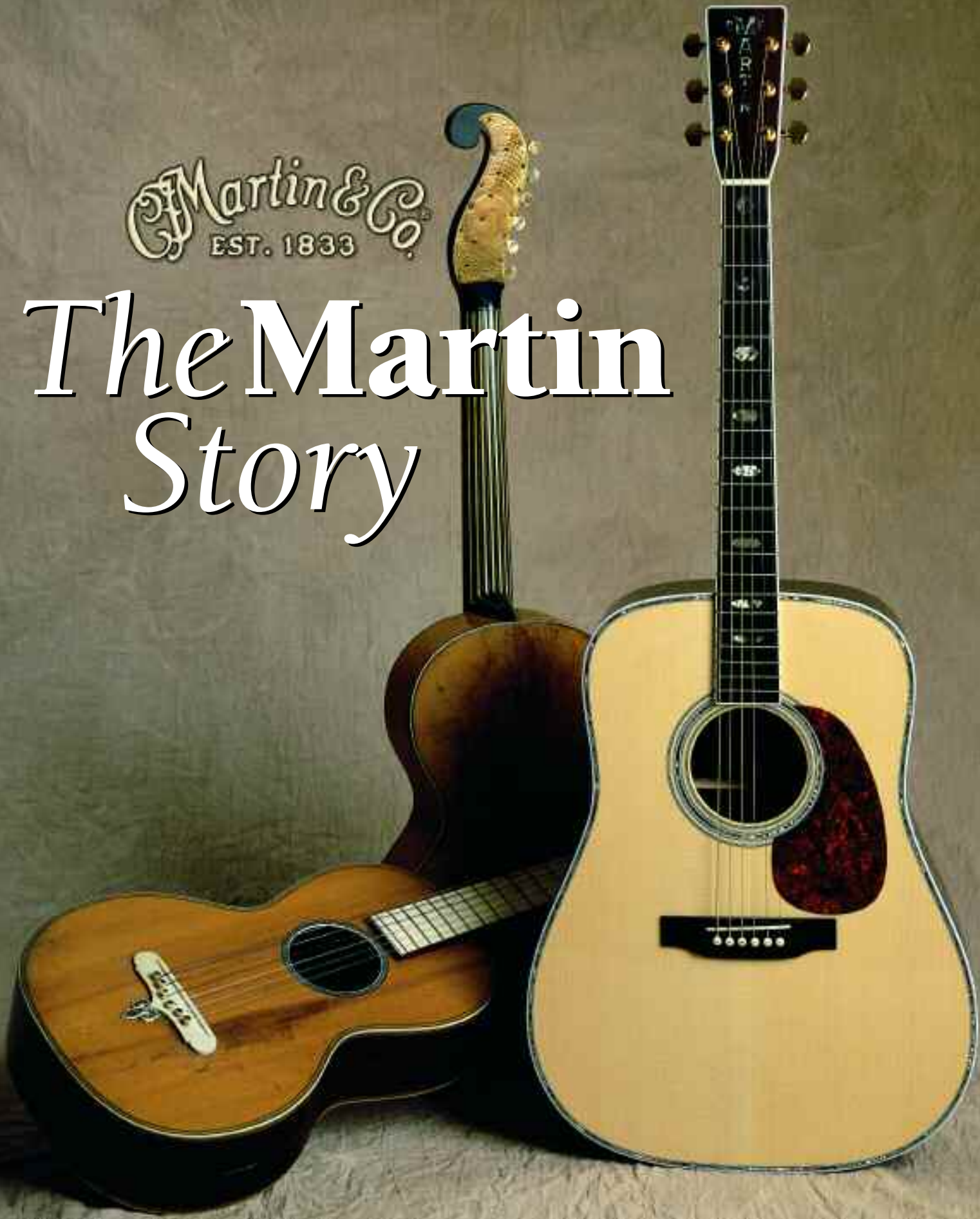


A BRIEF HISTORY OF
THE MARTIN GUITAR COMPANY

Martin & Co.
EST. 1833

The Martin Story



The C.F. Martin Story

FOR WELL OVER A CENTURY AND A HALF, THE MARTIN GUITAR COMPANY has been continuously producing acoustic instruments that are acknowledged to be the finest in the world.

The Martin Guitar Company has, through the years, managed to survive with each succeeding generation from C. F. Martin, Sr.'s Stauffer influenced creations of the 1830s to recent developments introduced by C. F. Martin IV. Continuous operation under family management is a feat bordering on the remarkable, reflecting six generations of dedication to the guitarmaker's craft. In or out of the music industry, C. F. Martin has few rivals for sheer staying power.

Throughout its colorful history, the company has adapted successfully to continual changes in product design, distribution systems and manufacturing methods. In spite of the many changes, C. F. Martin has never veered away from its initial commitment to quality. The concern for producing the finest instruments possible in 1833 is especially in evidence today at Martin's expanded facility in Nazareth, Pennsylvania.

The story behind one of America's most famous guitars began on January 31, 1796, in Markneukirchen, Germany, with the birth of Christian Frederick Martin, Sr. Born into a long line of cabinet makers, Christian Frederick took up the family craft at the early age of 15, when he left his hometown and traveled to Vienna to apprentice with Johann Stauffer, a renowned guitar maker.

FLEEING RESTRICTIVE GUILDS

While records of the period were sketchy, it would appear that the young Martin was a gifted apprentice, as he was named foreman of Stauffer's shop shortly after his arrival. After marrying and bearing a son, he returned to his homeland to set up his own shop.



CHRISTIAN FREDERICK MARTIN, SR.
1796-1873
Founder of C.F. Martin & Co.

Shortly after launching his business in Markneukirchen, Martin found himself caught in an acrimonious dispute between the Cabinet Makers Guild and the Violin Makers Guild.

Martin and his family had long been members of the Cabinet Makers Guild, as had numerous other guitar makers in the area. Looking to limit competition, the Violin Makers Guild sought to prohibit the cabinet makers from producing musical instruments.

Attempting to receive an injunction against the cabinet makers, the Violin Guild launched an abusive rhetorical campaign, declaring, "The violin makers belong to a class of musical instrument makers and therefore to the class of artists whose work not only shows finish, but gives evidence of a certain understanding of cultured taste. The cabinet makers, by contrast, are nothing more than mechanics whose products consist of all kinds of articles known as furniture." Slandering the work of the cabinet makers, the Violin Guild added, "Who is so stupid that he cannot see at a glance that an armchair or a stool is no guitar and such an article appearing among our instruments must look like Saul among the prophets."

In defending their right to manufacture guitars, members of the Cabinet



Frank Henry Martin scroll cut this intricate plaque to inspire his workers. It incorporates the Martin family motto in Latin: "Non Multa Sed Multum" which translates "Not Many But Much" or more commonly "Quality Not Quantity."

C.F. MARTIN & CO. remains one of the longest surviving family owned and operated manufacturers in the world. Six generations of the Martin family are pictured, each dedicated to the company's primary product, their superbly well-crafted acoustic guitars.



CHRISTIAN FREDERICK MARTIN, JR.
1825-1888
Son of Christian Frederick Martin, Sr.



