

A Tribute to John H. Buckbee

John H. Buckbee is credited (mugwumps.com) with making banjos from 1861 to 1897. Like William Boucher, an earlier maker of banjos, Buckbee made drums prior to making banjos. Buckbee was one of the first, and perhaps most prolific, mass manufacturer of banjos in 19th century America.

Bollman & Gura's excellent book (*America's Instrument*) has some interesting information on Buckbee, including that it was:

"probably the largest banjo factory in the world" and it turned out "the best of that class of work", unlike, say, instruments from Henry Benary's operation, which "of all cheap and vile factory banjos" were "the cheapest and vilest".

Buckbee made some good-quality banjos for resale by banjo sellers (such as the Dobson Brothers) and also produced inexpensive, lower-quality banjos for mass sales. Buckbee also sold banjo parts that were assembled by banjo sellers and sold under their respective names.

Buckbee contributed significantly to making banjos accessible to the American public in the latter half of the 19th century. I'm attracted to Buckbee banjos mostly because of their significance in popular music in America. Because of their original abundance, Buckbee banjos from shortly after the American Civil War are still available.

Mark Ralston

BUCKBEE, John H.

1881-82	mus instrs	Thomas c. E. 178th
1883	not listed	
1884-87	mus instrs	Webster Ave. c. E. 178th
1888-90+	"	1963 Webster

Although the *1885 AMD* (p. 202) listed Buckbee as a "Musical Instrument Manufacturer," he apparently specialized in making banjos, many of which were stencilled and sold through other firms. Banjo dealer Henry C. Dobson reportedly had many of "his" instruments manufactured by J. H. Buckbee Company, "which was the largest shop of its kind from 1860 to 1890. In 1897 that company was taken over by Rettburg & Lange." (Howard 1959:46)

*Musical Instrument Makers of New York:
A Directory of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Urban Craftsmen*

By Nancy Groce

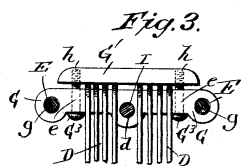
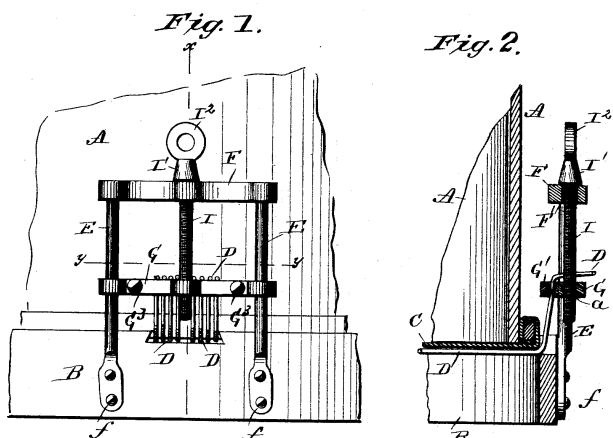
"Known for Banjos, J.H. Buckbee Made Drums Too"

<http://blog.fielddrums.com/2008/04/known-for-banjoes-jh-buckbee-made-drums.html>



(No Model.)

J. H. BUCKBEE, Jr.
SNARE TIGHTENER FOR DRUMS.
No. 388,527. Patented Aug. 28, 1888.



WITNESSES:

Phil. C. Dietrich.
C. Sedgwick

INVENTOR:

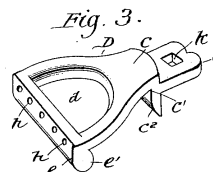
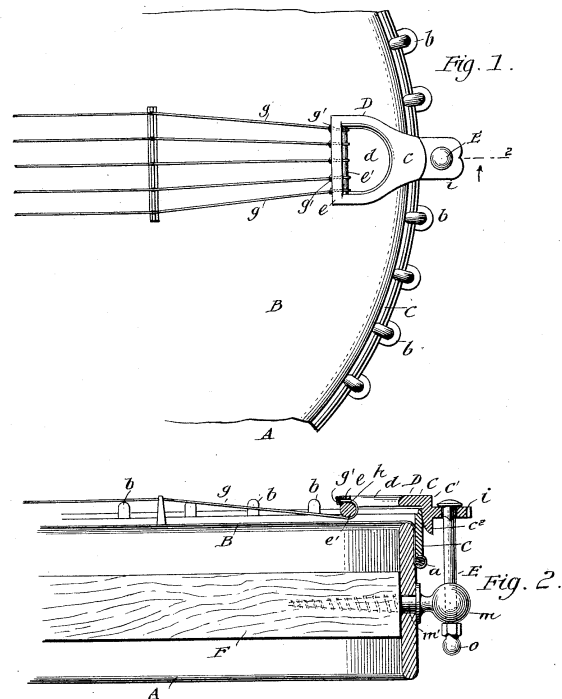
J. H. Buckbee, Jr.
BY Munn & Co.

