

TRANSFER OF STEINWAY HALL WILL MARK THE PASSING OF WORLD-FAMOUS MUSICAL CENTER

Distinguished Firm of Piano Manufacturers Will Erect New Building in Carnegie Hall District—Fourteenth Street Structure Was for Many Years the Rendezvous of Celebrated Musicians and Its Auditorium Housed the Principal Concerts of the Day—Many Notables Made Their American Debuts There

WITH the steady northerly shifting of the musical center of New York City, the present site of Steinway Hall has come to be downtown instead of uptown, and for the past five years the directors of Steinway & Sons have had under serious consideration the problem of finding a new home some distance north of Fourteenth Street. The final decision to acquire a site for a new Steinway building at 109-11-13 West Fifty-seventh Street was arrived at after at

Rubinstein gave his first recital there. I remember very distinctly how we used to listen to Rubinstein when he was practicing in the grand room. We would stand for hours listening to him, forgetting all about our luncheon, if it happened to be around the noon hour. Rubinstein had been in the habit of using the customary seven octave European piano of those days, and was not familiar with our seven and one-third octave pianos. It was necessary, therefore, for us to place a block of wood over the upper keys, to make the keyboard the required seven octaves in width.

"Rubinstein was insistent upon this because he was in the habit of striking the highest note on the keyboard, and insisted that it would throw him out badly if he was obliged to use the full seven-and-one-third octave instruments of our make. This little change, however, was easily accomplished, and dear old Rubinstein was made happy."

The nominal rental of Steinway Hall was \$125, but time after time it was given without charge to promising young artists, and here, as in many other ways, the distinguished house of Steinway gave evidence of its desire to do everything within its power to further the interest of music in this country.

The late William Steinway, who was president of Steinway & Sons after its incorporation in 1876 to the time of his death, Nov. 30, 1896, kept a diary from the date of his marriage in 1861 until his death. This diary, which is now in the possession of his son, Theodore E. Steinway, and which consists of eight large books of closely written pages, contains many interesting anecdotes connected with Steinway Hall and the connection of Steinway & Sons with the musical advancement of the times.

In this diary Mr. Steinway wrote of the inaugural concert Oct. 31, 1866, which was given by the Beaman Concert Troupe, and which was a tremendous success. Parepa-Rosa, the famous soprano; Brignoli, tenor, and Ferranti, the baritone, with Theodore Thomas conducting the orchestra, presented the program. Other world-famous artists who appeared at Steinway Hall during the next few years included Wieniawski and Ole Bull, violinists. Steinway Hall was the home of the Oratorio Society, under the direction of Dr. Leopold Damrosch, and it was this society which presented the first American performance of the "Damnation of Faust." The Philharmonic Society was then under the direction of Theodore Thomas.

A year after the opening of the hall a musical festival was given from June 3 to 9, inclusive, under the direction of L. F. Harrison. This was the musical event of the season, and was attended by the elect of social and musical circles.



