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DURING the last half of the 18th century a few scattered instances of woodwind making began to appear among the settlers in the New World. *The New York Gazette* of November 16, 1761, carried the following advertisement:

Gottlieb Wolhaupter living at the sign of the musical instrument maker opposite Mr. Adam Vanderberg's has just imported from London a choice parcel of the best English boxwood; where he continues to make and mend all sorts of musical instruments such as German flutes, Hautboys, clareonets, flageolets, bassoons, fifes, and also silver teapot handles.¹

Another early maker, Jacob Anthony (1736–1804), came from Germany to Philadelphia about 1764.² First he and then his son ran a musical instrument making business that continued until 1811. Two flutes by this firm are in the Dayton C. Miller Collection at the Library of Congress. There is also similar evidence of early woodwind making in Boston. William Callender appears in the city directories there first as an ivory turner in 1789 and after 1796 as a musical instrument maker. A fife of his is at the Lexington, Massachusetts Historical Society.

In the first couple of decades after 1800 a few more makers began business including Edward Riley, John Firth and William Hall in New York; William Whiteley in Utica, New York; and Allyn Bacon in Philadelphia. All of these, at least until the 1820s, were evidently small shops producing mostly flutes, fifes, and clarinets. Even the larger firms established in the 1820s and 1830s such as Graves & Co. and Asa Hopkins are not known to have made double reeds or larger clarinets. It is with a great deal of surprise, then, that we may now consider the surviving instruments of a group of makers who worked in Hartford, Connecticut between 1799 and 1814. The list includes an oboe, six bassoons and five bass clarinets.

The principal figure in Hartford's musical instrument making was George Catlin (1778–1852) who worked there from at least 1799 until

moving to Philadelphia about 1814. Next in importance was John Meacham, Jr. (1785–1844) who worked with Catlin about 1804–1808 before moving to Albany. In Albany, he and a brother, Horace (1789–1861), established a large firm making and dealing in musical instruments. A third member of the Hartford group was Uzal Miner (c. 1783–?) who completed an apprenticeship with Catlin in 1811 and set up business in Catlin's old shop. Miner continued at least until 1814 but is not heard of again after that.

George Catlin first comes to public notice in the Hartford City Directory of 1799. The nature of his business is more fully documented by an advertisement placed in the *Connecticut Courant*, June 23, 1800:

GEORGE CATLIN

At the head of Prison Street makes almost every kind of musical instrument now in use, such as pianofortes, harpsichords, violoncellos, guitars, bassoons, clarinets & hautboys of different keys, tenor clarinets, flutes of various kinds, fifes, reeds, etc. etc. Also mathematical instruments, gauging rods, wantage do., sliding Gunter calipers, board & log measures, wood measures on a new scale. Those who favor him with their custom may depend on having their work well done & warranted. A generous allowance to good customers.

Catlin also made a pipe organ in 1800 for Christ Church in Hartford. The Vestry paid him \$2.00 per week for use of the instrument and for providing someone to play it.³ These arrangements were evidently not entirely satisfactory as Catlin subsequently tries to sell the organ. He appears to have been doing a good business, for the next advertisement includes a notice seeking a helper. The following is from the *Connecticut Courant* of January 4, 1802:

FOR SALE

A GOOD TON'D ORGAN

Standing in the Episcopal Church in Hartford . . . Also piano fortes organized in the neatest manner very reasonably; beside almost every kind of musical instrument now in use made by the subscriber 30 per cent cheaper than imported. He returns his sincere thanks for the encouragement he has received in the manufacture of musical instruments and hopes through the experience he has had in that business to give ample satisfaction to all those who may think so favorably of American manufactures as to favor him with their custom.

George Catlin

Said Catlin wants a journeyman well experienced in the above business to whom good encouragement will be given.

