

From 1860, Homer was a church organist in New York, serving at the Madison Avenue Baptist Church for nearly 35 years. He was a founder of the American Guild of Organists.

Homer Bartlett's compositions numbered some 250, many unpublished, ranging from a three-act opera, the operetta "Magic Hours," the oratorio "Samuel," the cantata "The Last Chieftain," a symphonic poem "Apollo," to marches for orchestra, some 80 songs and as many piano pieces. Christopher O'Hare of the NY Evening Post reviewed a performance of "Apollo" in the November 11, 1916, paper, in which he described Bartlett as "a musician esteemed for his record as a pianist, organist, conductor; and, moreover, and especially, for his eminent service to the cause of creative musical art." The review concludes with "It should be taken for granted that the performance of the 'Apollo' symphonic poem was only preliminary to its being taken up by the leading orchestras. It is fully worthy of such recognition."

The *Homer Newton Bartlett Concert* at the *Hunt Memorial Dedication* on January 31, 1918, included ten works, all of his composition. He spoke very briefly of the pleasure that was his upon returning to his "home town" after years of absence, and later commended the community's talented musicians and singers. His playing of the Japanese selection "Kyo-no-shiki," which was as yet unpublished, received very hearty applause. It was based upon themes taken from a collection of folklore published in Tokyo and presented to Bartlett by a member of the Japanese embassy.

The *Ellenville Music Club's* gift to Homer Bartlett that evening was a framed photograph of his former home on **Maple Avenue**. The handsome programs (spelled "programmes" in the report of the event) also carried that picture. It is appropriate to note that when Homer lived in the **33 Maple Avenue** house, he scratched his name, "Homer Bartlett, New York" into a windowpane of one of the front windows of the house. According to tradition, the name was inscribed with a diamond in a ring. The windowpane is a treasured part of the collection of the *Ellenville Public Library & Museum*, having been presented to the Museum by Mrs. Mary H. Douglas when she owned the Bartlett house in the 1970s.

Homer Newton Bartlett died in Hoboken, New Jersey, on April 2, 1920, only two years after the *Hunt Memorial Dedication*.

Thanks are due to several people for the interest in Homer Bartlett that has been stimulated in recent months: Irwin Rosenthal has engaged in research on the Internet, seeking recordings of Bartlett's music and information about the availability of sheet music; Vic Zolinsky of Napanoch recently donated to the *Ellenville Public Library & Museum* a framed photograph of Mr. Bartlett, inscribed to the Ellenville Music Club (*the portrait of Bartlett in this article is a close-up from that photo, courtesy of the Library*). Katharine T. Terwilliger stimulated the Museum's interest in Homer when Mrs. Douglas offered the windowpane and frequently mentioned Homer Bartlett as one of Ellenville's early musicians of note. Photocopies of newspaper articles from local and New York City papers provided much of the information used for this article. Research continues and, who knows? Someone reading this column may have a connection or a piece of music or a bit of knowledge that will help correct or expand the body of knowledge collected to date. Comments are welcome, c/o *Wawarsing.Net*.

The picture of Dr. Alice Divine that was added to last month's column was made available originally by Reuben Hull of **Berme Road**. Thank you, Ruby. 



Above: A sheet music cover from the collection of Bartlett piano and vocal music at the Library of Congress; one can find sheet music for over 20 of Bartlett's compositions by clicking on the Bartlett link at: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/smhtml/smessay5.html>
Below: Liner notes for a recording of the opus written in Ellenville by the 17-year-old Bartlett, as quoted in this article.

HOMER NEWTON BARTLETT (1846-1920) *Grande Polka de Concert*

Homer Bartlett was a descendant of Josiah Bartlett, who was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the first governor of New Hampshire. A prodigy, Homer played piano publicly at nine and began composing at ten. After study with a number of important teachers, including Sebastian Bach Mills, he enjoyed a long and distinguished career--including thirty-five years as organist of New York's Madison Avenue Baptist Church--that kept his name and reputation fresh in America's musical periodicals for half a century.

Bartlett presents an extremely interesting case historically, particularly as a stylistic bridge between two wholly different musical eras. The "Grande Polka de Concert (composée par Homer N. Bartlett)" is a worthy essay in the brilliant Gottschalkian ballroom tradition, including the mandatory use of French on its title page. It was published in 1867, when Bartlett was twenty-one. When we compare the "Polka" to Grobe's "United States Grand Waltz," which at first glance seems to belong to the same genre, we readily perceive the great difference between Grobe's showy but perfunctory little display number for home use and Bartlett's polished, musicianly, big-scale virtuoso piece. Even if it does not quite equal Gottschalk's melodic invention, harmonic novelty, and pointed wit, the "Polka" is nonetheless thoroughly captivating, and it must have proved irresistible to a society so enamored of polkas that they appeared regularly in the pages of Godey's *Lady's Book*. It is so characteristic and so successful an example of its type that it comes as a surprise to learn that Bartlett also composed big virtuoso organ works, a symphonic poem based on *The Iliad*, a three-act opera, plus numerous smaller vocal and instrumental works for a total of two hundred and fifty opus numbers. And when we further discover that Bartlett did a series of piano pieces on Japanese themes, we realize that we have left the 1850s behind for the fascinating but less sunny and indeed much less innocent world of James Gibbons Huneker, Lafcadio Hearn, James McNeill Whistler, and Art Nouveau. — Robert Offergeld, page 21

<http://www.composersrecordings.com/linernotes/80257.pdf>