Charles H. Steinway, Head of the Distinguished House of Steinway & Sons

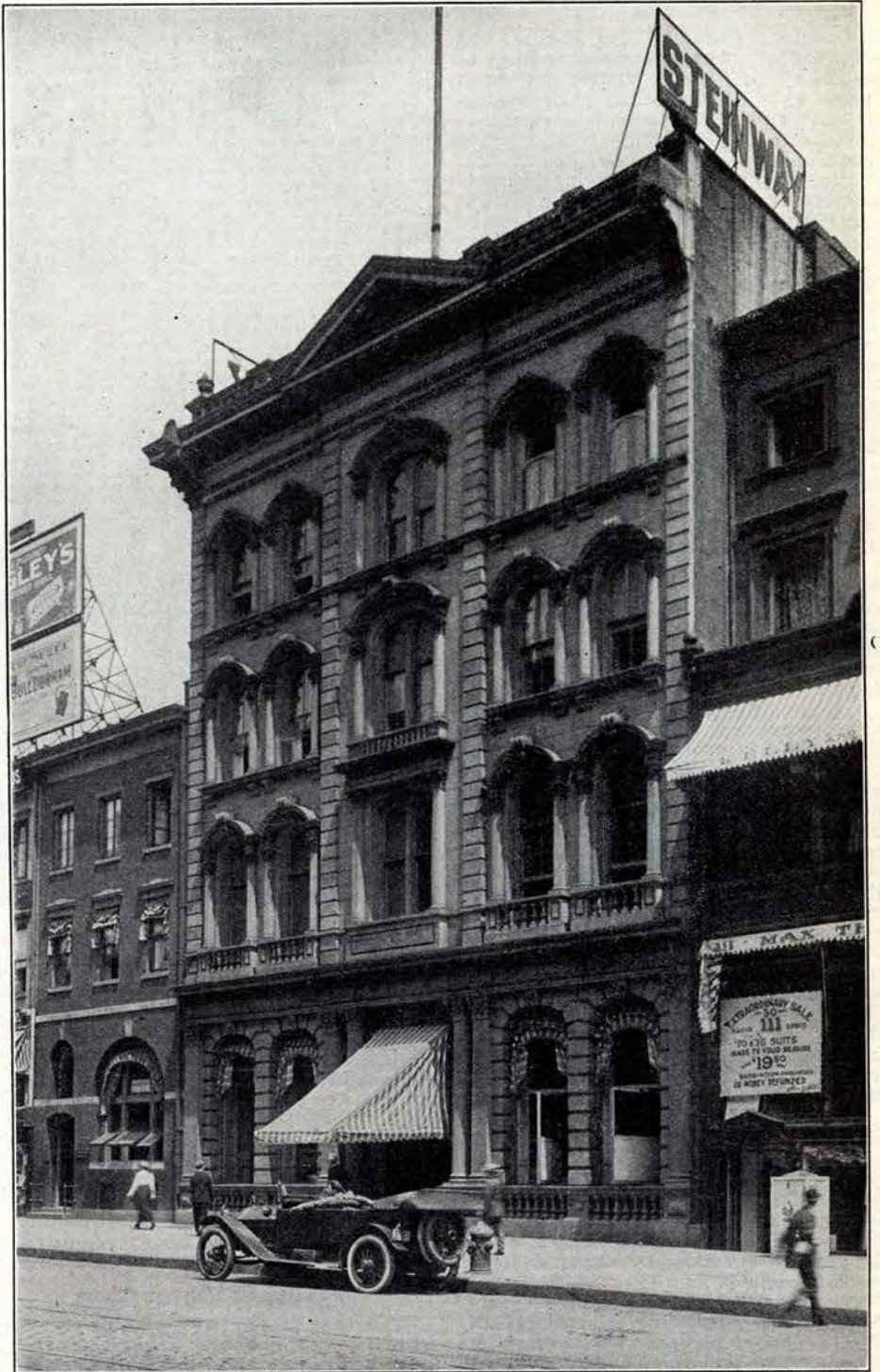
least 275 propositions had been presented by as many or more real estate brokers.

"It is needless to say," remarked Charles H. Steinway, president of Steinway & Sons, who discussed the projected move with a representative of MUSICAL AMERICA on Tuesday, "that we gave this problem the most thoughtful care and we feel that there is no question whatever that we have decided upon the best possible location for the next quarter of a century, or more."

Mr. Steinway was a boy of nine years when Steinway Hall was opened in 1866, but he recalls clearly the exciting incidents connected with the laying of the corner stone by Mayor Hoffman, on Saturday, May 26, 1866, and the opening of the concert hall, Oct. 31, of the same year.