FRANK HENRY MARTIN
1866-1948
Son of Christian Frederick Martin, Jr.

Makers Guild asserted that “violin makers had no vested right in the making of guitars” and that “the discovery of the guitar” had been brought about 35 years ago and had been completed by the cabinet maker Georg Martin, father of Christian Frederick Martin. In supporting their claim before local magistrates, the cabinet makers submitted testimony from a noted wholesaler, who declared, “Christian Frederick Martin, who has studied with the noted violin and guitar maker Stauffer, has produced guitars which in point of quality and appearance leave nothing to be desired and which mark him as a distinguished craftsman.”

While the cabinet makers successfully defended their right to manufacture guitars, the drawn battle took its toll on C. F. Martin. Concluding that the guild system severely limited opportunities in Germany, he made the decision to emigrate to the United States, and on September 9, 1833, he left his homeland for New York City.

On arriving in New York, he quickly set up shop at 196 Hudson Street, on the Lower West Side. Martin’s first establishment on these shores was a far cry from the company’s current 180,000-square-foot factory

staffed by over 600 employees. His modest storefront housed a limited guitar production set-up in the back room, as well as a retail store selling everything from cornets to sheet music.

Given the limited output of guitars and the immaturity of the music market in 1833, distribution of Martin guitars was a haphazard affair in the early years. To augment the sales of his retail store, C. F. Martin entered into

distribution agreements with a variety of teachers, importers, and wholesalers, including C. Bruno & Company (operating today as a subsidiary of Kaman), Henry Schatz, and John Coupa. Consequently, a number of Martin guitars manufactured prior to 1840 are labeled “Martin & Schatz” and “Martin & Coupa.”

GUITARS FOR WINE

Accepted business practices in the early days of Martin’s retail and manufacturing operation were far removed from today’s methods and reflected a simpler society. Barter was common in the retail trade.

C. F. Martin’s personal records contain numerous entries of trading musical merchandise for everything from a case of wine to children’s clothing. New York City’s teeming Lower West Side was a harsh environment that was a world apart from the pastoral Saxony where Martin and his family grew up. Correspondence between Martin and his close friend and business associate, Henry Schatz, revealed that he never



TABLE OF CONTENTS

C.F. MARTIN STORY	2
DREADNOUGHT STORY	10



HERBERT KELLER MARTIN
1895-1927
Brother to Christian Frederick Martin III



CHRISTIAN FREDERICK MARTIN III
1894-1986
Son of Frank Henry Martin



FRANK HERBERT MARTIN
1933-1993
Son of Christian Frederick Martin III



CHRISTIAN FREDERICK MARTIN IV
1955 –
Son of Frank Herbert Martin

felt truly at home in New York and longed to move. In 1836, Schatz moved to the rolling hills of Pennsylvania, purchasing a 55-acre tract near Nazareth. When C. F. Martin's wife paid a visit to Schatz and his family, she developed an instant affinity for the tranquil Pennsylvania countryside. Upon returning to New York, she exerted what must have been considerable influence and prompted her husband to make the big move to Nazareth. Thus, in 1838, Martin sold his retail store to another music dealer by the name of Ludecus & Wolter and purchased an eight-acre tract on the outskirts of Nazareth. He had obviously found what he wanted, for he spent the remainder of his life there.

The following years were a period of significant development for C. F. Martin & Company guitar makers. In addition to products sold by Ludecus & Wolter in New York, company records indicate that numerous shipments were made to the then centers of trade, which were primarily shipping posts and those cities served by the canal system, since the railroad had yet to evolve. Martin's shipping records made frequent mention of sales in Boston, Albany, Philadelphia, Richmond, Petersburg, Nashville, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and New Orleans. Business in the period was obviously satisfactory, for in an advertisement in 1850 the company declared, "C. F. Martin, Guitar Maker, respectfully informs the musical public generally that the great favor bestowed upon him has induced him to enlarge his factory, in order to supply the increasing demand for his instruments."

FROM WORKSHOP TO FACTORY

The early Martin guitars were totally hand-crafted products, made on a one-by-one basis, and there was little standardization. However, there were a few features that were commonly incorporated in most of C. F. Martin's

instruments. Until the mid-1840s, Martin guitars were characterized by a headstock that had all the tuning keys on one side. Martin acquired this design from his teacher in Vienna, Johann Stauffer. The headstock design with all the tuning keys on one side was discontinued by Martin and went unused until Leo Fender resurrected



MARTIN'S NORTH STREET PLANT, as it appeared in the early 1900s. Originally constructed in 1859, the building underwent numerous expansions in the 1920s to accommodate rising mandolin and ukulele demand.



Invented by C. F. Martin, Sr. in the 1850's, the X-bracing pattern yields maximum strength with the least amount of wood, and hence great tone.

the design in 1948 with his Telecaster™ guitar.

Another feature of the early Martin guitars was an adjustable neck. A screw mounted in the back of the heel of the neck was extended into the neck block. At the top of the dovetail (where the neck joins the body) there was a wooden fulcrum about which the neck could pivot up and down. With the strings attached, the neck could be adjusted via a clock key inserted into the heel. While the adjustable neck allowed the player to adjust the playing actions of the guitar, the device was complicated and prone to slipping under full string tension. So gradually, Martin phased out this unique neck adjustment.

The 1850s also witnessed one of C. F. Martin's major design innovations, the "X" bracing system for the guitar top. Still in use in all steel-string Martin guitars today, the bracing system is largely responsible for the distinctive Martin tone, characterized by brilliant treble and powerful bass response.

C. F. Martin, Sr. died on February 16, 1873, leaving to his family and the musical world a fine tradition of guitar making. Succeeding him at the helm of the young company was his son, 48-year-old Christian Frederick, Jr., who was born in Germany. Since relocating from New York City to Nazareth, the Martin Guitar Company had evolved from a one-man operation into a thriving entity employing over a dozen craftsmen. Originally located in the Martin family homestead, Martin guitar operations had expanded to the point where a factory was needed. In 1859, a plant was constructed on the corner of Main and North Streets in Nazareth. Having undergone numerous expansions, the North Street plant is still used today as a warehouse and shipping location for strings and accessories, as well as the site of Guitarmaker's Connection, a retail supply house for instrument making and repair.

TESTING A YOUNG MAN'S CHARACTER

During the years following C. F. Martin, Sr.'s death, the fortunes of the Martin Company rose and fell with the business cycle. Company records, while incomplete, indicate that sales flourished during the Civil War, due in small part to the fact that many guitars were destroyed during the course of the war. A currency crisis following the war caused something of a panic among the populace and dampened Martin's sales. However, by that time, the organization had been built to a level where it could withstand fluctuations in the economy.

In 1888, C. F. Martin, Jr. died unexpectedly, leaving the business in the hands of his 22-year-old son, Frank Henry. Young Frank Martin's abilities as a businessman were put to the test early on in his career, as he took over

a company faced with a severe distribution problem. At the time, C. A. Zoebisch & Sons, a New York-based importing firm, was the sole distributor for Martin guitars.

