings Hall” on Wiles Street, opposite the factory, celebrating the completion of the 2,000th organ built by Hook & Hastings Co. The employees and their families, numbering about 150, were present by invitation of the company. The 2,000th organ comprising all the modern features was built for the Foundry Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C.

In 1905 Mr. Hastings drew the plans for an organ which he installed in the music room at the north end of his house. There were twelve stops which were operated manually. There was a piano player which could be attached to the organ and was operated by two-foot treadles. The air for the organ was furnished by a water pump in the cellar which could be turned on and off by means of a metal control knob. Each roll for the piano player was kept neatly in a cardboard box and properly labeled. There were many rolls, some of which were: Polonaise Militaire, Poet and Peasant, Largo, Cavaleria Rusticana, Strauss (Blue Danube), Strauss (Rosen auf dem Senden), Pomp and Circumstance, Lobengrin March, Intermezzo, Tales from the Vienna Woods, Tales of Hoffman, William Tell Overture, March and Chorus from “Tannhäuser.” The tempo was governed by a lever operated with the left hand. It controlled a needle or pointer following a line printed on the player roll paper. The loudness was governed by a similar lever operated with the right hand and by following the instructions printed on the roll could be varied from “pianissimo” to “forte fortissimo.” Sketches of the house organ, dated in January 1905, were done by Mr. Hastings, showing swell folds which were like louvres and were opened and closed by operating the foot pedals. The finished organ was installed in July, 1905. The organ was removed after Mr. Hastings' death.

Francis Henry Hastings was a typical New Englander with strong puritanical ideas of the right. He was a student of nature, fond of good books — especially books of history, art, and science — and had strong inventive tendencies. He enjoyed horseback riding and driving. In 1872 Mr. Hastings was granted a patent for improvement in swells for pipe organs, and in 1897 a patent for electro-pneumatic organ action in which he had a half interest.

Hastings was a Republican and a staunch, loyal Unitarian, supporting the First Parish in West Newton and the parent organization, the American Unitarian Association. He
NEW STORE.

ELIAS HOOK,

HAVING taken the Store No. 17, Old
Paved Street, opposite Barton's Hotel,
inlands keeping a general assortment of
Music, Stationary and Fancy Goods,
among which may be found
A selection of superior toned Piano
Fortes
Patent and common German Flutes
Third, seventh, and octave do. Clarinets,
and Bassoons; Keyed and plain Trumpets;
Doh. do. Bugles; French and Post
Horns
Double and Single Flageolets; Flute,
Drums and Tamborines
Guitars, Violins and Violincellos
Half-English and Roman Viol Strings; Guit.
ner do; Tuning Forks and Hammers
Bows, Clogs, Pegs, Clarified Rosin, Sow
Hair, &c.
Buccaneer and Clarionet Reed
Do, Mouth Pieces
A general assortment of Piano Forte
Music—and will be constantly receiving
all New Publications
Instruction Books for all kinds of Instruments
Black Music Paper; Drawing, Writing and
Rice do.
Gilt and Plain Letter do.; Ink and Ink
Powder; India ink; Quills, sealing
Wax and Walers
Boxes of Paint; Loose Cakes do.; Paint
Saucers, for Velvet and Flower Painting
Pallets, Velvet Scuffs, Camel's Hair, and
Lead Pencils
Tortoise Shell, and Morocco Reticles;
Thread and Needle Books
Pocket and Memorandum do.; Card Cases,
Wallets, &c.
Ladies' Work Boxes, and Fancy Cushions
Embroidery Waters and Pearl Needles
Fine Steel Scissors and Pen Knives
Visiting and Playing Cards; Card Racks
Candle Ornaments; Chess Men; Checker
Boards and Chess Counters
Clothes, Head, and Tooth Brushes; Comb
and Nail do.
Ivory and Horn Dressing Combs; Pocket do.
Razors, Strops, Father Boxes and Brushes
Old Windsor, Naples, and Rose Shaving
Soaps; French Fancy do.; Alkyston
Ambrosial Soap
Bear's Grease and Carbolic Fluid
Rowland's Kalydor; Maccaro Oil; Ex.
urrence of Tyrle, and Alkyston Extract
Gowland's Lotion: Milk of Roses; Laven.
der and Cologne Water; Otto of Rose
Rose and Antique Oil; English, French,
and American Pomatum
A variety of English and German Toys
Piano Fortes to let.