Both in this ad and the one to follow the inevitable comparison of his products with similar European goods appears. An interesting change occurs, however, for in the 1802 advertisement he offers his instruments '30 per cent cheaper than imported' and appeals to 'those who may think so favorably of American manufactures' to buy his

instruments. In the following which appeared for several weeks in the *American Mercury* beginning April 14, 1803, and in the *Connecticut Courant* on April 13, 1803, his instruments 'have received the highest encomiums of the most able performers', and are 'proved to be second to none of European manufacture' although they are made of 'the best imported materials'. Charles Mather, Jr., evidently was marketing the instruments for Catlin and this may account for the change of character:

Musical Instruments . . . in Military sets or single, plain and trumpet stop'd bassoons, tenorpoons, clarinets and hautboys, ivory tip'd and plain with brass and silver trimmings—flutes, fifes & c. made of the best Turkey box—also most kinds of stringed instruments—violins and bass viols, a great variety, that have received the highest encomiums of the most able performers. Those who wish to purchase church or house organs that perform by keys or crank, or the common organized, or grand pianofortes may be supplied on short notice with such as are examined and proved to be second to none of European manufacture—Also implements for playing, strings, reeds & c. Likewise on hand a church organ and pianoforte of most beautiful tones, to be had on reasonable terms if applied for soon. The above are manufactured by the ingenious George Catlin of the best imported materials, and sold at the factory price.

Charles Mather Jr.

Catlin also continues to make mathematical measuring instruments. Following is his advertisement in the *Connecticut Courant* of February 20, 1805:

GEORGE CATLIN

At his musical instrument manufactory opposite the bank, has, and will keep on hand, for sale, a general assortment of musical instruments of various kinds viz: bassoons; tenorpoons [tenorpoons?]; clarinets; hautboys; flutes of various kinds; fifes; violoncellos; tenor viols; violins; with reeds, fittings, &c.

Gauging rods; wantage do. callipers &c. Likewise may be had organs of different descriptions, with or without barrels; pianofortes organized. Those who wish to possess this beautiful addition may be gratified with a sample of the kind at the above place.

N.B. for sale on very reasonable terms a good toned organ suitable for a small church.

Evidence begins to appear in 1807 that Catlin has helpers or apprentices. In July of that year he sells his shop to John Meacham, Jr., and moves to a new location.⁴ In May of 1808 he and Meacham, together with Uzal Miner, Eli Gilman and William Corning, purchase property on Front street.⁵ Shortly after this John Meacham and his brother Horace set up business in Albany, New York. Although direct references to Meacham as an apprentice of Catlin have not been found, it seems highly likely that he learned the music instrument making trade

working in Catlin's shop. Uzal Miner, in his own words 'served a regular apprenticeship with Mr. Catlin' and took over Catlin's shop in 1811.⁶ The other two associates Gilman and Corning are not heard of again.

Up until 1810 what contemporary sources there are give no hint of any of the partnerships Catlin is known to have formed. Although Charles Mather evidently retailed Catlin instruments for a time, his name was never included in the name of the firm. Also John Meacham and Uzal Miner were never partners in the firm even though they certainly became competent makers, and even helped buy the new shop in 1808.

After 1810 two partnerships can be documented, although little is known of either. In 1812 Christ Church in Hartford procured a new organ built by Catlin and Bacon at a cost of \$500.⁷ There is also a bassoon at the Smithsonian Institution and a bass clarinet at the Letchworth State Park museum both inscribed 'Catlin & Bacon, Hartford Con.'. Another bassoon in the collection of Philip Young, Victoria, British Columbia, inscribed 'Catlin, Bliss, Hartford Con.', is the only evidence of a second partnership.

On January 14, 1817, the following appeared in the *Connecticut Courant*:

NOTICE

The copartnership heretofore existing between Allen and Charles Bacon is by mutual consent dissolved. The business of Musical Instrument making will in the future be conducted by the subscriber . . . Charles Bacon, Hartford. It is quite possible that one or both of these men were partners of Catlin in 1812.