ATTORNEYS.

A. PETERS: Photo-Lithographer, Washington, D. C.

(No Model.)

H. FENTON.
BANJO TAIL PIECE.
No. 454,728. Patented June 23, 1891.



WITNESSES:

H. Clark.
C. Sedgwick

INVENTOR:

H. Fenton
BY Munn & Co.
ATTORNEYS

THE KAYE PETERSON CO., PHOTO-LITHO., WASHINGTON, D. C.

H. FENTON.
BANJO TAIL PIECE. No. 454,728. Patented June 23, 1891-.

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.
HERSCHEL FENTON, OF NEW YORK, N. Y., ASSIGNOR TO
JOHN H. BUCKBEE, OF SAME PLACE.
BANJO TAIL-PIECE SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No.
454,728, dated June 23, 1891,
Application filed February 3, 1891. Serial No. 380,021. (No model.)



THE "SMALL GOODS" TRADE

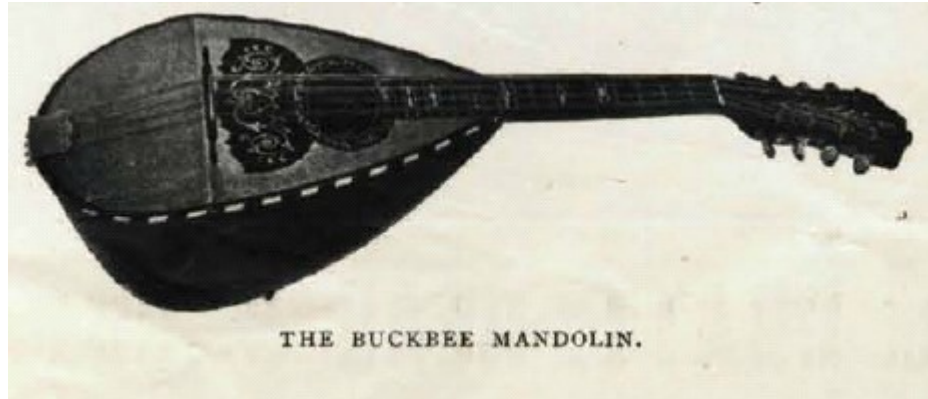


New Style Buckbee Mandolins.

John H. Buckbee, the celebrated banjo, mandolin and drum manufacturer, who recently removed from 1963 Webster avenue to larger quarters at 115-21 East Thirteenth street, is preparing a number of very handsome mandolins for the fall trade, which are destined to create a most favorable impression and find ready sales.

The illustration herewith may give an idea of the class of instrument Mr. Buckbee is turning out, but it is entirely inadequate to convey an idea of the beauty of finish, and its thorough musical excellence.

The new Buckbee mandolin has an inlaid finger board from the first fret down to the last, the peg head also being ornamented in the same manner. The body, also center and sound hole and sides, are fancy inlaid and engraved. The ribs are fluted and German silver edges. The Buckbee mandolin is destined to become as popular as the Buckbee banjo.



THE BUCKBEE MANDOLIN.