April 19.

The May 9, 1827 Essex Register of Salem advertised Elias Hook's entry into the music business.

The parents of Francis Henry Hastings, Mary Cooley Hastings (1817-88), and Francis Hastings (1809-99), celebrated their golden wedding anniversary on June 20, 1883. Francis Hastings, a bootmaker and farmer, lived all of his life at 199 North Avenue.

Francis Henry Hastings built "Seven Gables" at 190 North Ave. in 1885. His bride, Anna Coburn Hastings and her sister, Edith Coburn, moved in 1899. After Hastings' death in 1916, Mrs. Hastings' niece, Anna Hall, lived here with Mrs. Hastings.

The Hastings homestead at 199 North Avenue. Francis Henry Hastings was born here in 1836. His father, Francis, made boots in the rear shed and farmed the land across the street. Francis died in 1889. In 1914, Francis Henry Hastings sold the homestead to one of his organ factory employees, Norman Jacobson.

The view from Frank Hastings' home at 190 North Avenue, looking westward toward the organ factory. The two houses on White Lane built for factory employees in 1894, remain in use as #73-77 Brook Road.
took an active part in town affairs, contributing both his time and financial help where it was needed. [Francis Hastings loved Weston. In 1894 he compiled for the
Friendly Society a history of the old houses of the Town; wrote for approximately twenty of the
hospitals and institutions of the City; wrote for many of these hospitals and insti-
tutions in D. S. Lamson's history of Weston; and was the moving spirit behind a reunion
at the "Old Schoolhouse." In 1894, Mr. Hastings gave the Town Hall a bust of
Alonzo S. Fiske — Weston's long-time legislator — who had died a year earlier. Mr.
Hastings provided guided tours of historic Boston for seniors at Weston High School.
In addition, those Tour Reports listing "Donations to the Schools" were found with
examinations. His name is found in the history of the old school. Examples are picture "General Grant" (1899); picture "The Aurora" (1901); "reproductions of famous objects of art" and "A View of Washington's Home" (1902); picture "Mother and Child" and "Chillon Castle" (1905); picture "A Group of Cherubs" and "The Stuart Prince" (1905); picture "Spirit of 76" and "Bugler" (1905); picture "Sixty Years of Conival" (1905); "The picture of Lincoln" by a person who
knew him (1912). Under Arthur L. Coburn, Frank Hastings held the
office of
Student Trustee in Burlington Schools in 1896-97 and as a Field Driver in 1898. In 1906 he and Coburn served on the five-member committee to
study the need for a new school building. Mr. Hastings also cooperated with the
members of the organ factory at the center of the town was not added until 1922. Ed.]

On April 27, 1899, Hastings married Anna Cutter Coburn, daughter of Isaac and Julia Ann Cutter Coburn, granddaughter of Jones and Susannah Viles Coburn and of
Charles and Anna Smith Cutter and a descendant from Edward Coburn who came from
England to Ipswich, Massachusetts On the ship "Defence" in September or October,
1632. [Miss Coburn, who had grown up, and taught school in Weston, was a fine
married, Frank Hastings was 62, and "Miss Annie," 46. Ed.] Hastings' one child, Francis Warren Hastings, was a former
marriage.

When Mr. Hastings was seventy years old, in 1906, he was given a birthday party by his employees. About 300 people gathered at his residence to extend congratulations and which was presented to him by the company, a testimonial signed by the employees of the firm, a token of their loyalty. [This party is described in the January, 1982 Bulletin, Ed.]

In 1914, Frank Hastings sold the family homestead in 189 North Avenue to an
employee, Norman Jacobson. Mr. Hastings died on February 23, 1916 after a short
illness at his home "Seven Gables," 180 North Avenue, Weston. In 1917 Mrs. Hastings
was given a new organ (Opus 2399) to the First Parish in Weston in memory of her
husband. The firm was placed in the transplanted by Horace S. Sears — her class-
mates in the Weston High School Class of 1871 — in memory of one of her brothers,
William H. Coburn. [Will Coburn was the author's father. The First Parish in Wayland
also had an organ from the firm, Opus 402 by E. and G. G. Hook, installed in 1866. A
future researcher might trace details of the firm's rate of production. In the initial two
decades of their partnership, the Hook Brothers averaged first 4, then 16, new organs
each year. From the time Francis Hastings joined the company in 1855 through 1877,
the firm averaged 30 to 45 organs per year — whether in Roxbury or, after 1889,in
Weston. Understandably, World War I slowed production. Average output from 1917
to 1920 dropped to 15 new organs per year. The firm's production records subsequent to 1920 have not been located. Eventually production slowed to a trickle in the Great
Depression. Natalie Coburn recalls Anna Coburn Hastings saying, "The company
motto is 'Quality first; quantity next.'"

