

# Chauncey Richmond & 'The Old Buckbee'

— The story of a banjo, its maker, and its player —

by Reginald W. Bacon

**Chauncey E. Richmond**, a modest farmer and banjo-playing rural mail carrier in North Stonington, Conn., was an unlikely prospect to become a vaudeville show promoter in 1909. Yet that's exactly what happened.

**His 1885 Tremont No. 98 banjo** – rescued a century later from a tumbledown shed and woodchuck den in crumbling, filth-encrusted condition – was viewed as beyond restoration to playability. Yet eventually, that's exactly what happened.

**John Henry Buckbee**, a resolutely anonymous craftsman in then-leafy Bronx, N.Y., was probably too busy to notice when his operation grew to be “the largest banjo factory in the world” in the 1880s. Yet that's exactly what happened.

**Chauncey Richmond & “The Old Buckbee”** tells the stories of the banjo, its maker, and its player, illuminated by the social, technological, and economic context of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The book also brings to light new details about the prolific banjo manufacturer, John Henry Buckbee.

**Along the way**, the three tightly-focused studies yield useful insights into the practice of micro-history, and into the discipline of historical and genealogical research, evidence, and conclusions.

## *Three Studies in American Musical Micro-History*

**About the author:** R.W. Bacon is a museum/history professional with specialties in 17th- and 18th-century New England architecture and domestic life – and early 20th-century vaudeville and circus. His first career as a journalist, editor, and publication designer informs his current museum work. His arduous 35-year career as an acrobatic juggler and jazz/ragtime musician informs his performing arts research. He is the author of a dozen books on varied history topics.

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The Restored Buckbee “Tremont No. 98” Banjo (c. 1885)