The primary business of Zoebisch & Sons was the distribution of band and orchestral instruments, and Frank Martin felt that consequently they did not devote sufficient effort to promote the Martin guitar. Martin was also continually aggravated by Zoebisch's reluctance to handle new products, particularly the mandolin.

During the 1890s, with the massive immigration of Italians into the United States, the mandolin (an instrument of Italian origin) became increasingly popular. Frank Martin sensed a great opportunity in this new product; however, Zoebisch steadfastly refused to handle it. Convinced that Zoebisch was impeding the progress of his family's guitar business, Frank Martin decided to terminate the distribution agreement, a large move for a young man with limited experience. Severing ties with Zoebisch was made even more difficult due to a long-standing bond of friendship that had existed between the Martin and Zoebisch families.

Upon assuming distribution of its own products, Martin enjoyed a tremendous boom in the sale of mandolins. In 1898, Frank Martin's personal records indicated that the firm produced 113 mandolins of various styles. Production in the previous year had totaled a mere three units. Given that the company's guitar production for the previous three years had been approximately 220 units per annum, the addition of mandolins to the product line represented significant growth for the company.

In the absence of a distributor, sales of Martin guitars and mandolins were handled by various direct mail adver-

tisements in local newspapers and through the efforts of Frank Martin. On an annual basis, he made extensive sales trips throughout upper New York state and the New England area, where he personally sold the majority of the company's output to music dealers.

EDUCATION INSTEAD OF SALES

The growth of C. F. Martin & Co. was slowed somewhat by Frank Martin's decision to invest in a college education for his two sons, rather than in an expanded sales force for the company. A self-taught scholar who placed a high value on learning, Martin felt that a fine education for his sons would be in the best interests of the company on a long-term basis. Thus, Christian Frederick Martin III enrolled at



THE MANDOLIN gained popularity as immigrants brought European musical styles to the new world. Martin began making mandolins in the Italian bowl-back style as the turn of the century approached.

Princeton University in 1912 and was joined there the following year by his brother, Herbert Keller Martin.

Recalling his father, Christian Frederick III says, "He was a remarkable man. He worked long hours all of his life in the guitar business. Yet, with little formal education, he was extraordinarily well read, with a thorough knowledge of Greek and Latin."

Upon graduation from Princeton in 1916, Christian Frederick III entertained the idea of attending the graduate school of business administration at Harvard University. "I had ambitions at the time of getting away from the family business," he recalls. "But my

brother was still in college and my father needed help managing things, so I came home and went to work making guitars on what I thought would be a part-time basis." What started out as a temporary situation for Christian Frederick evolved into a life-long vocation.

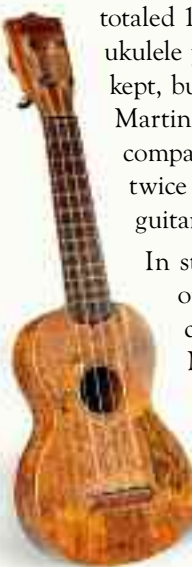
RIDING THE UKULELE BOOM

The 1920s were booming years for the Martin Company, as the ukulele captured the fancy of the American public. The first Martin ukuleles were not well received. They were made much like a guitar, with too much bracing in the body, particularly in the top, which was of spruce. The excessive bracing and the spruce top gave the instruments a dead and lackluster tone that failed to appeal to the buying public.

Recognizing the shortcomings of its initial ukulele design, Martin went to work at producing an acceptable uke. By reducing the amount of bracing and substituting mahogany for spruce, Martin quickly garnered a large share of the ukulele market. The demand for the products was such that Martin was forced to double the capacity of the North Street plant with an additional wing and increase in the work force.

Guitar production in 1920 totaled 1,361 units; records of ukulele production were not kept, but Christian Frederick Martin III estimates that the company turned out nearly twice as many ukuleles as guitars during the '20s.

In structuring the organization of the company, Frank Henry Martin initially envisioned Christian Frederick Martin overseeing manufacturing with Herbert Keller



MARTIN UKULELES gained incredible popularity in the 1920s and '30s. This famous Martin "Konter" ukulele accompanied Admiral Byrd on his first expedition to the North Pole. It is signed by the entire crew as well as Thomas Edison, Charles Lindbergh, President Calvin Coolidge, and many others.

Martin attending to the sales. This division of responsibility worked well until Herbert Keller Martin died unexpectedly after a few days of illness in 1927. With the passing of his brother, Christian Frederick became increasingly involved in company sales efforts, traveling extensively throughout the country.

During the decade of the '20s, sales of C. F. Martin instruments increased every year, and by 1928 annual guitar production stood at 5,215 units, over four times the output of 1920. With the advent of the Great Depression in 1929, national economic hardship forced the Martin family to discard aspirations for increased sales and concentrate on plain survival. With millions out of work and thousands of businesses on the brink of bankruptcy, selling guitars proved increasingly challenging.

Between 1929 and 1931, guitar sales were virtually halved. Responding to the harsh climate, Martin reduced its wage rate and for a time operated on a three-day week. The company also diversified, producing violin parts and even some wooden jewelry, in an effort to keep workmen busy. However, the company never vigorously pursued any of these areas. "We were always afraid that getting into some other business would hurt our guitar business," related C. F. Martin III. He added, "We entered a few other fields during the Depression, not with any enthusiasm, but out of necessity."



Both of the hardcover books pictured above provide a fascinating view of the development and production of the Martin guitar. Dozens of photographs help simplify the identification of Martin instruments and detail virtually every guitar size and style that the company has produced from the early 1830s to the present day.

Striving to stimulate seriously depressed sales, Martin launched an active product development campaign during the Depression. During this period, the company added new designs to the product line, altered existing products, and explored numerous features in hopes of finding a product that would bolster lagging sales. While many of the products conceived during this period had a short life span, two major developments emerged that had a lasting effect on the company: the creation of the now famous "Dreadnought" guitar, and the invention of the 14-fret neck.

MARTIN INNOVATIONS

According to C. F. Martin III, the 14-fret neck was developed in late 1929. Prior to the period, guitars were generally equipped with a 12-fret neck. As the story goes, a renowned plectrum banjoist of the day, Perry Bechtel, suggested to Frank Henry Martin that he make a guitar with a 14-fret neck. Bechtel reasoned that the longer neck would increase the guitar's range and make it a more versatile instrument. Following Bechtel's advice, Martin introduced a guitar with the longer neck and dubbed it an "Orchestra Model."

The 14-fret neck was so well received that Martin eventually extended the feature to all models in its line. In short order, it became the standard design for the American guitar industry.