❁ THE "SMALL GOODS" TRADE ❁

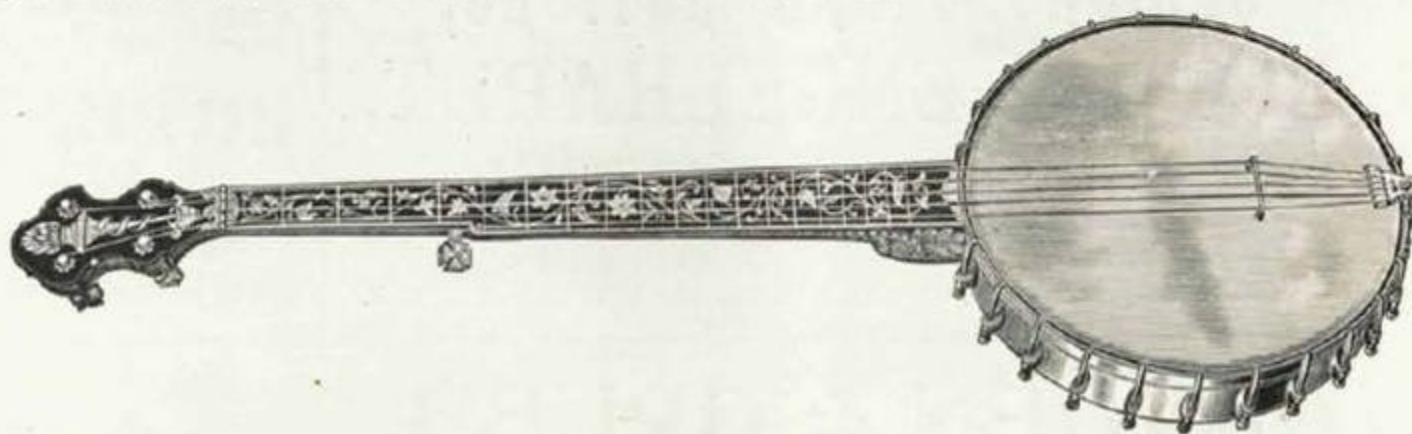
The Buckbee Banjos.

Among the banjos and mandolins of domestic manufacture those made by John H. Buckbee, 115-121 East Thirteenth street, this city, command a splendid reputation. They are conscientiously made throughout of well seasoned wood under the supervis-

ion of a practical man who knows his business from A to Z—a man who takes a pride in his wares and believes in turning out only the best.

The Buckbee banjo, of which an illustration appears herewith, is a great favorite with musicians on account of its beautiful tone and artistic finish and through possession of certain features entirely peculiar to this product.

Dealers interested in first class instruments that will give satisfaction to purchasers and afford them a fair margin of profit should write Mr. Buckbee.



THE BUCKBEE NO. 6.

Banjo Sellers who may have sold banjos manufactured by Buckbee:

Ajax (premium for magazine subscriptions)

Benary, A.E. NY, NY

Robert H. Benary & Son, NY, NY (later known as Metropolitan Musical Instrument Co)

Boyle Brothers Boston, MA

Burke, Walter Providence, RI

Alfred D. Cammeyer NY, NY

Bruno

Tremont brandname

Beau Brummel brandname

Columbia

Converse (?)

Henry C. Dobson NY

Doré Brothers

F.H. Douglas, Newark, NJ

Farland (?)

Hall (?)

Herschel Fenton NY, NY

Foote (?)

Thomas Goggan, Galveston, TX

Karnolt, William NY, NY

Fred Martin (?)

Fred Mather (?)

Morrison (?)

Harry Newcorn (?)

August Pollman

Wm Pond

J.F.Stetson (brand name used by W.J. Dyer & Bros.) St. Paul, MN

J.F. Stratton

Adonis brandname

Bijou brandname

Voight, Charles A. Philadelphia, PA

Trade Card Advertisement of a Young Woman Playing a Pollmann Mandoline-Banjo, August Pollmann publisher (1894), New York City.

A very nice piece of late 19th century commercial art advertising the Pollmann Mandoline-Banjo, a unique instrument featuring a standard 5-string banjo neck grafted on to a large flat back mandolin body, which the August Pollmann Company of New York City began offering in the late 1880s. On through the 1890s, this sweet-toned instrument enjoyed some popularity in Upper Crust musical society as evidenced by this testimonial from the back of the card: "Dear Sir.-- I have noticed that the attention given by Banjoists, especially ladies, to your Mandoline-Banjo is steadily on the increase. Sacramento, California, December 23, 1893. C.A. Neale."

Here we see an artist's depiction of a fashionable young lady serenading a dapper gentleman with her mandoline-banjo, possibly a high-end model dubbed "The Favorite." The legend reads: "Positively Nothing Like It. The New Society Instrument. The Pollmann American Mandoline-Banjo."

On the verso, the heading proclaims: "The Mandoline-Banjo and Mandoline-Guitar. Banjo Players can perform on the Mandoline-Banjo, as Guitar Players can perform on the Mandoline-Guitar, without practice whatever." This statement is followed by nine glowing testimonials from satisfied "Professionals, Dramatists and Musical Artists" and the admonition: "The 'August Pollmann' are the GENUINE. Each of these Instruments bears that name. -- BEWARE OF IMITATIONS." (Truth be known, Pollmann, following standard practice of the period's musical instrument industry, actually contracted other makers such as John C. Haynes of Boston and

James H. Buckbee of New York to manufacture some models of the mandoline-banjo.)



