

## The Bruder Elite Apollo Carousel Organ

Jerry Doring

The 65-key Bruder Elite Apollo Carousel Organ, whose first American home was at the infamous Coney Island amusement park, is presently in the collection of Jerry Doring of Arcadia, California. The organ is probably one of only two 65-key Bruder Elite Apollo organs in the United States today (**Figure 1 and centerfold**).



Figure 1. The Bruder Elite Apollo Carousel Organ as it is photographed in the Jerry Doring Collection in Arcadia, California.

The organ probably made its American debut sometime in 1912, when it was obtained from the Berni Organ Company (a New York importer of Gebruder Bruder organs) for a Hershell-Spillman carousel. It was purchased by the Stubbman Brothers for the Beer Garden Carousel at Coney Island.

In the late 1920s, the organ was sent to the B.A.B. (Ervista Bona, Andrew Antoniazzi and Dominic Brugnolotti) factory in Brooklyn, New York, where it was



Figure 2. The 65-key Bruder Elite Apollo organ as photographed in 1958 on a Stein and Goldstein carousel. Photo: Dr. Robert Miller.

converted to play the 66-key B.A.B. music roll. The restoration included installing bronze hand bells on mounts attached to the outer façade around the Hershell-Spillman logo and connecting them to a pneumatic board and valve chest behind the façade. B.A.B. also replaced the wooden trumpet pipes with metal oboe pipes.

Assumedly, the Bruder organ accompanied the carousel in 1953 to a new location on the Boardwalk at W. 16th Street, Coney Island, to replace an Illions machine lost in a fire. The location was below Steeplechase, and thus the carousel was termed the Steeplechase Carousel. Dr. Robert Miller, however, who provided me with a picture of the Bruder in a 1958 photo, believes the Bruder was on a Stein and Goldstein carousel (**Figure 2**). Also, Jerry Betts in a letter to me in 1981 claims the Bruder was on the McCulloch carousel based on a 1959 photo. Actually, it is possible that the organ was shuffled around to play on numerous carousels at Coney Island considering there were as many as 25 carousels there at one time. Unfortunately, however, much of the organ's history during this time remains a mystery.

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In 1964, John Rogers, an attorney and founder of The American Calvacade Corporation, acquired the Stubbman Carousel and Charles Feltman's Carousel from Coney Island. Both organs on the carousels were combined to make the music for the carousel at the Carousel Plaza of the Lake Amusement area at the 1964 New York World's Fair. After the World's Fair the carousel continued to operate at Flushing Meadows, New York. However, the 65-key Bruder organ ended up being warehoused and eventually sold at auction to Jim Wells in 1971. The Feltman carousel organ, which is an 80-key Bruder Elite Apollo organ, still resides at Flushing Meadow. It has been vandalized over the years, and though still running, is in poor condition (**Figure 3**).

In 1981, I purchased the 65-key Bruder Elite Apollo from Jim Wells, but without the original wings. The wings that came with the organ were originally carved portions from the façade of the 80-key Bruder. One of the original statues from the 80-key Bruder was also obtained in the purchase. Fortunately, I was able to obtain the original