A Lewis Bliss is known to have had a dry goods store in Hartford in 1803;⁸ and also in that year a tanner named Isaac Bliss appears.⁹ It is not known which if either of these men formed the partnership of Catlin/Bliss.

From 1811 to 1814 Uzal Miner advertises in the local papers. The following is from his notice in the *Connecticut Courant* of September 14, 1813:

UZAL MINER

MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MAKER

Opposite Messrs. Ward & Bartholomew's Main St. Hartford (Conn.) has on hand and for sale very low for cash the following articles—Viz: Bassoons, Catlin's patent clarions, clarinets, hautboys, different keyed flutes, C and B fifes, bass and field drums, (very nice ones) Bugle and Hunter's Horns, Bass viols and violins, bassoon, clarion, clarinet, and hautboy reeds . . .

The lists of instruments offered in the advertisements of Catlin and Miner are most impressive for the time and place in which they

appeared. One would be tempted to treat them merely as an indication of what the maker might be willing to attempt rather than instruments regularly produced were it not for existing examples of some of the most unusual items and supporting documentation for others.

It is also interesting that Catlin and Miner invariably list instruments from larger or lowest to highest, contrary to usual practice. The larger instruments must have been their speciality, perhaps because of the difficulty of ordering and shipping them from abroad. The following is a composite list of instruments mentioned in Catlin and Miner advertisements, 1800 to 1813:

Pipe organs	Tenoroons
Pianofortes	Clarions (Bass clarinets)
Pianofortes organized (Pianos with an organ attachment)	Tenor clarinets
Harpsichords	Clarinets
Barrel organs	Hautboys
Guitars	Flutes
Bass viols	Fifes
Violoncellos	Bass and field drums
Violons	Bugle and hunter's horns
Bassoons, plain and trumpet stop'd	

Knowing that pipe organs, oboes, bassoons, and clarions or bass clarinets were made, it is not hard to concede the making of barrel organs, tenoroons, tenor clarinets, clarinets, flutes and fifes. Whether pianos, harpsichords, drums and various string and brass instruments were also made or merely retained for other makers will have to await further evidence.

The earliest surviving Hartford instrument is a bassoon by Catlin of about 1805 in the collections of the Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan. It is thought to be earlier than the other Hartford bassoons because it has only four keys and is signed simply 'Made by/Geo. Catlin/Hartford/Con.' (Plate III). It is not in any way a beginner's attempt, however, for it is of proper dimensions and design, nicely finished and has the distinctive spade-shape key flaps peculiar to all of the Hartford bassoons and bass clarinets. Moreover, it was evidently a successful playing instrument for it shows signs of long use. It is of maple with brass ferrules and keys, and its dimensions are: overall length, 121.3 cm.; air-column without bocal, about 210.5 cm.; bore entering the wing joint, 12.8 mm.; leaving it, 14.1 mm.; bore entering the bass joint, 23 mm., leaving it, 29.3 mm. The bell chokes to about 24 mm., 3.5 cm. from the end before the flare.

Recently a bassoon of about the same date as the one described above was shown to me by Mr Richard Lottridge of Madison, Wisconsin. It is signed 'J. Meacham Jr./Hartford' and must have been made between 1804 and 1808 when Meacham was working with Catlin in Hartford. It is in excellent condition and, fortunately, is complete with an original bocal. Total length is 121 cm., air column without bocal is about 211 cm., and length of bocal including tenon section is 29.7 cm. The bore of the bocal expands from 5.6 mm. to 10.2 mm., that of the wing from 13.2 mm. to 16 mm. and of the bass joint from 22.5 mm. to 30.5 mm. The bell section gradually chokes throughout its length to a bore size of 25 mm. and has no flare at all. Maple and brass again are the major materials and the keys are the distinctive Hartford spade.