The Dreadnought guitar, named after a large class of World War I British battleships, has become something of a trademark of the Martin Company. The original Martin Dreadnought models were designed by Frank Martin and Harry Hunt, manager of Chas. H. Ditson Co., a leading music retailer with stores in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. A shrewd judge of the market, Hunt reasoned that a

Dreadnought guitar, with its large body and booming bass, would be ideal for accompanying vocals. The first Dreadnoughts, introduced in 1916, were sold under the brand name of "Oliver Ditson & Co., Boston, New York." At first the instruments were not very well received simply because there were not many singers using guitars, and solo players felt that the bass on the Dreadnought was overbearing. However, as folk singing became increasingly popular, sales of the Dreadnought picked up. The Ditson Company went out of business in the late 1920s, and in 1931 Martin incorporated the Dreadnought into its line of guitars. Today, the model is a dominant factor in the Martin line, and virtually every maker of acoustic guitars, both domestic and foreign, has



The demand for Martin instruments was peaking during the folk boom of the '60s. To keep up with demand, Martin constructed the **SYCAMORE STREET FACILITY** in 1964.

introduced a version of this original Martin design.

AN ERA OF PROSPERITY

Frank Henry Martin died at the age of 81 in 1948, and C. F. Martin III assumed the presidency of the company, which continued to enjoy worldwide recognition for its guitars of uncompromising quality. Post-war prosperity, coupled with a growing interest in guitars and folk music, made the years 1948-1970 an unprecedented era of growth for C. F. Martin. Demand for Martin guitars increased at a far greater pace than did production capacity, and thus by the early '60s the company was back-ordered as much as

three years. While some might have felt that Martin's back-order situation was enviable, C. F. Martin III recounted that it was a frustrating time. "When someone walks into a music store with several hundred dollars and asks for a Martin guitar, he wants it then, not three years later. Our lack of production capacity at the time cost us sales and strained our relationships with our dealer family."

Thus, C. F. Martin III, with the aid of his son, Frank Herbert Martin, who joined the company in 1955, made the major decision to build a new larger plant. In 1964 the North Street plant, with its multi-story construction and numerous additions, was no longer adequate to service the demand for the company's product. "The North Street plant was not the best production facility, but running up and down four flights of stairs constantly every day probably contributed to the longevity of Martin family members," quipped C. F. Martin III.

Production methods at the new Sycamore Street Martin plant have evolved slightly from methods used at North Street. Hand craftsmanship was and remains the trademark of the Martin guitar. However, with the building's efficient one-story layout, Martin has been able to improve the flow of materials and work in progress and thus gradually increase output without sacrificing quality.

Under the direction of Frank Herbert Martin, who succeeded his father, C. F. Martin III, as president in 1970, Martin began a period of acquisition. In 1970, the company purchased the renowned Vega Banjo Works of Boston. Months later, it acquired the Fibes Drum Company, makers of a unique fiberglass drum. The year 1970 brought still another acquisition, that of the Darco String Company, owned by John D'Addario, Sr., John D'Addario, Jr., and James D'Addario. Another addition in the early '70s was the A. B. Herman Carlson Levin Company of Sweden. Levin made a variety of classic guitars as well as the steel string type. In subsequent years, Vega, Levin and

Fibes were spun off; however, the manufacture of Martin and Darco strings remains an integral part of the company.

THE SIXTH GENERATION

Christian Frederick Martin IV was born on July 8, 1955. He then attended U.C.L.A., majoring in Economics. In his free time, he helped in the guitar repair shop of Westwood Music in West Los Angeles, and this also gave him a valuable insight into the retail end of the music business.

When Chris was small, he helped box strings, 6 to a box. In 1972 and 1973 he became more active in the business, helping in the office and attending the NAMM Trade Show in Chicago. He also worked in the machine room cutting out guitar neck blanks on the bandsaw.



MARTIN'S LIMITED EDITION guitar program was expanded to include signature models of significant artists like Gene Autry (top), Eric Clapton (center) and Johnny Cash (bottom), as well as many, many others.



THE BACKPACKER GUITAR, introduced in 1993, was the first guitar to venture into outer space aboard NASA's Columbia space shuttle. The Backpacker also made it to the summit of Mount Everest and to both the North and South Poles.

During the summer of 1973, Chris spent his time learning every operation and assisting with the construction of a D-28S guitar. This and his apprenticeship in the shop, was an invaluable experience when he took his place in the family business.

Chris joined the Martin Guitar Company full time after his graduation from Boston University in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the School of Management. Chris worked in many departments, learning how the business functioned from the bottom up. In 1985 he was appointed Vice President of Marketing, and he took an active role in the day-to-day challenge of running a traditional business in a modern world.

After the death of his grandfather, C. F. Martin III, on June 15, 1986, C. F. Martin IV was appointed Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, indicating his responsibility for leading Martin into the next century.

Under Chris's management, the Sycamore Street facility was expanded, the successful Backpacker travel guitar was introduced, and the limited edition guitar program was expanded to include signature models of significant artists like Gene Autry, Eric Clapton,

RIBBON LINING.

It takes cedar ribbons and a lot of clothespins and skill for this important step in the building of a Martin guitar.

Our expert craftsperson is gluing a Spanish cedar "ribbon" to the bottom rim of the sides. Ribbon gives support to the sides and provides a perfect gluing edge to attach the top and back. We notch the ribbon into waves of connected 1/4" segments so it's flexible enough to take the tightest curves and strong enough to maintain a solid connection.



NECK FITTING.

Tight dovetailing calls for sure hand-craftsmanship.

Here a woodworker individually "rough fits" the dovetailed base of the neck to the slot in the body so they slip together perfectly. Once he's satisfied, he stamps on the neck the same last three digits of the serial number already stamped on the body he matched up. The two parts go their separate ways and are reunited when the final neckfitter makes any necessary last adjustments before he or she glues and clamps them together permanently.



NECK SHAPING.

One of the oldest forms of craftsmanship lives side by side with the most modern technology in the making of Martin guitars. Every step requires the steady hands, sharp eyes and seasoned skill of our workers. This Martin craftsman is shaping a neck with a drawknife. Once satisfied, he'll smooth-shape it using the rasp, scapers and fine sandpaper before it's stained and polished and carefully fitted into place.



BRACING.

Our famous X-bracing designed and perfected by C.F.Martin, Sr. in the 1850s adds structural integrity and brings out our identifiable tone. Special Martin models are "scalloped braced" by hand, which allows the top to maintain strength yet vibrate even more and sound louder.



FINAL NECK FITTING.

After the lacquering process is complete and the finish has been polished, the neck and body must be matched up for a final fit to insure a perfect seam; when it is correct, it is glued and clamped.



and Marty Stuart as well as unique collaborations like the 1996 "MTV Unplugged" MTV-1 guitar. Perhaps the boldest new direction that Chris took was the development and introduction of the patented "1 Series" guitars, which thoroughly re-examined the way guitars are designed and constructed. Through the use of innovative processes combined with computer-aided manufacturing, the "1 Series" models offer an affordable acoustic guitar without compromise of tone or craftsmanship.

The Martin Guitar Company is thriving under the direction of Chris, whose management style is friendly and personal, yet firm and direct. Chris travels extensively world-wide in order to stay abreast of market trends and to do instructional clinics at Martin dealerships around the world.

ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS

C. F. Martin formalized its long-standing ecological policy in 1990. This program embraced the judicious

and responsible use of traditional natural materials and encouraged the introduction of sustainable-yield, alternative wood species. Martin's consumer focus group research has led to the introduction and widespread acceptance of guitars utilizing structurally sound woods with natural cosmetic characteristics formerly considered unacceptable. Martin has also developed numerous sustainable-yield, alternative wood guitars for industry-wide exhibitions intended to educate our consumers and provide

SIDE BENDING.