BANJOS.



No. 451.

DOUBLE WIRE EDGE, GERMAN SILVER RIM. CALFSKIN HEAD.
11 INCH.

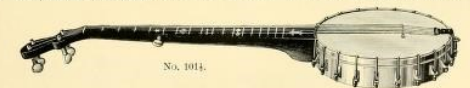
No. 451 20 Nickel Stud Brackets, Safety Nuts, Grooved Hoop, Polished Walnut Neck, Scroll Head, Metal Name Plate, Veneered Fingerboard, Fancy Pearl Inlaid Positions, Metal Frets, Celluloid Pegs, Wedge in Stick Each \$ 16 50



No. 102.

DOUBLE WIRE EDGE, GERMAN SILVER RIM. CALFSKIN HEAD.
11 INCH.

No. 102 24 Nickel Stud Brackets, Safety Nuts, Engraved Grooved Hoop, Polished Walnut Neck, Scroll Head, Ebony Veneered Fingerboard, Fancy Position Dots, Metal Frets..... Each \$ 20 00
" 103 Same, but with 40 Brackets..... " 25 00



No. 1014.

DOUBLE WIRE EDGE, GERMAN SILVER RIM. CALFSKIN HEAD.
10 INCH.

No. 1014 20 Nickel Stud Brackets, Safety Nuts, Grooved Hoop, Polished Walnut Neck, Scroll Head, Veneered Fingerboard, Inlaid Pearl Positions, Metal Frets, Celluloid Pegs, Wedge in Stick..... Each \$ 16 00
" 1024 Same as No. 1014, but with 24 Brackets, Fancy Inlaid Scroll Head..... " 20 00



No. 200.

DOUBLE WIRE EDGE, GERMAN SILVER RIM. CALFSKIN HEAD.
11 INCH.

No. 200 30 Nickel Stud Brackets, Safety Nuts, Engraved Grooved Hoop, Polished Walnut Neck, Scroll Head, Thick Ebony Fingerboard, very handsome Pearl Inlaid Positions and Scroll, Fancy Celluloid Pegs, Extra Finish Inside Rim..... Each \$ 26 00



No. 300.

No. 305.

No. 310.

BANJORINES.

NICKEL PLATED RIMS. 12 INCH.

No. 295 Wire Edge Nickel Rim, 20 Nickel Stud Brackets, Walnut Neck, Ebony Fingerboard, Metal Frets, Position Dots..... Each \$ 12 50
No. 300 Wire Edge Nickel Rim, 20 Nickel Stud Brackets, Polished Walnut Neck, Ebony Fingerboard, Metal Frets, Pearl Position Dots, Scroll Head, White Pegs..... Each \$ 16 00
No. 305 Double Wire Edge Nickel Rim, 30 Nickel Stud Brackets, Engraved Grooved Hoop, Polished Walnut Neck, Ebony Fingerboard, Metal Frets, Fancy Pearl Positions, Scroll Head, White Pegs..... Each \$ 22 00
No. 310 Double Wire Edge Nickel Rim, 20 Nickel Stud Brackets, Engraved Grooved Hoop, Polished Walnut Neck, Ebony Fingerboard, Metal Frets, Fancy Pearl Positions, Scroll Head, Fancy White Pegs..... Each \$ 28 00

BANJORINE BAGS.

No. 257 Green Felt, with Buttons..... Each \$ 1 70



VICTOR BANJOS.

GEORGE C. DOBSON, BOSTON, MASS.

(THE WORD VICTOR IS MR. DOBSON'S TRADE MARK.)

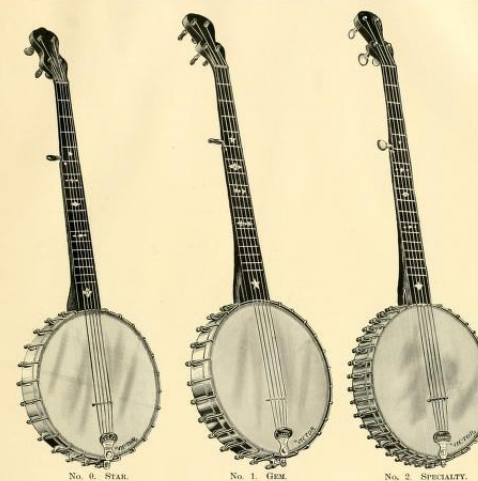
None genuine unless stamped Geo. C. Dobson, Victor.

