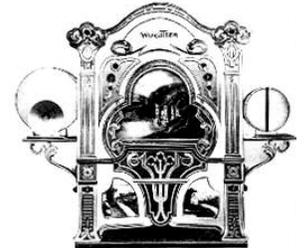




CAROUSEL ORGAN



The Official Journal of the
Carousel Organ Association of America (COAA)

*Devoted to enjoying, preserving and sharing knowledge of all outdoor mechanical musical instruments,
including band, fair and street organs, calliopes, and hand-cranked organs of all sizes.*

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Joyland Louie

Matthew Caulfield

“Joyland Louie” is the Wurlitzer style 160 band organ playing at Joyland Amusement Park in Wichita, Kansas. It sits near the park entrance, across from the carousel, in an open-front building of its own (**Figure 1**). A railing in front protects Louie from busy fingers, and the rear of the building has a screened opening so that patrons can see the pipework and other innards. The style 160, or “Mammoth,” was the largest of Wurlitzer’s early, barrel or paper-roll operated band organs (**Figure 2**). Joyland Louie has been much modified from its original state and now plays the style 165 roll, but it is the sole surviving example of what everyone agrees was a genuine Wurlitzer Mammoth. A like organ with a similar complement of pipes, though not necessarily a true Mammoth, is in the collection of Donald Neilson.



Figure 1 Joyland Louie — the Wurlitzer Style 160 (Mammoth) band organ complete with animated clown.

... continued on page 3



Figure 2. The Wurlitzer Style 160 or “Mammoth” military band organ as pictured in an early 1912 Wurlitzer catalog.

As a companion to the Mammoth, Wurlitzer also marketed the style 155, or “Monster,” band organ for those wanting a slightly smaller machine (Figure 3). There are three surviving examples of the Monster. The one in Bill Black’s collection plays its original style 155 roll, but is missing its original case (Carousel Organ, #2). The Monster on the Burlington, Colorado, carousel is intact with its elaborate leaded-glass case front. When new it played the same 155 roll as Black’s organ, but Wurlitzer later converted it—as happened to many organs—to play the 165 roll. As part of Burlington’s historically-faithful stewardship of its carousel and organ, a re-conversion to the style 155 roll was completed in recent months by renowned restorer Art Reblitz. A third Monster, without case, unrestored and not playing original rolls, is owned by Gordon Forcier.

COAA editor Ron Bopp’s book *The American Carousel Organ* contains complete specifications for the Mammoth, as well as more information about Wurlitzer’s early organs than can be found anywhere else, so I will repeat just a few statistics to give an idea of the Mammoth’s nature (Tables 1 & 2). Its approximate dimensions were 10 x 10 x 4 feet, with 122 keys (compared with 75 keys in the Wurlitzer 165, 100 keys in the Monster and 112 keys in the Wurlitzer 180 introduced in 1922). It had three windchests with a total of 8 stops, containing a total of 486 pipes, with bass and snare drums and cymbal.

Both the Mammoth and the Monster were probably originally designed to be played by pinned barrel; the complicated



Figure 3. The Wurlitzer Style 155 (“Monster”) military band organ. Note the leaded glass in front of the brass trumpets and trombones.

Comparison of Dimensions of Large Wurlitzer (& deKleist) Organs

Make and Style Organ	Number of Keys	Height	Width	Depth
deKleist 28A	100	9'6"	8"	3'
Wurlitzer 155	100	6'10½"	8'8¾"	3'3¼"
Wurlitzer 160	122	10'4"	10'6"	4'6"
Wurlitzer 180	112	10'8"	18'8"	5'

Table 1. Dimensions of Large Wurlitzer and deKleist Organs (from *The American Carousel Organ*).

and awkward modifications made to the Burlington Monster to accommodate roll operation in its original manufacture are proof of this. But factory catalog photos of both Mammoth and Monster models clearly show a roll mechanism in their front sides. Interestingly, the Monster uses the standard 10-to-the-inch hole spacing of its deKleist ancestor; but the Mammoth uses Wurlitzer’s standard .1227" hole spacing.

INSTRUMENTATION

120 Violins.	40 Piccolos.
29 Violoncellos.	40 Flutes.
29 Bass Violins.	13 Brass Trombones.
30 Clarionets.	27 Brass Trumpets.
148 Accompaniment Pipes.	

Table 2. Instrumentation of the Wurlitzer Mammoth as presented in an early 1912 Wurlitzer catalog.

Ron Bopp (p. 86) says this about Joyland Louie:

During the 1920s and 1930s this organ entertained dancers and skaters in Arkansas City [i.e. in Coffeyville, according to Harold Ottaway; not the mansion of the same name in Arkansas City], Kansas, where it was located on the 3rd floor of the Brown Mansion. The organ was placed between the dance room and the skating rink. During World War II the brass pipes were removed for the war effort. At some point it was converted by Wurlitzer to play the style 165 roll. Today efforts are being made to restore the organ by re-placing the original pipework.

