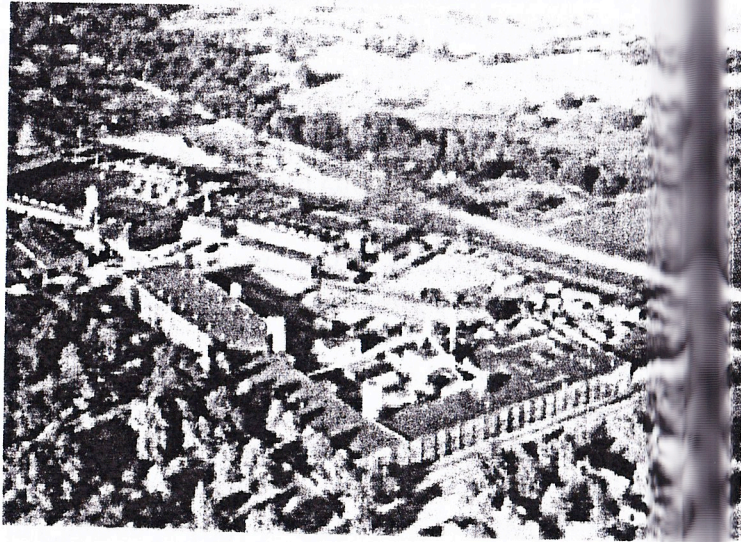




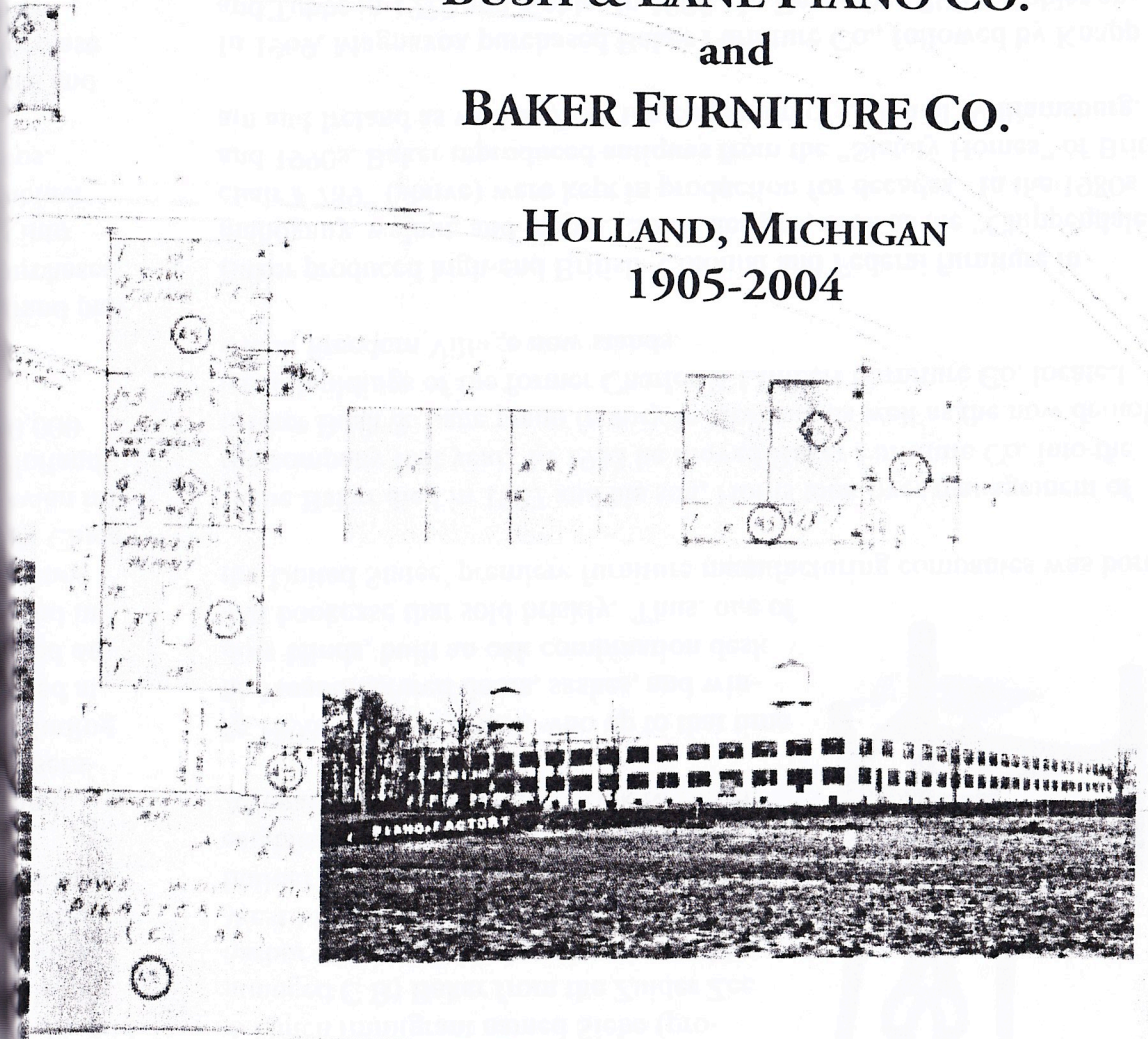
Dirk Dedel, carver at Baker, ca. 1950



Baker Furniture complex, ca. 1960

A BRIEF HISTORY
of
BUSH & LANE PIANO CO.
and
BAKER FURNITURE CO.

HOLLAND, MICHIGAN
1905-2004



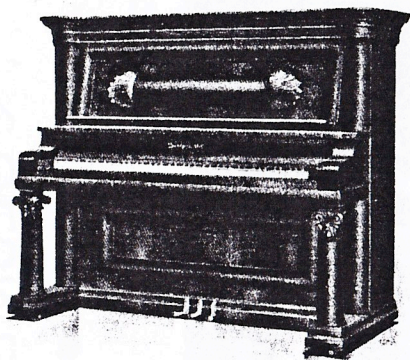
Bush & Lane piano factory ca. 1906

BUSH & LANE PIANO CO.

Formed in Chicago in 1901 by father and son William Bush Sr. & Jr., and Walter Lane, the piano manufacturing company of Bush & Lane developed the reputation of making the finest pianos in America's Midwest. The Bushes were businessmen with an interest in piano manufacturing while Lane has been called the company's "genius" in designing pianos.

Around 1905 the partners decided to build a new factory in Holland, Michigan at the corner of 24th Street and Columbia Ave. They assembled machinery for the new factory from around the country – including an Allis-Chalmers Corliss steam engine that the partners had viewed at the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904. (The steam engine was installed on a concrete pedestal at the corner of Waverly and 32nd St. in Holland in 2003.) In January of 1906, Bush & Lane began manufacturing pianos having brought a workforce of sixty men (and their families) from Chicago to Holland. A number of the Chicago workers were Scandinavian immigrants, and some of their descendants continue to live in the Holland area to this day. The company claimed to have produced over 60,000 pianos from 1906 to 1929.

The company's product line included upright, baby grand, and grand pianos. In 1914 the rights to the Farrand Piano brand name were purchased and a line of high-quality Farrand "Cecilian" player pianos went into production. Additionally, Bush & Lane manufactured lines of cabinet phonographs and cabinet radios.



STYLE No. 10
(Farrand)