Another bassoon, probably dating from about 1810 and signed 'Catlin/Hartford', is in the collection of Mr Clifford Allanson, Delmar, New York. It is very similar to the Nichol instrument except that it has F \sharp and E \flat keys, making six keys in all. The E \flat key is positioned for the left thumb in the English or French manner (Plate IV).

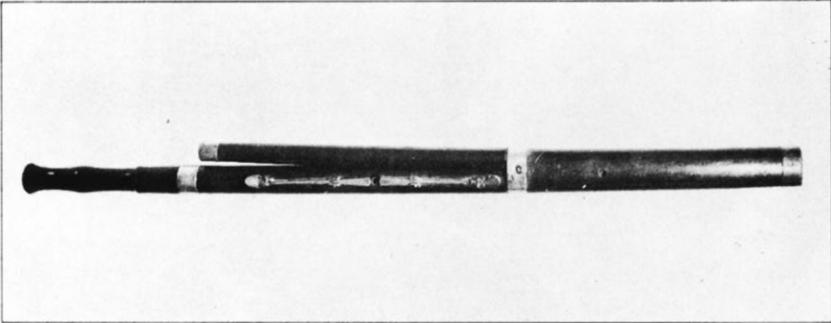
The bassoon signed 'Catlin & Bacon/Hartford/Con.' also has six keys and dates from about 1812. It is now in the collections of the Smithsonian Institution. Dimensions of this later instrument are: overall length, 122.5 cm.; air-column without bocal, about 211.5 cm.; bore entering the wing joint, 12.4 mm., leaving it, 15.2 mm.; bore entering the bass joint, 21.7 mm., leaving it, 29.4 mm. The bell choke was not measured. It is also of maple with brass fittings.

A fifth bassoon signed 'Catlin, Bliss/Con.' is now in the collection of Phillip Young, Victoria, British Columbia. It also has six keys and probably dates from about 1810-1814.

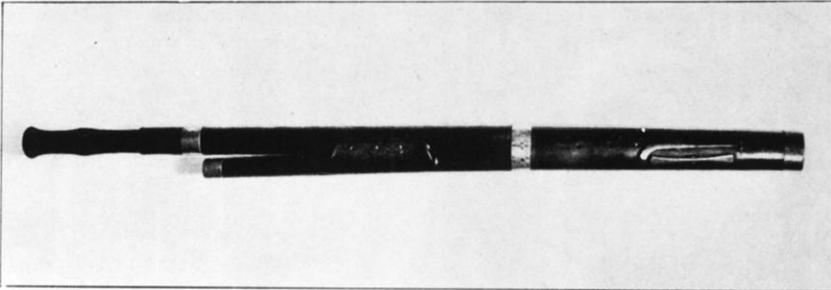
The sixth bassoon was made by John Meacham about 1810 shortly after he moved to Albany. It is signed 'Meacham/AL[bany]' and is preserved in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. This bassoon has four keys but does not have key flaps shaped in the distinctive arrowhead or spade design of the instruments made in Hartford.

A two-key boxwood oboe signed 'J. Meacham Jr./Hartford' is in the Letchworth State Park Museum near Castile, New York (Plate V). It was probably made about 1807 shortly before Meacham moved to Albany. This is the earliest American-made oboe found so far, but it clearly shows its English ancestry. An oboe by Kusder, London, at the Horniman Museum, illustrated in Baines, *European and American Musical Instruments*, No. 552, is almost identical to it.