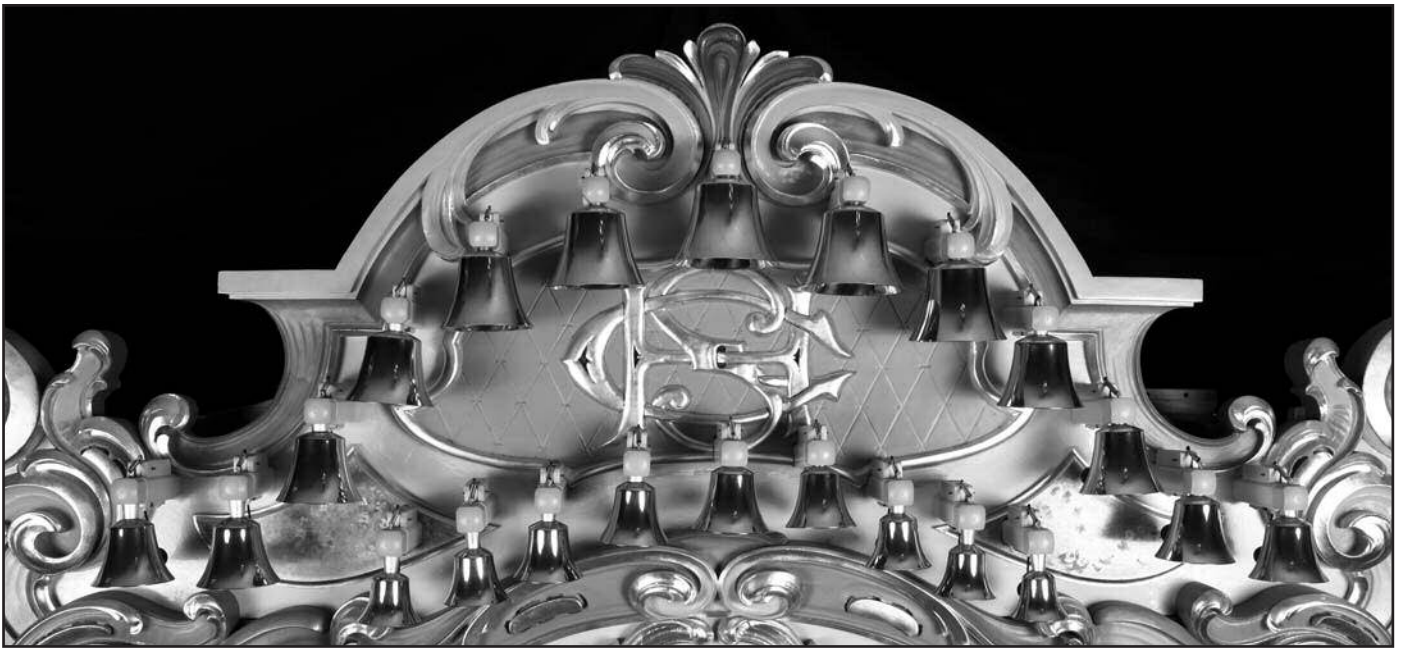


Figure 4. A closeup of the custom designed bronze bells, made by the Malmark Company of Plumsteadville, Pennsylvania.



Figure 3. The 80-key Bruder Elite Apollo organ on location at Flushing Meadow.

wings for the 65-key Bruder from Dr. Robert Miller of Newtown, Connecticut in 1984.

The restoration of the 65-key Bruder Elite Apollo Organ began in 1984 by the late Louis Suierveld, formerly of Norwalk, California. As part of the restoration, it was decided to modify one of the roll frames so the organ could accommodate Wurlitzer 165 music rolls as well as the 66-key music roles. The façade was sent to Hayes McClaren in Fresno for restoration and painting in the early 1990s (Figures 4 & 5). At that time the bell unit was not included in the restoration.

Later it was my desire to restore the organ to its B.A.B. form and re-install the bells. I sent the pneumatic board and valve chest to Johnny Verbeeck in Belgium for restoration in the early 2000s. The actual assemblage of the bell unit to the organ was done by Dana Johnson of Huntington Beach, California in 2004. The original cast

bells were replaced by custom designed bronze bells from the Malmark Company of Plumsteadville, Pennsylvania after examination of the old bells revealed them to have extensively deteriorated.

The outcome is an exceptionally beautiful instrument of refined tone and quality. As intended, it is two organs in one, since it is able to play both the 66-key B.A.B. music roll and the Wurlitzer 165 music roll.



Figure 5. The central portion of the façade after restoration.

Anyone having further information or past photos of the organ may contact Jerry by e-mail at [wendydoring@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wendydoring@sbcglobal.net).

Photos, except where noted, by Chuck Gallyon.

Jerry Doring is a long-time collector of mechanical musical instruments and well-known in the hobby. He lives with his wife, Virginia, in Arcadia, California.