Careful on those curves. That's how our highly skilled workers are as they negotiate the curves they form for the sides of many of our Martin models. First the craftsman sprays the wood lightly with water, then he gently works each side on the special heated iron until he achieves the desired shape.



PEARL INLAY.

Abalone pieces are intricately inlaid around the top, and on the style 45, the sides and back as well. Each piece of pearl needs to be checked, filed and fit perfectly end to end, and entirely by hand.

Be our guest on a
Factory Tour
at 1:00 P.M. workdays.
For more information
call 800-633-2060
or visit our website at
www.martinguitar.com

BINDING.

The bindings are installed by hand and are wrapped with a cloth webbing until the glue is dried. The wrap procedure has been used for hundreds of years on bound instruments.



FINAL INSPECTION.

After each guitar is complete and has been strung, it is thoroughly inspected. If our final inspector is satisfied, the guitar will go through a "settling-in" period before a final check to make sure it looks, feels and plays like a Martin—and off it will go to a patiently waiting Martin player.



THE FINISH.

Martin's finish is considered one of the finest wood finishes available. Here our polishing craftsman uses a cloth with special polishing compound to put the finishing touch on a Custom D-45. All areas of the guitar receive special attention during the polishing process.



direction for the company and industry. The company recognizes CITES as the governing authority on endangered species and closely follows their directives.

CONTINUING ADHERENCE TO PRINCIPLES

Martin's steadfast adherence to high standards of musical excellence, mixed with experienced management, has largely accounted for the company's remarkable longevity. Marketing methods and product mix have changed at Martin over the

years, but the company attitude toward guitar building has never varied. In the preface to the 1904 catalog, Frank Henry Martin explained to potential customers, "How to build a guitar to give this tone is not a secret. It takes care and patience. Care in selecting the material, laying out the proportions, and attending to the details which add to the player's comfort. Patience in giving the necessary time to finish every part. A good guitar cannot be built for the price of a poor one, but who regrets

the extra cost for a good guitar?" Almost eighty years have passed since Frank Henry Martin authored this statement of policy, but it still is an accurate expression of Martin's ongoing commitment to quality. ❖

The **C. F. Martin Story** is adapted from a story that originally appeared in **The Music Trades**, March 1993. Updated and used with permission, May 2006.

The Dreadnought Story

Martin® guitars and
Rolls Royce® automobiles,
Steinway® pianos,
Baccarat® crystal.

HIGH-FALUTIN COMPARISONS, to be sure; but few acoustic musicians can hear the name “C. F. Martin” without instantly linking it to some mental image that stands for enduring quality. Since 1833, the Martin Guitar Company has provided instruments of consistently high caliber to virtually a world-wide market. Among musicians there is a standing joke about being able to communicate in any language as long as you say, “Martin guitar.”

What is it that has created the interest and demand for the musical products from this small, privately held company in Nazareth, Pennsylvania? Although some would point to various technical features or famed models, it's probably best expressed in terms of family tradition

and longevity, and a reputation that borders on legend. No manufacturer ever has an unblemished record of creativity, value, and service, but Martin's has been so good for so long that one would almost think Christian Frederick Martin built his first guitar with wood from George Washington's cherry tree.

**Among the great variety
of instruments the
Martin Company makes,
it's safe to say that none has
enjoyed more popularity than
their line of Dreadnought or
D-size guitars.**

The “hand crafting” image that is part of the aura goes along with Martin's limited production. The company's current output does not exactly qualify for Fortune 500 status.

Among the great variety of instruments the Martin Company makes, it's safe to say that none has enjoyed more popularity than their line of Dreadnoughts or D-size guitars. Currently regarded as the standard acoustic guitar, the Dreadnought once was viewed in less favorable light primarily because it was so large in comparison to other guitars of the day.

The deep bass response of a D-28 was a very unusual feature to musicians used to the clear treble and overall balance of smaller “standard size” instruments. However, when the Dreadnought made its way into the hands of country music performers, it found an appreciative audience – it was just the item for backing up vocals, fiddles, and banjos in lieu of a bass instrument. A look through Mike Longworth's book, **Martin Guitars: A History**, shows that the Dreadnought's gain in popularity has been steady since its introduction. Today the Dreadnought is ubiquitous, found in every style of acoustic music, and accounts for approximately 80 percent of Martin's yearly production.



FROM THE BEGINNING

The very first Dreadnought guitars (named for a class of World War I-era British battleships, “Dreadnought”) were manufactured by Martin for the Oliver Ditson Company, a publishing firm based in Boston. Curiously enough, the guitars weren’t sold with the Martin name on them, but rather were marketed in Boston and New York under the Oliver Ditson brand name, beginning in 1916. These Dreadnoughts did not even include a Martin serial number, but instead used Ditson’s own serial numbering system. They continued to appear in the Ditson catalog until the company’s demise in the late 1920s.

The Ditson Dreadnoughts were quite different in appearance from their modern offspring: The bodies were elongated to accommodate a wide, 12-fret neck (12 frets clear of the body) with a slotted peghead. The early Ditsons also had a different soundhole rosette and inlay pattern, and had no pickguard. All of the Ditsons had mahogany backs and sides and spruce tops, like a modern D-18.

In 1931 the Martin Company began producing Dreadnought guitars that carried the Martin name. Two models designated D-1 and D-2 made their debut. The D-1, like the earlier Ditsons, was a mahogany body instrument, destined to become the D-18. With the D-2 (four were made in 1931) Martin introduced what may

National Maritime Museum London



THE DREADNOUGHT GUITAR. In the late 1920s, F. H. Martin enlisted the advice of Harry Hunt of the Oliver Ditson Company in the development of the Dreadnought body shape, named after a large class of World War I British battleships.

still be the most popular style of steel-string guitar, the rosewood body Dreadnought. All of Martin’s early Dreadnoughts had the 12-fret neck of the Ditson design. It wasn’t until 1934 that D-28s and D-18s officially were offered with the 14-fret neck most consider standard today.

How else did Martin’s early Dreadnoughts differ from today’s version? The early D-18 was similar in appearance to its modern counterpart, with one exception: Ebony was the standard material for bridges and fretboards, rather than the rosewood used now. Like all style 28 guitars preceding

it, the early D-28 had a strip of marquetry (with a distinctive “herringbone” pattern) running around the top. This decoration led to the current designation, “herringbone D-28” which one hears reverently discussed among Martin fanciers. (It is basically the same instrument as today’s HD-28.) In addition, bisecting the back was a “zipper” decoration strip of purfling, which is different in appearance than that found on modern D-28s.

The herringbone purfling was discontinued on style 28 guitars in 1947, due to a matter of history and economics: The purfling was manufactured in pre-World War II Germany and was not replaceable from American sources. When the stockpile ran out, D-28s (and all style 28 guitars) were subsequently treated to a new decoration scheme of alternating black and white celluloid originally used on the Martin arch-top C-2 model. Only one herringbone



The **HD-28**, introduced in 1976, represents the recreation of Martin’s legendary “herringbone” D-28 guitars built from roughly 1933 to 1946. Herringbone refers to the delicate wooden inlay that trims the perimeter of the soundboard.