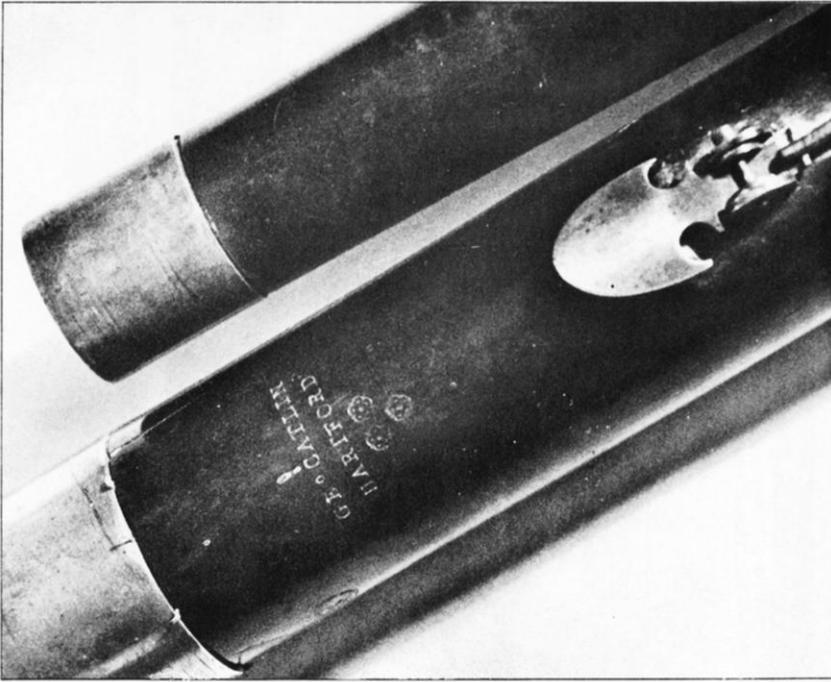
Although oboes and bassoons may have been made earlier in the United States, these are the earliest surviving examples known at



(a)



(b)



(c)

PLATE III

*Four-key bassoon signed 'Made by/George Catlin/Hartford/Con.'
Photo courtesy of Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan*