My husband always quoted quality. He never quoted price. Today organ makers are quoting price and I decided it was time to take it
town." While the firm was productive, railroad traffic to Hastings Depot was
convenient. Those employees who lived in Boston or Waltham commuted daily by rail.
Materials — including parts imported from England or Zimmerman reeds from Paris —
were shipped in and completed organs shipped out. Ed.]

Probably the most famous Hook and Hastings organ is the "Rockefeller Organ",
which was installed in the Riverside Church in January, 1931. The church's organist

wrote a letter dated January 13, 1931 to the Hook & Hastings Co. which reads in part:
"It has been four years now since we began to plan for the organs in the
Riverside Church and now that the instruments are in active use, it is a
pleasure to look back over the delightful association. In this age of mass
production and a constantly increasing mechanization of life, it is encouraging
to find at least one group of highly skilled artisans such as your company
has, who put into their work the best that is in them, and who obviously
regard the construction of an organ as a work of art and not merely a
commercial job. Every one of the multitude of mechanical details has been
attended to with the utmost care so that the instrument responds instantly
and perfectly to every musical requirement. The voicing of every stop
has been accomplished with rare delicacy, but perhaps the greatest
achievement of all is to be found in the perfect blending of the whole
ensemble. It is absolutely impossible to find an unpleasant combination
of stops. Reeds, strings, flutes and diapason blend in a harmonious whole.
Every time I play it I say to myself, 'Thank God I can be a musical artist and not a
mechanician!" I hope that the Hook & Hastings Co. will remain true to the
artistic ideals which made the name famous in years past. With every good
wish for your continued progress and prosperity.

The introduction of talking movies had made obsolete the organs which played for
the silent pictures. The big movie theatres such as Balaban & Katz in Chicago disposed of
their Wurlitzer organs to prospective churches. The depression also hurt the organ
business. In January, 1931 Arthur L. Coburn, who had been the President and
operating head of the factory for thirty-eight years, died. Alfred L. Pratt continued
the firm for a short time, but it was the opinion of the trustees of Mr. Hastings' estate
that the plant and some of the real estate should be liquidated. Therefore, in June, 1936, a
contract was signed with the Mystic Building Wurlitzer Co., Inc. of Chelsea, Mass., to
demolish the factory building and lumber shed, two house houses and two hydrants,
four servants' houses, the railroad track and the railroad track which extended
across Viles Street, up to the switch belonging to the Boston & Maine Railroad.
The work which began on July 1, 1936 was completed in forty-five days.

The Buttrick House at 253 North Avenue was razed in 1942 and Hastings Hall,
which was across Viles Street from the factory was razed in 1944, and the West
Storehouse in 1947.

PART II: FACTORIES AND ORGANS

The factory at 1331 Tremont Street was two hundred feet long, and contained two
finishing halls as well as large work rooms, fitted with all available machinery and
corner of the factory, for the convenience for manufacturing and testing instruments of the largest size. In addition, there were large storehouses in which lumber, obtained from all parts of the continent, was
dried and stored.

It was printed in the 1883 King's Handbook of Boston that, "their large business enables them to systematize their work under the direction of various experts, each
performing his own operation, thus securing the most perfect result and the greatest
economy. Possessing and applying all important improvements, their relations with
eminent European buildings, the ingenuity and skill of our American workmen,
combined with their constant endeavor to advance the standard of their work, have enabled
these builders to attain the highest position in their art."

The factory in Kendall Green was composed of two wings — each one hundred feet
long — with two stories and a basement, with a corner section eighty feet long, forty feet wide
and forty feet high, extending through all four stories. This tall center section was called the
"finishing" or "erecting" room where each organ was assembled, tested and played
— then knocked down and crated for shipment to its destination.

The factory extended along the tracks of the Fitchburg Division of Boston and
Maine Railroad across from Hastings Station. There was a Mill Room which con

machinery. This was located in the basement or lower floor of the Viles Street wing. The Wood Pipe Room where the wood pipes were manufactured and assembled. In the construction of the wood pipes only the finest selected and most thoroughly seasoned wood was used. The wood was specially treated so that when finally built into organ pipes, they would successfully withstand atmospheric and climatic extremes.