Joyland Amusement Park is now owned by Stanley Nelson, purchased in 1972 from the Ottaway family, brothers Harold and Herbert, who had opened the park June 12, 1949. Harold Ottaway, now 82 years old, remembers clearly the details of acquiring Joyland Louie for his new park. In 1947 the Ottaway brothers were contacted by Jess Gibbs, an organ man in

Parsons, Kansas, about an old band organ owned by the Brown estate in Coffeyville, 40 miles southwest of Parsons. It had stood unused in the old Brown Mansion (Figure 4) since its closing in the depression years. Harold, Herbert, and Jess made the trip to Coffeyville to see the organ. Harold remembers Ms. Brown describing the mansion's heyday and demise. In the 1920s people came in droves to the



Figure 4. Brown mansion as seen today in Coffeyville, Kansas.

Photo credit: Coffeyville Chamber of Commerce

spa that occupied the mansion's basement, the dining room and lodgings on the first and second floors, and the ballroom and skating rink on the top floor, where the mansion's Wurlitzer Mammoth provided music. In the horse-and-buggy age, the spa attracted a captive audience and the mansion prospered. With the advent of the automobile people who came for the spa often went elsewhere for their dining, lodging, and entertainment. Eventually, the mansion closed and the Mammoth stood unused and perhaps forgotten up on the third floor. Today the Brown Mansion is open again to visitors. See its website at (<http://www.terraworld.net/cville/brown.htm>) for an illustrated description of the mansion.

The Ottaways bought the Wurlitzer Mammoth "as is" from the Brown estate for what Harold remembers as being "around \$350, certainly not more than \$500." They had it moved to Jess Gibbs' shop in Parsons, where Jess put it into playing order. Mice seemed to have feasted on the glue joints in the organ during the decade or so it sat silent. Harold recalls that the organ had no brass pipes in it when they acquired it in 1947 (which fits with the report of the brass going to the 1941-1945 war effort), but he does not remember it lacking anything musically. It came with a number of Wurlitzer 165 rolls, suggesting that the conversion to that system by Wurlitzer for the Browns or for an earlier owner, if any.

One of the distinguishing features of the Joyland Mammoth—and the source of the organ's name—is the animated clown figure, "Joyland Louie," who sits in front of the organ at a keyboard and appears to be playing the organ. Louie was an addition by the Ottaways. As an offshoot of their park operation the Ottaways developed a train ride and other amusement devices. So both as park operators and ride manufacturers, the Ottaways were members of the National Association of Amusement Parks, Pools, and Beaches, which held an annual trade show/convention in Chicago. At one of these shows, the Ottaways were intrigued by the lively and high quality animated figures being sold there as amusement devices. So they bought the clown figure for \$750 and had him installed at a

dummy keyboard in front of the organ. Thus was born Joyland Louie, though Harold doesn't remember today who gave him that name or why. Louie's movements are random and not tied to the organ roll; but people have been fooled into thinking Louie is a pretty talented mechanical organist.

Eventually Jess Gibbs moved to Wichita and continued to maintain Joyland Louie, the organ,

until his death. Since selling the park to the Nelson family, Harold has lost track of organ developments, though he still remembers clearly and fondly how Louie could belt out marches such as E.T. Paull's "Ben Hur Chariot Race." And Harold, at 82, has not lost his interest in old mechanical machines. He still travels to Canada and occasionally to England to enjoy the tractor and steam engine meets that he can't find enough of in this country.

Today, under the watchful eye of Stan and Margaret Nelson, who are in their mid-70s, a new generation runs Joyland and maintains its trademark organ, Joyland Louie. Damien Mays has taken over the work of Jess Gibbs, with the assistance of Gordon Ramsay. At some time in the past the organ was converted to blower operation, swell shutters were added to the front of the organ, and the organ's original percussion (bass drum, snare drum, and cymbal) were expanded to include wood block, castanets, tambourine, and triangle, all visible in front of the swell shutters to the left and right of Louie's keyboard. Californian Alan Erb was instrumental in starting the re-installation of the organ's missing brass pipework, though the trombone rank is yet to be completed.

The park owns some original green-paper Wurlitzer 165 rolls as well as a number of recuts of original rolls, and the rolls are changed daily for the benefit of the public. I believe tapes are available from the park, Joyland Amusement Park, 2801 South Hillside, Wichita, KS 67216 (phone 316-684-0179).

This article is based on written and oral communications from Nancy Strattan, Les Lovesee, Harold Ottaway, Stanley Nelson, Alan Erb, and Art Reblitz, as well on as data from Ron Bopp's book. My special thanks to Nancy, without whose on-site help, I would still be much in the dark about Joyland Louie. And to the Ottaway and Nelson families for preserving this unique treasure of Americana.

Reference: *The American Carousel Organ—an Illustrated Encyclopedia*, Ron Bopp, 1998.

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