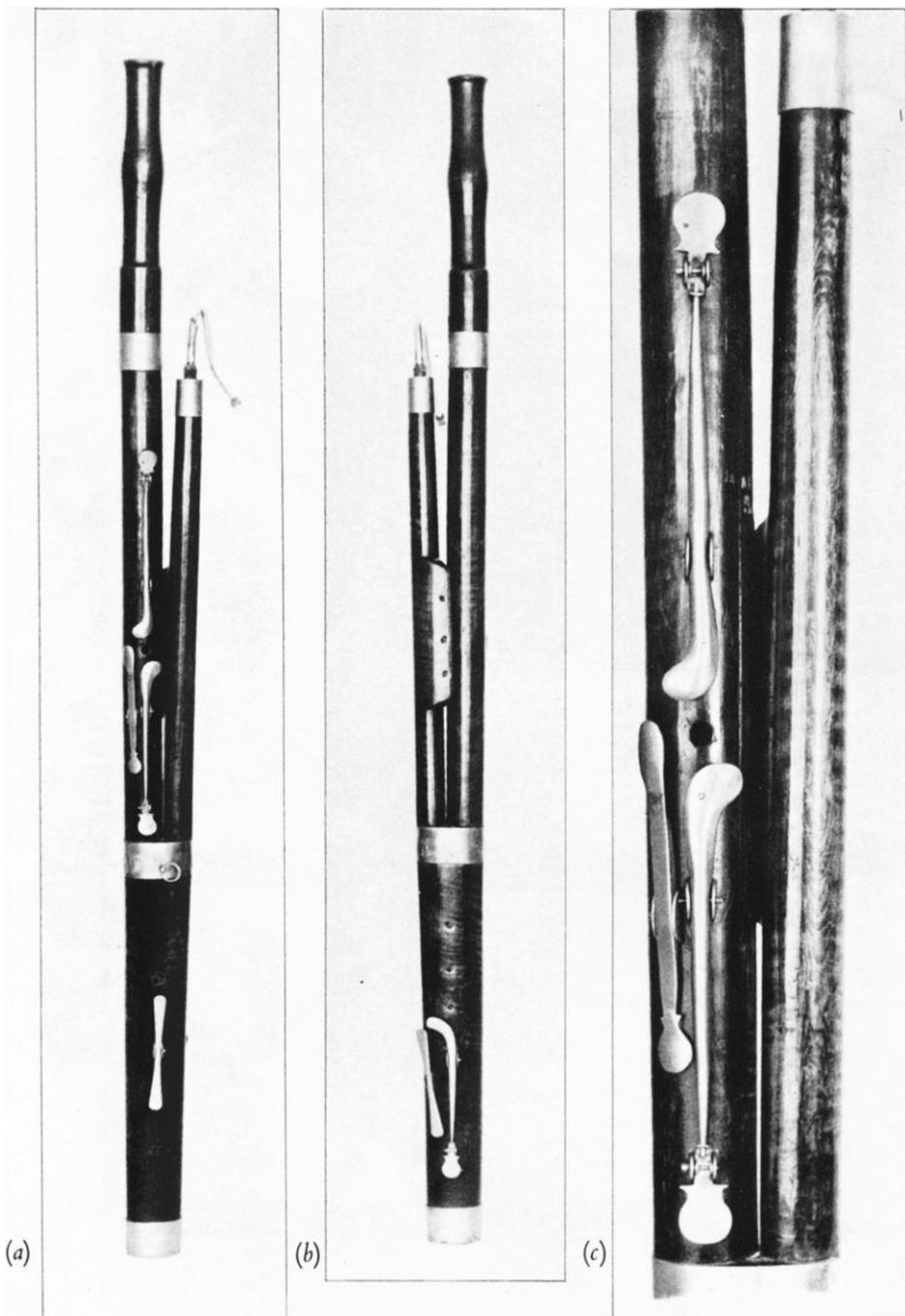


PLATE IV

*Six-key bassoon signed 'Catlin/Hartford'
(bocal and reed not original)*

Photo courtesy of Clifford Allanson, Delmar, New York



PLATE V

(a) Two-key oboe signed 'J. Meacham Jr. | Hariford'; (b-d) Nine-key bass clarinet signed 'Patent | Catlin & Bacon | Hariford | Con.'

Photos courtesy of Genesee State Park and Recreation Commission, Pioneer and Indian Museum, Letchworth State Park, Castile, New York

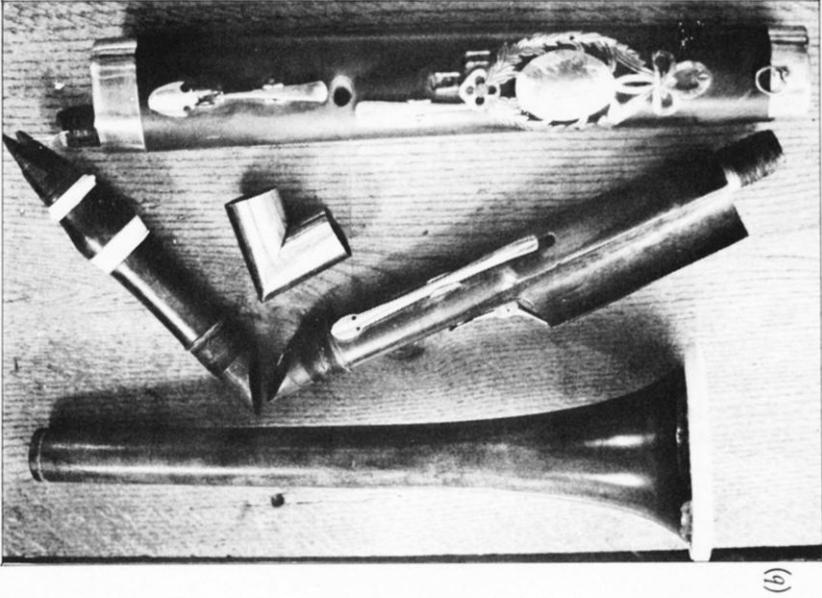
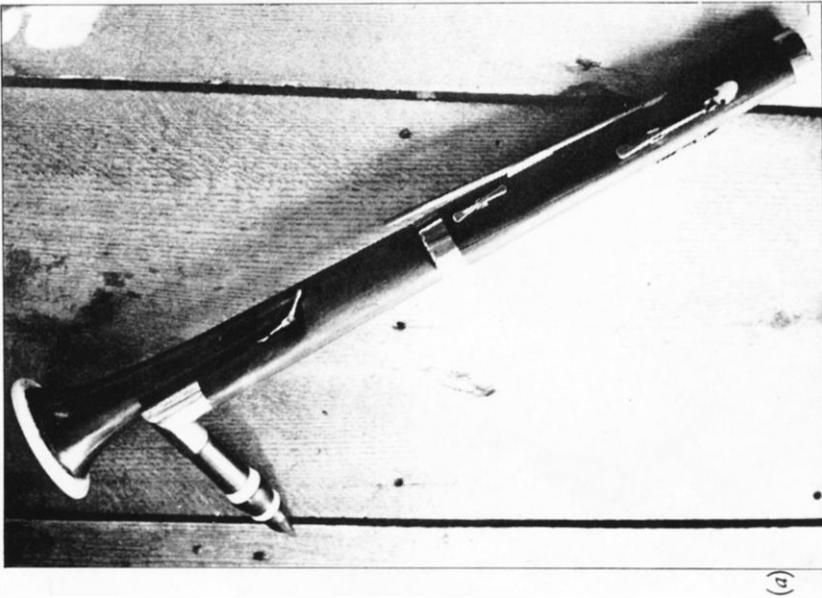