The Metal Pipe Room was on the top floor of the Viles Street wing. There the metal in every pipe was compounded to a special formula. In the graduation of the pipes a mixture of scales and gauges was used embodying the cumulative knowledge and experience of scales and gauges that had been used in the past. Each order number was recorded. In addition, the rise and dip were recorded for each organ, and the order was recorded for each organ.

There were several Action Rooms where materials were carefully subjected to severe tests. The factory was a pioneer in this country in successfully applying the electric action to pipe organs. The first organ in which such action was installed was built in 1895 and is doing excellent service today. The main contacts of the key and coupler were built of platinum.

In the Voicing Room the voicers preserved the distinctive characteristics of each individual stop and devoted attention to proper blending and coordination of the finished whole. By the use of pipes of large scale and special methods of voicing, grandeur and solidity were given to the tone. The French Horn and Patented Flute were features of Hook & Hastings organs.

The Console Room was where the consoles were assembled. There were two different styles, one with knobs on the resters and the other vertical jamb set at an oblique angle.

Although much of the Hook & Hastings organs’ fame derived from its large instruments, the firm was not insensitive to the market for small organs. An advertising brochure from about 1876 describes little organs, called the “Choral” organs, ranging in price from $500 to $1,200. One model consisted of a single fifty-eight pipe, Open Diapason. The brochure noted that this organ was “far superior to any reed organ in every respect, especially in dignity and pervading characteristics of tone, and in durability, a feature that further distinguishes it.”

In the early 1880s the Hook & Hastings had six models of small organs that were ready-made, while larger models were custom-built. Standard specifications and prices were given, but variation from the suggested specifications was possible based on the size of the building.

The Hook & Hastings sometimes won a contract by “donating” a part of the contracted amount to the church. In letters between the company and the First Congregational Church, North Brookfield, Massachusetts, we read that on June 6, 1874 the Hook & Hastings donated a pipe organ for $3,200 for an organ. By June 11 they had reconsidered, and the price was lowered to $3,100. On June 18 their letter to a representative of the church contained the following paragraph:

"'We would like to offer our organ at a reduced price of $3,050, which should be known only to ourselves. We have in the contract specified it in full — $3,100, upon payment of which we agree to refund $50.'"

According to the log of new and rebuilt organs, there were 2,445 recorded up to 1920 when the practice of recording was discontinued. Assuming an average of thirteen when the practice of recording was discontinued. Assuming an average of thirteen years per year from 1920 to 1927, the last year before work was commenced on the organ for the Riverside Church in New York, there were approximately 2,536 organs built.

The most notable organs built by the firm in Boston, as recorded in the History of the Organ in the United States or by the firm’s own evaluation, were as follows: 1863, Second Choir at Knowles; University Chapel; 1864, Mechanics Hall in Worcester; 1865, Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, N.Y.; 1866, Shurtleff in Boston; 1865, Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, N.Y.; 1867, First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; 1871, Union Park Congregational Church in Chicago; 1873, Church of the Holy Union in Philadelphia; 1875, Holy Cross Cathedral in Cincinnati; 1881, First Church of Christ, Scientist in New York; 1891, First Church of Christ, Scientist in Chicago; 1901, Walnut Street Baptist Church in Philadelphia; 1902, St. John’s M.E. Church in St. Louis; 1900, Lake Avenue Baptist Church in Rochester; Immaculate Conception in Boston; and, skipping to later organs, 1916, First Congregational Church in Fall River, 1917, Presbyterian Church in Huntington, 1917, Presbyterian Church in Englewood, New Jersey; 1918, First Church of Christ, Scientist in New York; 1919, First Church of Christ, Scientist in St. Paul, Minnesota; 1919, First Church of Christ, Scientist in Troy, New York; 1920, Congregational Church in Giovettano, New York; 1920, St. Paul’s Cathedral in Boston; 1920, Masonic Temple in Lake Charles, Louisiana; and 1920, Sacred Heart Church in Wichita Falls, Texas.