The market for high-end pianos and player pianos had begun to decrease in the later 1920s, and the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and subsequent Depression killed the business. Rather than compromise quality or merge with another company, then President Walter Lane officially closed Bush & Lane in 1930.

The Holland Museum, 2007

BAKER FURNITURE CO.

A Dutch immigrant named Siebe (pronounced C B) Baker from the Zuider Zee harbor town of Enkhuizen immigrated to West Michigan in 1870. He worked as a builder and a general store manager before establishing a water-powered planing mill in Allegan, Michigan named Cook & Baker.

In 1893, Cook & Baker, who up to that time had manufactured doors, sashes, and window blinds, built an oak combination desk and bookcase that sold briskly. Thus, one of the United States' premiere furniture manufacturing companies was born.



Siebe Baker died in 1927 and his son, Hollis took over management of the company that year. In 1933 he moved Baker Furniture Co. into the former Bush & Lane piano factory in Holland, as well as the now demolished buildings of the former Charles P. Limbert Furniture Co. located where Freedom Village now stands.

Baker produced high-end British, Colonial and Federal furniture in mahogany, walnut, and maple. Some designs, such as the "Chippendale chair # 789" (above) were kept in production for decades. In the 1980s and 1990s, Baker reproduced antiques from the "Stately Homes" of Britain and Ireland as well as from the collection of Colonial Williamsburg.

In 1969, Magnavox purchased Baker Furniture Co., followed by Knapp and Tubbs in 1972 and Kohler in 1986. In December, 2003, Kohler announced that they were moving Baker's manufacturing to North Carolina and the factory closed in July of 2004. By December 2004, developer Bosgraaf Commercial publicly proposed and subsequently rehabilitated the vacant factory into residential and commercial condominiums, preserving this significant piece of Holland's history and giving it a vibrant use for the future.

www.hollandmuseum.org