PLATE VI

(a) (b) Nine-key bass clarinet signed 'Uzal Miner|Hartford|Con.'

Photo courtesy of the Farmington Historical Society, Farmington, Connecticut

present. Their existence is evidence of musical activity, and demand for some of the more unusual instruments sufficient to support a shop, that is unique in early American history. Very few other bassoons or oboes by American makers are known to me before the present century. Catlin probably supplied military and municipal bands based on the *Harmonie-Musik* combination of oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons. Bassoons may also have been used in some New England churches. Unfortunately this promising enterprise was probably a casualty of severe conditions brought to New England by the War of 1812 and changing tastes in American popular music. From the 1830s on the new brass instruments dominated popular music and few ensembles demanded the services of a bassoon or oboe.

Although Hartford oboes and bassoons of this date are significant in American woodwind-making history, they are not as surprising to historians as the bassoon-shaped bass clarinets which were also made in Hartford from about 1810 to 1815. What may be the earliest of these belongs to Philip Young (Victoria, British Columbia) and is signed 'Invented and made by George Catlin Hartford Con.'. Another, at the Letchworth State Park Museum, is signed 'Patent/Catlin & Bacon/Hartford/Con.' (Plate V *b-d*). Catlin was probably unaware of similar bass clarinets made by Grenser of Dresden from about 1793 and experiments along the same lines by Dumas in Paris in 1807.¹⁰ He could not have known about other contemporary experiments by Sautermeister and Stengel.¹¹ Since no patent was granted to Catlin either in England or in the United States he may have found out about those preceding him only when his patent application was refused.

The Letchworth instrument is thought to date from about 1812 because of the known activity of the partnership of Catlin and Bacon in that year. It is of maple except for a brass bell section. The keys and most of the fittings are brass, but the elbow and neck ferrules are of ivory. The mouthpiece is of boxwood. Overall length is 84 cm. The air-column without mouthpiece is about 165 cm. and the bore at the barrel joint is 17.3 mm. There are nine keys: speaker; A; closed C#/G# for the right forefinger; long closed G#/D# for the left little finger; open F/C for the right little finger; open E/B, open low D; a closed E \flat which closes the E/B and D keys when opened, and low B \flat , all operated by the right thumb. The idea for these four right thumb keys comes directly from the arrangement of keys for the left thumb on the six key bassoon. They control exactly the same notes in the same way except that on the bass clarinet a key for E/B is added. There is also a very similar bass clarinet signed 'Uzal Miner/Hartford/Con.' in the Farmington, Connecticut Historical Society collection

(Plate VI). This instrument differs from the Letchworth example in having a bell section of wood and an elbow of brass. It also has a decorative guard over the lower three right thumb keys (two of which are missing). The maker's signature is engraved on this guard.