BABY DITSON D-45. Four of these small guitars were made circa 1919. They were ordered by the Oliver Ditson store in New York City. It was this unusual shallow waisted shape that inspired the larger bodied Dreadnought body design.

D-28 was made in 1947.

What the company regarded as a minor change still has economic repercussions on the guitar market – a '46 D-28 (herringbone) is bound to sell for more than a '47 D-28 (non-herringbone), even though they are structurally and functionally identical guitars.

Certainly the tremendous interest in prewar Dreadnoughts isn't predicated on the existence of a decorative strip of wood alone, is it? Well, no – and yes. If we could peek inside a 1943 D-28 (for that matter, a '43 D-18 or any 1943 Martin steel-string guitar), we'd notice what amounts to the most significant difference between pre-1945 and 1945 production guitars: the overall shape of the cross braces and lower braces attached to the guitar's top.

The pre-1945 braces have a scooped or "scalloped" profile, making them lighter in mass. Functionally this means a more flexible vibrating surface (the top) and provides stronger bass response. (It has long been assumed that the switch from the old style scalloped braces occurred at the beginning of 1945. According to Longworth, the change occurred in very late 1944, with 12 D-28s and 26 D-18s produced with the new heavier top braces that year. For convenience, the date 1945 will be used in this article.)

And now for the "yes" part of the answer. The discrepancy between the change to heavier top braces and from herringbone produces an overlap of two-plus years. Simply stated, a '46 herringbone D-28 has more in common structurally with a non-herringbone '47 than it does with prewar and wartime vintage herringbone Dreadnoughts. The '45 Dreadnoughts used Adirondack spruce for the tops, and their braces were not scalloped. The '46s are non-scalloped with a Sitka top. Incidentally, there were just 1,451 D-28s and 3,753 D-18s manufactured before the change in braces, so finding one for sale may be a little difficult.

Why did the Martin Company change from the "scalloped" braces to heavier braces? The answer is not in the guitar at all, but in the strings.

Many guitarists of that time were using heavy-gauge strings on their instruments. These heavy strings were tough on the lightly constructed Martin guitars, especially on the Dreadnought with its long 25.4" scale. Quite simply, the Martin Company wasn't interested in making a much heavier guitar to withstand the extra string tension, so they compensated by adding some rigidity to the braces supporting the top.

As the Dreadnought developed in the early years, there were a few other



GENE AUTRY with the very first D-45 ever made. This ornate model, with a 12-fret neck, was special ordered for Gene by Chicago Musical Instruments on March 23, 1933.

minor changes—which have kept Martin fans arguing for decades. One was the actual location of the cross braces on the top. In the early production years, the braces were positioned closer to the soundhole, with the result being a top that flexed in a slightly different manner. There are a number of guitarists who consider these "high X-brace" instruments to be Martin's greatest achievement; others find the difference minimal. The entire bracing pattern was moved away from the soundhole, according to Longworth, in the late 1930s to strengthen the top.

Due to a shortage of metal during World War II, the Martin Company discontinued the use of a steel reinforcing bar (T cross-section) in the neck. They replaced it with a similarly shaped piece of ebony. Their earlier

ebony-bar design had been replaced by the steel T-bar in late 1934.

The ebony-bar guitars are quite a bit lighter than their earlier and later counterparts, and more prone to neck-angle problems. After the war, the steel T-bar found its way back into production, only to be replaced in 1967 by a square steel tube. In 1985 (decades after some other manufacturers had initiated its use), the Martin Company introduced the first adjustable reinforcing (truss) rod in its history.

THE FIRST D-45

In 1933 cowboy star and country singer Gene Autry came up with a special project. Autry wanted a guitar similar in appearance to his idol Jimmie Rodgers' 000-45, but in the new large body style. The Martin Company complied, and the first and perhaps most famous D-45, #53177, was born, complete with Autry's name in pearl script on the fretboard.



JIMMIE RODGERS, the father of country music, with his famous "Blue Yodel" Martin 000-45. C. F. Martin III personally delivered this guitar to Jimmie Rodgers in Washington, D.C. on July 27, 1928.

Like all early Dreadnoughts, the first D-45 had the elongated body and 12-fret neck. As you can imagine, with all of the abalone pearl body decoration, the guitar proved to be expensive to make, costing a whopping \$200.00 in the middle of the Depression.

Although the D-45 was not cataloged until 1938, five more were built between 1933 and its official introduction, including two other 12-fret versions. The guitar built for Autry had a

“torch” inlay pattern on the peghead; subsequent D-45s had the familiar “C. F. Martin” block letter logo. In 1939, the fretboard inlay pattern was changed from the traditional style 45 “snowflakes” to new “modern” solid hexagons.

The Martin Company had produced 91 D-45s by the time the guitar was [temporarily] discontinued in 1942. Except for the 1936 D-45 (which had a 5/8” wider body and three different 12-fret “S” designs), all of these guitars were structurally identical to the other pre-1945 Dreadnoughts.

MID-’40S TO THE MID-’60S

Following this rather active period of development (1931-1947), the D-18 and D-28 remained virtually unchanged for the next 20 years. There were other changes, however, which produced a pair of new Dreadnoughts and the reissue of a third.

In 1954, the Martin Company again started building Dreadnoughts with the elongated body and 12-fret neck, on a very limited basis. Designated with an “S” after the model number, the first few D-28S guitars were strictly special products.

The E. U. Wurlitzer Music Company of Boston ordered a few of these S-body guitars in 1962 to be sold only through their stores. The resulting D-28S proved to be popular enough that, in 1968, Martin added it (and the D-18S and D-35S) to its regular line. Versions of all three models are featured in the Martin “Vintage Series.” According to Longworth, the factory has always given credit to Peter Yarrow (of the folk trio Peter, Paul & Mary) for popularizing the D-28S.

In 1956, a new rosewood-bodied Dreadnought, the D-21, made its first public appearance (six samples had been built in 1955). The D-21, like the D-18 and the D-28, was the Dreadnought version of an existing model (style 21).

The D-21 had the same rosewood body as a D-28, but in

other features was more like a D-18: tortoiseshell-colored body binding and a rosewood fretboard and bridge.

Until the mid-’60s, Martin had always purchased rosewood in log (or “timber”) form in Brazil. The wood was then resawn in the U.S. to Martin’s specifications. The Brazilian government placed an embargo on timber shipments, demanding instead that the logs be resawn in Brazil. This situation proved completely unsatisfactory for the Martin Company, and it began importing rosewood from India.

The effects of Martin’s decision to change to Indian rosewood occurred in stages. First, in 1965, was the introduction of a Dreadnought which allowed Martin to utilize a narrower section of wood than normally used in a D-size guitar: the three-piece back D-35. It was a brand new style, complete with fancier celluloid trim around the body, and binding on the sides of the fretboard. Unlike the D-21, the D-35 was a major success.