Rubinstein's Début

"It was six years after the opening of the hall," said Mr. Steinway, "that Anton



—Photo by Press Illustrating Service

The Exterior of Steinway Hall on Fourteenth Street as It Is To-day

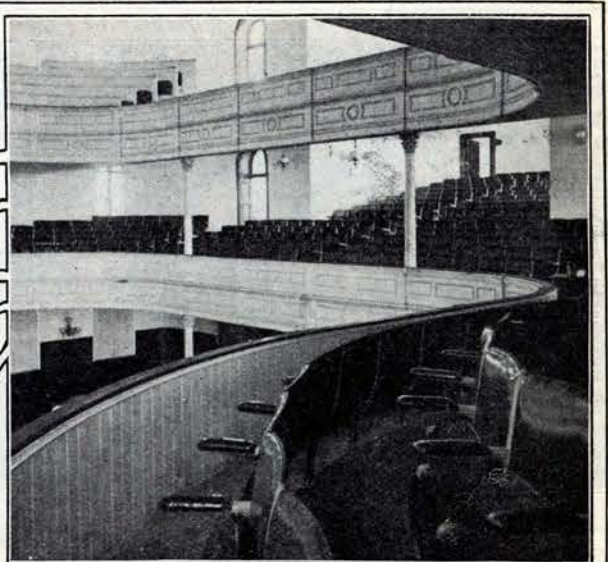
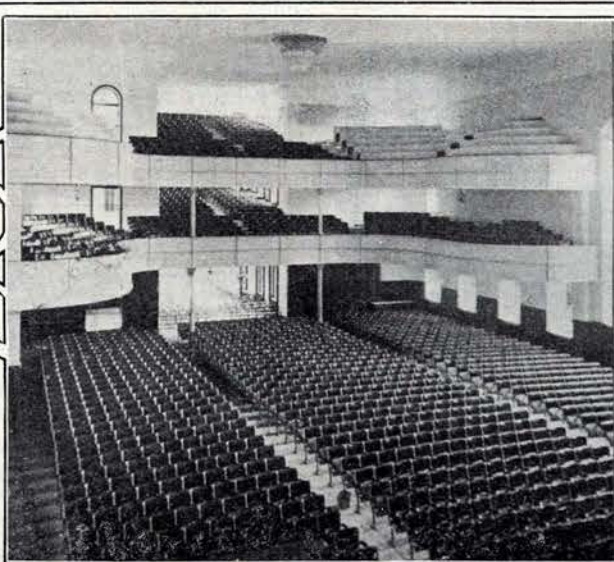
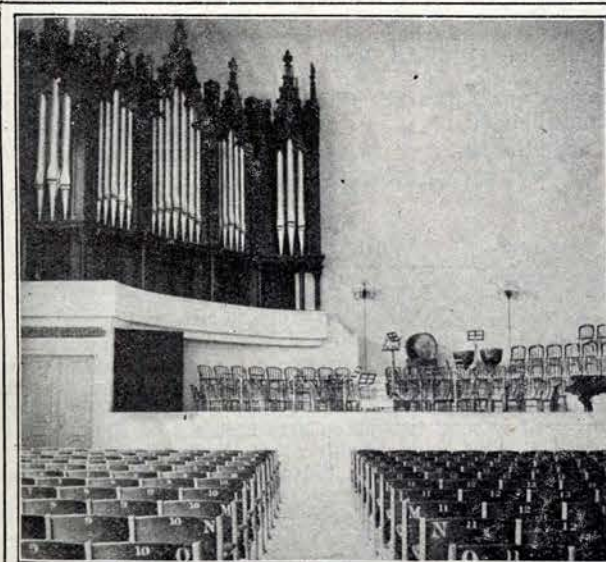
Harper's Weekly illustrated its review of the affair with a large wood cut.

When Charles Dickens Gave His Readings

Harper's again took occasion to feature a Steinway Hall affair with a wood cut illustration when the readings by Charles Dickens took place in December, 1867.

The sale of seats for the first series was announced for Dec. 11, at 9 a. m., and at 10 o'clock on the night before there were 150 persons in line, and at the opening of the box office the following morning more than 500 were waiting an opportunity to buy tickets. The course of four readings was repeated twice.

[Continued on page 6]



Views from Three Angles of the Auditorium in Steinway Hall, in Which America's Leading Concerts Took Place from 1866 Until 1890, When the Hall Was Converted Into the Art Department of Steinway & Sons