Another bass clarinet, similar to the one described above, is in the possession of Mr Joe Privette of Florence, South Carolina. It is unsigned, but has the same distinctive key flaps as the other Hartford bassoons and bass clarinets. Screw holes indicate that a key guard like that on the Farmington bass clarinet once covered the lower right thumb keys. Unfortunately this guard, and possibly Uzal Miner's signature as well, has been lost. Both bell and elbow joint on this instrument are of wood. Again there are nine keys, but one of them is a closed F#/C# key whose touchpiece closes the F/C key; and the low E \flat key for the right thumb is omitted. There is also an unusual second hole for the left thumb which would give low B when open, but its operation by the base of the thumb would be most curious.

Recently yet another bass clarinet in the style of these Hartford makers was brought to my attention—No. 61-259 in the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society Collections, Buffalo, New York. Although again there is no signature, this example is very similar to the Catlin & Bacon bass clarinet at Letchworth State Park. It has nine keys, the distinctive Hartford spade key flaps, and a copper bell section. Again screw holes are evident where a key guard once was attached.

Two other unsigned but probably American-made bass clarinets are known. Both are similar to the Hartford instruments in construction and have the same type of key systems. Instead of the spade-shaped key flaps, however, they have plain square flaps. Both appear to date from the same period. One of these instruments is in the Smithsonian Institution collection, and the other was only recently called to my attention and described by Jason B. Selch who noticed it in the New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire.

The seven bass clarinets of Hartford make or influence are of even more importance than the bassoons and oboe. Only about twenty-two other bass clarinets are known which could have been made before 1815, and of these, about fourteen survive.¹² Considering only bassoon-shaped instruments, eight are known and five or six survive other than the seven mentioned here.¹³ Catlin and Miner, evidently unaware of the work of the Grensers about seventeen years earlier, attempted a similar solution to the problems of the bass clarinet. Their attempt was fairly successful, for if surviving examples are an accurate gauge they produced at least as many of these instruments as any European shop.

The accomplishments of these makers are outstanding in American woodwind history for they preceded any other serious double reed and larger clarinet making by more than a century. Beyond this their bass clarinet making adds a new chapter to the early history of this instrument. Although a few American scholars, notably Philip Young, have known of Catlin's bass clarinets for some time, the extent and importance of the Hartford contribution in this field has only recently been recognized.

NOTES

1 Quoted in Rita S. Gottesman, *The Arts and Crafts in New York, 1726-1776*, I, pp. 367-368.

2 Obituary of Jacob Anthony, *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, Philadelphia, 5 January, 1805.

3 *Contributions to the History of Christ Church, Hartford* (Hartford: Belknap & Warfield, 1895), p. 57.

4 Hartford County Deed Records, Volume 26, p. 315.

5 Hartford County Deed Records, Volume 26, p. 506.

6 Advertisement in *The Connecticut Courant*, Hartford, 22 May, 1811.

7 *Contributions to the History of Christ Church, Hartford*, p. 63.

8 Advertisement in the *American Mercury*, Hartford, 20 January, 1803.

9 Advertisement in the *American Mercury*, Hartford, 22 September, 1803.

10 David Lewis Kalina, "The Structural Development of the Bass Clarinet" (unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1972), p. 21.

11 Kalina, pp. 25, 27.

12 Kalina, pp. 5-48.

13 Kalina, pp. 14-27.