THE TUMULTUOUS MID-’60S

After the introduction of the D-35, Martin was faced with a dwindling supply of Brazilian rosewood and a quickly growing guitar market — folk music was booming. The newly imported Indian rosewood required more seasoning before it could be used. Consequently, Martin began cutting their remaining Brazilian rosewood logs differently to obtain more usable wood out of each log. By late 1969, the change to Indian rosewood was complete, with D-21 #254498 having the distinction of being the first official Indian rosewood guitar.

The changes didn’t stop there. Other familiar features disappeared as well. In 1967 the tortoiseshell-colored, nitrate-base plastic, which was used as body binding on D-18s, D-21s, and for pickguards on all Dreadnoughts, was replaced with a black, acetate-base plastic that was a considerably more stable material to use and store. The familiar ivory-colored (ivoroid) binding



D-18
“Standard Series” model

D-35
“Standard Series” model

D-45
“Standard Series” model

on D-28s and D-35s similarly was replaced with a newer, more stable material called Boltaron®.

Another change (albeit inadvertent) was the rounding of the top edges of the mid-'60s Martin pegheads. According to Longworth, who heard the story directly from C. F. Martin III, the original wood peghead template had become so worn from use that the square corners became rounded. Eventually a new metal template was made, and the peghead edges once again were square.

A more serious change occurred on April 9, 1968. On that date the Martin Company began using rosewood instead of maple for the bridge plate, the small piece of reinforcing wood glued to the inside surface of the top, directly under the bridge. Martin also enlarged the bridge plate.

As in the case of heavier braces two decades earlier, the problem of structural stability had been raised. To Martin, a larger, heavier bridge plate seemed to be the answer. If one had to point to a single, indisputable, qualifiable difference between Martin guitars made before and after this period, it would not be in the types of rosewood used in the bodies, the color of the plastics, the shape of the peghead, or any number of other visible components, but rather a seemingly innocuous piece of wood inside the guitar.

It is interesting to note that during the mid-1980s, Martin began to restore many of the vintage "pre-war" features to its entire line, including scalloped braces and smaller maple bridgeplates.

THE BIG GUITAR BOOM

The late 1960s may have witnessed the end of one era for the Martin Company, but their last few products of that decade ushered in the ensuing "high production '70s" with a surprise. In 1968, after 26 years, the famous D-45 surfaced again. Martin Historian Mike Longworth deserves more than a little credit for reintroducing this product.

When Longworth went to work for the Martin Company, he brought with him the knowledge of how to do the

pearl work necessary for the fanciest production Martin guitar. Working on his own, Longworth actually "converted" several D-28s by retrofitting them with all of the pearl bordering found on the old D-45s. This was no attempt to deceive, but flattery of the highest regard. 230 D-45s were made with Brazilian rosewood in the late '60s before the switch to Indian rosewood.

A totally new model was introduced in 1969 to fill the gap between the D-35 and the new D-45: the D-41. This instrument featured pearl borders around the top only, as opposed to the all-encompassing borders on the more expensive D-45. Thirty-one D-41s, starting with #252014, were made with Brazilian rosewood; all the rest are constructed of Indian rosewood.

With the tremendous interest in acoustic guitars in the early 1970s (which coincided exactly with the new "soft-rock" era of James Taylor, Loggins & Messina, and Seals & Crofts), the Martin company increased production to an unprecedented rate. As a comparison, in 1961 the company made 507 D-28s; in 1971 the total was 5,466. The company offered five different Dreadnoughts (as well as numerous smaller-sized guitars) to a market that seemed to grow every month.

To meet the ever-increasing demand, Martin chose to build up its staff rather than change production procedures, which still primarily required hand work. Martin reached its peak production in 1971, but didn't hit its peak Dreadnought production years until 1974 and 1975. Over 30,000 Dreadnoughts were produced in this two year period. (1974: 3,811 D-18s; 5077 D-28s; 6,184 D-35s; 506 D-41s; 157 D-45s. 1975: 3,069 D-18s; 4,996 D-28s; 6,260 D-35s; 452 D-41s; and 192 D-45s [does not include "S" models].)

OTHER MODELS

As a result of the phenomenal growth in acoustic guitar sales during this period and the subsequent slowdown, the Martin Company began an aggressive research and development

phase which brought no fewer than nine new Dreadnought models into production by 1980. It's difficult to single out one model for consideration, but the HD-28 represented an interesting glimpse back, while all of the rest were new ideas.

Introduced in 1976, the HD-28 was a conscious effort to remake a guitar from the past—the prewar herringbone D-28. Like the early Dreadnoughts, it featured scalloped top braces, a small maple bridge plate, and herringbone marquetry around the top. This bow to the past has proven to be a very popular model. After the success of the HD-28, the HD-35 (a D-35 with scalloped braces, maple bridge plate, and herringbone trim) was introduced in 1978.

A singular effort was the Bicentennial commemorative D-76, featuring a three-piece back, style 28 body trim, pearl stars in the fingerboard, a pearl eagle in the peghead, and two herringbone back strips. It had a limited production of 1,976 guitars (plus an additional 98 employee instruments). The D-76, which began production in 1975, was not a hot seller; it didn't sell out until 1978.

Yet another eye-catching series of guitars was produced, made out of Hawaiian koa wood. This was not the first time the Martin Company used this tropical hardwood, but these were the first Dreadnoughts using koa. Two basic styles came in two optional models each. The D-25K had a spruce top, two-piece koa back and sides, rosewood fretboard and bridge, and black binding; the optional koa top changed the designation to D-25K2. The D-37K came with figured two-piece koa back and sides, spruce top, ebony fretboard and bridge, white binding, and fancier inlay; the koa top option was the D-37K2.

Two other instruments were introduced to fit between the D-18 and the D-28. The D-19 was a D-18 with a stained top (brown to match the sides and back). It was followed by the D-19M which was a D-18 with a mahogany top.

APPROACHING 2000 & BEYOND

Now, as the company approaches the next century, after nearly 70 years of constant production, the Martin Dreadnought guitar is available in the standard production models, in an assortment of vintage inspired recreations, in the newly patented, economically priced “1 Series” and “16 Series” models, in the occasional “Limited Edition,” or even as a customized “dream guitar.”

The Limited Edition Dreadnoughts have taken a variety of forms. Martin has released historically accurate reproductions of mid-’30s D-28s—complete with “high X-braces,” Brazilian rosewood, V-shaped neck, tortoiseshell colored pickguard, “ivoroid” binding, and all the other features found on a normal HD-28. The company also has experimented with materials new to them, like maple, as in the Limited Edition D-62.

Other one-time offerings have included a relatively inexpensive koa

Dreadnought, followed soon after by a string of the fanciest Martin Dreadnoughts ever seen. The 1987 D-45LE with a price tag of \$7,500 was designed by C. F. Martin IV, current Chairman and CEO of the company. This model set the stage for future D-45 Deluxe models, including two C. F. Martin, Sr. Commemorative 1996 editions which featured pearl borders nearly everywhere, specially selected rosewood, period inlays and gold tuning machines. In 1994, Martin issued a recreation of Gene Autry’s famous 12-fret D-45 which bore a retail price of \$23,000. A 1996 collaboration with “MTV Unplugged” yielded a highly unusual Dreadnought that mixed both rosewood and mahogany tonewoods with MTV conceived inlay patterns.