On the occasion of the completion of the 2,000th organ, a banquet was given in Hastings Hall on March 3, 1904. The organ was built for the Foundry Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. An organ recital was given in the organ factory Finishing Room where the organ was set up ready for shipping. After the banquet, Mr. Hastings spoke in part:

"I am pleased to greet you on behalf of the Corporation and on behalf of my young associates . . . I greet you on my own behalf. It has been my good fortune to long have the valued aid of many very capable experts, men who have grown up with me and the business. Some of our and have identified themselves with its interests and to whom I am glad to here express my indebtedness and gratitude . . . I am able to say now as I said to a reporter who came out here fourteen years ago — ‘We have never had any labor troubles here.’ When this was told by the reporter on his return to Boston, he was sent back to learn all about us, and the Boston Herald of Sunday, July 13, 1890 published under a four-column article with illustrations describing what it termed a ‘community of labor,’ an ‘object lesson — a neighborhood like a family.’ All this can be repeated and emphasized by the further experience of fourteen years and this I owe largely to you. It may be well here to glance back and briefly review some features of our past. Its beginning was in 1827 — a memorial of which is the little imitation organ, rescued from the rubbish of our old factory and turned into our finishing hall. Many have wondered when and where it was made, and for what purpose — it was used for a sign over the door of the first factory nearly eighty years ago . . . From 1865 the business increased rapidly and by 1880 we had produced 1,000 organs and fulfilling my promise — on the completion of organ #1,000 for a church in Washington, D.C., we celebrated the opening of the organ #2,000. It is not until this, too, is for Washington for the new large church for what is there known as the Foundry Methodist Church, attended by President Grant and other noted men. I can make but brief illusion to the years 1880-1881, and the deaths in those years of my old partners and my succession to the entire business — to the years 1886-87 when the business was moved from Iron Street to its present home by me, and the move completed in 1889, with my son as its President, who continued as such ten years until his recent death. The vacancy has just been filled, as you know, by the election of Mr. Arthur I. Coburn, I think you will join me in wishing our new President success and pleasure, and in giving him our hearty cooperation.”

Philip F. Coburn
FROM THE EDITOR

In 1980 Harold “Red” Travis encouraged Phil Coburn to research the history of the Hook-Hastings organ factory, Weston’s largest employer from 1889 to 1936. Phil was a likely person to write the story because his Uncle Arthur had been president of the firm, his Aunt Anna had been married to the owner, Frank Hastings, and Phil could remember making many excursions through the factory — taking tin pans to be mended and selling magazines and newspapers to the workmen. Further, Phil and his wife Natalie lived for a short time at 227 North Avenue — one of the homes built by Frank Hastings for his employees. This Bulletin and the next present Phil’s findings — and added companion material not available at the time of Phil’s death last spring. The October 1980 and January 1982 issues of the Bulletin contain pictures and additional information on the organ factory.

The impact of the factory as an employer cannot be overestimated. Weston’s population was about 1,700 when the factory — an employer of over seventy persons — came to town. Adjusted to our current population, a business would need upwards of 475 workers to have a comparable effect in numbers upon Weston’s economy — a number greater than all positions in all businesses currently in Weston with the exception of the office building at the Turnpike entrance. This conservative estimate of the organ factory’s impact omits the employment created by the construction of buildings described in Phil Coburn’s article.

The organ factory is only the most conspicuous example of Weston’s industrial past, a story yet to be written. North Avenue had a ropewalk and a shoe factory-tannery. In 1891 there burned at the corner of South Avenue and Pine Street a “wooden knitting factory” — whatever that was! South Avenue also had a sawmill. Crescent Street had a sawmill and gristmill which later made textile machinery, clocks, butter and cheese drills, window screens, and school furniture. The Boston Post Road had a pottery and a sawmill-gristmill which later made textile machinery for both the North and the South, hardware and tools, then pencil sharpeners.

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SCHEDULE OF DUES

Annual: $5 per person; $8 per family including children under 21
Life: $250 per person

Gift memberships are suggested

(Currently the age span of our life members is from 5 to “over 80!”)

Contributions and Bequests to the Endowment and Memorial Fund are welcomed. All checks should be mailed to: Weston Historical Society, Inc., Box 343, Weston, MA 02193

Additional copies of THE BULLETIN may be obtained by phoning Mrs. Raymond Paynter, Jr., 899-3533, or Donald G. Kennedy, Editor, 893-1319; also by calling at the Josiah Smith Tavern any Wednesday afternoon during “Open House”. If you have a spare copy of BULLETINS, vintage 1963-70, our Curator, Mrs. J. E. Fraser, 894-2872 would be glad to have them.