



Cramer Pianos
by Tim Lewin

In 1901, Captain Scott took a Cramer Patent Portable Piano on his first expedition to the Antarctic, and also a Pianola piano player. Alistair Gellatly wrote to me from the Discovery Point museum. "There was one skilled pianist on board Discovery – Lieutenant Charles Royd's. The following is from "The Voyage of Discovery" written by Captain Scott. He notes that for an hour before dinner, Royd's "goes to the piano and plays it, sometimes with and sometimes without the aid of the Pianola; in either case we others in our various cabins have the pleasure of listening to excellent music, and feel that the debt of gratitude we owe to our only musician is no light one". The piano did not only stay on board ship but was also moved at times to one of the huts they constructed on Ross Island. The rest of the men enjoyed using the piano – or more accurately the Pianola. This was of the push-up variety.

PATENT PORTABLE PIANO
MODEL 1.

The Patent Portable Piano is made in just the same complete manner as a full-sized instrument and has exactly the same class of tone and touch. The Keyboard folds up when not in use. This is the model which was taken to the Trenches in France for the Soldier Concerts, organised by Mr. Seymour Hicks and Miss Ellaline Terriss. The late Captain Scott also took one of these little instruments to the Antarctic Regions, and it was returned in perfect playable condition. Compass, 5 Octaves, C to C; Height, 2 ft. 3 in.; Depth, shut, 1 ft. 2 in., open, 1 ft. 9 in.; Width, 3 ft. 6 in.

In Solid Mahogany or Oak - 23 Guineas NETT.
Specially prepared for extreme climates - 42s. extra.

PianoHistoryInfo



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The portable pianos were also used in the trenches during the 1914 war, as explained in this page from Cramer's catalogue. Originally, they had stands which allowed a pedal or 2 to be attached to the bottom of the piano, but many have now lost them, and some stands have been replaced by tables or cupboards. Scott's *fateful 1910 expedition included a Broadwood player piano, even bigger and heavier than a normal piano.*

By 1897, some of the Cramer portables had the unusual combination mentioned above – of oblique stringing and over stringing, producing 17 surprisingly long bass strings, but by 1919, this was simplified to a semi-oblique arrangement, about 40 degrees off the vertical, with 23 monochords and the rest bi chords.