Messrs. C. Bruno & Son, New York.

Boston, May 25, 1886.

GENTLEMEN: I hereby appoint you Agents for the sale of my VICTOR BANJOS.

(Signed) GEORGE C. DOBSON.



No. 0. STAR.

No. 1. GEM.

No. 2. SPECIALTY.

VICTOR BANJOS.

No. 0 VICTOR STAR—Nickel Wire Edge Rim, 11 Inch Grooved Hoop, 24 Nickel Excelsior Brackets, Polished Walnut Neck, Metal Frets, Inlaid Pearl Position Dots, Scroll Head..... Each \$ 16 50
(Retail Price, \$ 10 00.)
No. 0 1/2 Same as No. 0, but 10 Inch Rim, Ladies' Size..... Each \$ 16 50
(Retail Price, \$ 10 00.)
No. 1 VICTOR GEM—German Silver Double Wire Edge Rim, 11 Inch Grooved Hoop, 24 Nickel Excelsior Brackets, Polished Walnut Neck, Ebony Fingerboard, Metal Frets, Pearl Inlaid Positions, Scroll Head..... Each \$ 20 00
(Retail Price, \$ 12 00.)
No. 1 1/2 Same as No. 1, but 10 Inch Rim, Ladies' Size..... Each \$ 20 00
(Retail Price, \$ 12 00.)
No. 2 VICTOR SPECIALTY—German Silver Double Wire Edge Rim, 11 Inch Grooved Hoop, 20 Nickel Excelsior Brackets, Polished Walnut Neck, Metal Frets, Fancy Pearl Inlaid Positions, Inlaid Scroll Head..... Each \$ 27 00
(Retail Price, \$ 15 00.)

THE ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

The MUSIC TRADE REVIEW

VOL. XXV. No. 7.

Published Every Saturday at 3 East Fourteenth Street. New York, August 14, 1897.

\$3.00 PER YEAR.
SINGLE COPIES, 10 CENTS.

Buckbee Sold Out.

Deputy Sheriff Simonson Wednesday sold out the effects of John H. Buckbee, manufacturer of musical instruments and banjos, at 115 and 117 East Thirteenth street, city, under an execution for \$1,088, in favor of Charles Bruno. The sale amounted to \$1,094. Josef Sheina, the veneer man, was the purchaser.

The effects of **John H. Buckbee**, manufacturer of musical instruments and banjos, B. New York, were sold out by the sheriff at August 11, under an execution for \$1,088 in is favor of Chas. Bruno. The sale amounted at. to \$1,094.

The American Stationer, Vol. 42.

July 13, 1897

Rettberg & Lange.

A NEW FIRM OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MANUFACTURERS.

Last Wednesday a new firm of musical instrument manufacturers, known as Rettberg & Lange, was formed in this city. The members have purchased from Josef Sheina the plant, machinery and stock formerly owned by J. H. Buckbee, 115-7 East Thirteenth street, New York, and have placed a force of workmen in the factory building, where they have begun the manufacture of banjos, drums, tambourines, etc.

The proprietors are young men who have had an extensive experience in the musical instrument business. Wm. P. Rettberg has been with Frederick Gretsch, the instrument manufacturer of Brooklyn, for eight years. Mr. Lange has been associated with the well-known firm of C. Bruno for nine years, and has traveled extensively for him. Messrs. Rettberg & Lange are full of pluck and energy, and without doubt will meet with success in their business, as they have been thoroughly trained in every department.

Published Every Saturday at 3 East Fourteenth Street. New York, September 25, 1897.

\$2.00 PER YEAR.
SINGLE COPIES, 10 CENTS.



Buckbee No. 6



Washburn Improved 5100

The banjo on the left is a Buckbee No. 6 from a 1897 advertisement. The banjo on the right is a Washburn Improved 5100, believed to have been made by Rettberg & Lange, successor to Buckbee. R&L kept some of Buckbee's construction details and appointments.



John H. Buckbee, the banjo manufacturer of this city who recently failed, has decided to settle in Chicago, where he hopes to retrieve his fortune.