One drawback of some Limited Edition instruments is that at times they are available on such a limited basis that potential customers aren’t even aware of their existence until it’s too late.

At the same time, a customer has the ultimate freedom of designing his or her own “limited edition” guitar. Martin’s customized Dreadnoughts are not really a new option—in 1934, singer Tex Fletcher special-ordered the only D-42 ever made, a left-handed instrument. But since 1983, Martin has solicited custom work on a regular basis.

With all these options, and the quickly changing Martin offerings, this is an exciting and occasionally confusing time for Martin fans. But like quality automobiles and fine pianos, Martin Dreadnoughts, new and old, continue to command considerable respect and likely will for many years to come. ❖

The **Dreadnought Story** is adapted from a story that originally appeared in **Frets Magazine**, May 1988. Used with permission.



DM
“Road Series” model

D-1
“1 Series” model

D-16GT
“16 Series” model

HD-28V
“Vintage Series” model

Milestones for a musical legend— Highlights of the Martin story

1796 Christian Frederick Martin is born on January 31, 1796 in Markneukirchen, Germany.

Early 1820s C.F. Martin learns guitar building in Vienna from famed guitar maker Johann Stauffer. (Violin virtuoso Paganini played a Stauffer guitar and composed music on it and for it.) C.F. Martin weds Ottilie Lucia Kühle, harpist and daughter of another well-known Viennese guitar maker, Karl Kühle.

1825 C.F. Martin Jr. is born in Vienna on October 2, and so is the Martin legacy.

1833 C.F. Martin Sr. leaves Germany with his family and sets up his own guitar shop in New York City. He brings the Stauffer headstock to America.

1839 C.F. Martin Sr. moves family and business to Nazareth, Pennsylvania.

1840s He creates and perfects X-bracing to give strength to the guitar top, so it can better hold up under the pressure of taut strings and heavy playing without killing the tone. Today C.F. Martin's X-bracing still proves to be the best method and is imitated by luthiers the world over.

1850s C.F. Martin introduces O model.

1866 Frank Henry Martin is born to Lucinda and C.F. Martin Jr.

1873 C.F. Martin Sr. dies, and C.F. Jr. takes firm command. • Sales records of the 00 guitar start to appear on the books.

1887 C.F. Martin Jr. builds the first addition to the North Street factory.

1888 C.F. Martin Jr. dies. His 22-year-old son Frank Henry Martin takes over.

1890s The mandolin craze hits America, and Martin begins production.

1894 Christian Frederick Martin III is born on September 9. A year later his brother, Herbert Keller Martin, arrives.

1902 Frank Henry Martin introduces the size 000, the biggest Martin so far, to compete with mandolins and banjos. • We design our first Style 45 guitar.

1916 The ukulele boom begins. Martin uke production takes off. • We design and build for Oliver Ditson Co. of Boston and New York the first "Dreadnought," named in honor of a huge battleship of the day.

1917 We build our first steel-string Hawaiian guitars, played with a steel bar. Martin Hawaiian guitar sales soar.

1918 Martin discontinues use of elephant ivory, instead uses celluloid ("ivoroid").

1922 We introduce our first line of guitars made to accept steel strings.

1928 We make the "Blue Yodel" 000-45 for America's favorite entertainer, Jimmie Rodgers, "The Singing Brakeman."

1929 Martin modifies the 000 (or Orchestra model) to accommodate 14 frets clear of the body, instead of 12, for star banjo player Perry Bechtel who wants to go from the 15-fret plectrum banjo to the guitar. Later named the OM-28, it is the first regular Martin guitar specifically designed for steel strings, and it proves so popular that other guitar makers copy it. It becomes the industry standard.

1931 The Ditson Co. is sold. We bring out the Dreadnought on our own with the D-18 and D-28. Other makers begin to borrow the design—and even the name.

1933 Frank Herbert Martin, son of C.F. Martin III, is born. • We create the first D-45 for cowboy star Gene Autry—#53177.

1940s Country music starts to sweep the land. Big country stars show up on stage with Martins, including Hank Williams, Ernest Tubb, Lester Flatt and Hank Snow.

1945 C.F. Martin III takes the helm.

1948 Frank Henry Martin passes away.

1950s Folk music captures America and folkie artists appear on stage, TV and their album covers playing Martins. Among them: The Weavers, Josh White, The Kingston Trio, Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary, and Woody Guthrie. • Elvis Presley erupts in the music world, almost always playing his D-28, and records all of his famous Sun sessions with a Martin.

1955 Frank Herbert Martin joins the company. • His son, C.F. "Chris" Martin IV, is born July 8, 1955.

1964 We move to our new Sycamore Street factory.

1968 Martin brings back the famed D-45 guitar with its now highly prized pearl-decorated look, to applause from the many players long craving to own one.

1969 We discontinue hard-to-obtain Brazilian rosewood for stock models and replace it with rosewood from East India.

1971 Frank Herbert Martin becomes president. C.F. Martin III remains chairman.

1979 We open the doors of our Custom Shop. Now Martin players can design the guitars of their dreams. In 1980 Neiman-Marcus in their Christmas catalog features their own gold-laden D-45 Custom, three times the price of the standard version.

1984 We start our "Limited Edition" and "Special Edition" programs as "Guitars of the Month" to an eager reception. First offerings include the now-coveted 00-18V.

1986 C.F. Martin III passes away. Chris Martin—C.F. IV—takes leadership.

1990 Martin Guitar celebrates the completion of guitar #500,000, an HD-28 signed by all employees and now proudly on display in our factory museum.

1991 We bring out the compact Backpacker travel guitar.

1993 We introduce the D-1 with A-frame bracing. • Frank Herbert Martin dies.

1994 The crew of the Columbia Space Shuttle STS-62 packs a Backpacker on its orbit around the earth. • We launch the "Signature Series" with a reissue of Gene Autry's trail-blazing D-45.

1995 Martin introduces the Eric Clapton "Signature" 000-42EC. • We add 18,000 sq. ft. for strings at our Nazareth factory.

1996 With the HD-28V we inaugurate the Vintage Series, which pays tribute to the much-admired legendary Martin guitars of the pre-World War II period.

1997 Martin debuts the DM and Road Series. • We launch superior SP® strings.

1999 We complete our new addition to the factory, almost doubling its size. • We build Martin guitar #700,000.

2000 We end the millenium with serial #780,500.

2001 We introduce the "D-50 Deluxe Edition" guitar and "SP+ Extended Life" strings.

2003 We introduce the "Little Martin."

2004 Martin builds Guitar #1,000,000. • Claire Frances Martin, the seventh generation Martin is born to Chris Martin IV and his wife Diane on September 13, 2004.

2006 Grand opening of Martin Guitar Museum and Visitors Center, February 22, 2006.