The Review was glad to welcome John H. Buckbee, at one time a well-known manufacturer of banjos and drums, in New York City, to Boston this week. It is a pleasure to see "Johnny," as all his many friends call him, on the road again. He is now traveling for the Strauss Manufacturing Co., of Nos. 142 and 146 West Fourteenth street, New York, his specialty being the "Zobo" and other novelties manufactured and handled by his house. "Johnny" is on his way eastward from Chicago, where he was royally received by the trade. In fact he is being warmly welcomed everywhere. He still retains the same geniality of temperament which characterized him when he represented his own line on the road.

BOSTON'S BUDGET OF NEWS.

Something of the Magnificent New Building to Be Erected for the Henry F. Miller & Sons Piano Co. Will Cost \$300,000—J. H. Buckbee Visits the City—Geo. F. Blake's Success—Willard A. Vose Returns to Town—A. H. Stuart May Build Pianos in Fall River—Improvements at the Wentworth Factory—The Briggs Petite Grand—Carter Will Travel for Needham and Bailey—Budget of Items.

(1903)

ZOBO Harmonophone

You can play it with-
out being taught.



Size
6½ x 4
inches.

A Whole Band for 50 Cents

Enables you to play the most exquisite music
imaginable, and to perform all kinds of musical
tricks.

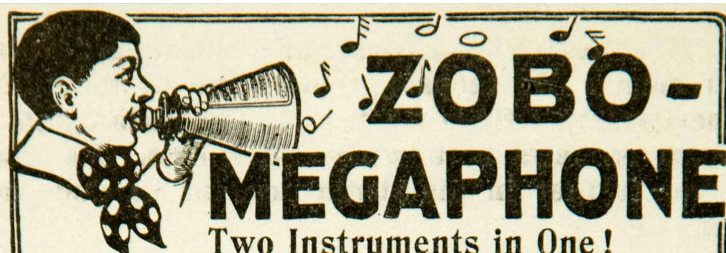
SING BY IT! DANCE BY IT!
MARCH BY IT!

Sent post-paid on receipt of 50 cents. Satisfac-
tion guaranteed or money cheerfully refunded.
Illustrated catalogue of Amusing Home Enter-
tainments sent free.

STRAUSS MFG. CO.,

142 W. 14th Street, Department 13, New York.

Buckbee, proprietor of a
prominent musical manu-
facturing firm, ran into fi-
nancial difficulties, moved
to Chicago, and was em-
ployed by Strauss Mfg.
Co. selling musical novel-
ties



Two Instruments in One!

**You hum or talk into the mouthpiece;
Zobo-Megaphone does the rest.**

The famous Zobo, which reproduces tunes in
any kind or quality of singing voice — combined
with a powerful megaphone which is detachable.
Made of regular megaphone material, 7½ in.
long, 4½ in. bell.

From all dealers or by mail, post-paid

Satisfaction guaranteed
or money promptly re-
funded.

*Entertains Everybody
Everywhere.*

STRAUSS MFG. CO.,
138 W. 14th St., New York.



**YOU CAN PLAY THEM
WITHOUT LEARNING.**



CHURCH BAND OF PATERSON, N. J.

The Wonderful Zobo For Entertainments and Parties

The most extraordinary musical instrument ever
produced; so constructed that the human voice
comes out so wonderfully as to make it melodious
beyond all comprehension. It seems impossible
for it to accomplish so much. It gives you the
vocal power of giants, yet its music may be softened
to the cooing of a dove or the thrilling song of the
nightingale. Money- and music-making feature
for **CHURCH CHOIRS** and other concerts. You can
organize a **brass band** for public appearance
with 30 minutes' practice.

Sing into mouthpiece — Zobo does the rest.

25-cent Special Offer.—To introduce the
wonderful ZOBO we will send one carefully
packed, together with our handsomely illustrated
catalogue, prepaid, for **25 cents**. Warranted
just as represented or money cheerfully refunded.
Agents Wanted.

STRAUSS MFG. CO.,

142-146 W. 14th Street, Department 13, NEW YORK.

 In The Musical Merchandise Domain 

CALLING ON THE TRADE.

John F. Buckbee is no longer connected with the Strauss Manufacturing Co., New York, as ambassador to the trade at large. Louis Strauss, of the firm, is now attending to the calling end, and reports say he is booking business right along. The novelties outlined by the house for the fall are about ready.
