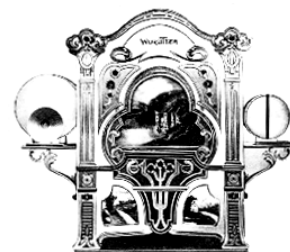




Issue No. 4
July, 2000

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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Editor/Publisher — Ron Bopp
Assist. Editor — Angelo Rulli

Mechanical Organs of the American Traveling Circus, Menagerie and Wild West*

Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

Though they are largely unknown in our era of electronically-reproduced and computer-generated music, mechanical organs once commonly provided an acoustic musical accompaniment to many outdoor amusement enterprises. The general public and music historians typically associate the hand-cranked organ with itinerant street musicians; the pipe organ with churches and theaters; the orchestrion with palatial homes; and the band organ with the carousel. A review of the historical record reveals that each of these four types of instruments could be heard at traveling shows. Visitors to the menagerie, the circus and the Wild West exhibition were all exposed to a variety of mechanically-produced sounds during the heyday of these instruments.

Mechanical organs were employed in two principal ways: In the most basic application they provided a musical atmosphere for the show grounds or inside the tents. In their most elaborate form they were housed in large, ornamented parade wagons that provided musical interludes in the daily street processions staged by traveling shows. After the parade, the wagon-mounted organs were parked on the show lot or inside the menagerie or another tent where their melodies continued to add to the sensory experience of visiting a field show.

A traveling menagerie, or collection of wild animals that toured the countryside housed in portable cages, was the first itinerant show enterprise in America to be accompanied by a mechanical organ. The advertisements for the Museum of Living Animals of 1814 noted that it would feature "good music on the organ." An 1818 traveling menagerie had an organ with figures that moved on it. The style suggests the work of Ignaz Bruder (1780-1845), who is generally considered the founder of the Black Forest show organ industry. The Grand Caravan of Living Animals, an 1821 collection of beasts, called attention to their "music on a good Beloudy organ."

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... continued on page 7

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The President Speaks . . .

The staff of the COAA has been very busy the last quarter. Some things that have transpired to give the members more visibility to the organization are—we now have our own web site and webpage. We are working on our webpage to provide you with information on rallies, information on joining the group, plus many other worthwhile topics. We would like to have input from the group on what makes sense to display on our webpage—if you have any thoughts please contact one of the staff. This is your page and it should have information that makes sense. Check out our new webpage: www.carouselorganassociation.org.

We have also been working on our new logo—we are very close to getting this one put to bed. We have already contacted a company to make up transfers for hats, tee shirts and sweat shirts. Hopefully all of our products will be available for the Indiana rally.

I hope to see you at a rally this summer, drive safely and come enjoy the happiest music on earth!

Terry

From the Editor's Loft . . .

As we move into our fourth issue the quality of articles for the *Carousel Organ* seems to improve. This issue features a landmark article by Fred Dahlinger on mechanical music in the circus. We all new it existed but have never read anything about it until now. In addition we have chance to read a lifelong love affair with the band and fair organ in the article submitted by COAA member Capt. John Leonard. Harvey Roehl has lent us his years of experience in making and marketing sound recordings — a new insight into another facet of this wonderful hobby — thanks Harvey!

You will notice something new in the back portion of this expanded issue of the *Carousel Organ*. We now have display advertising. Approved by your officers and by a membership vote at the Houston organ rally we will now accept camera-ready advertising for one-fourth, one-half or full page advertising. Rates may be found on page 25.

Know someone who is interested in organs and not a member of the COAA? Try and get them to sign up. The more members we have translates into more interesting pages of the *Carousel Organ*.

Ron

On Stage

Between January 22 and February 6, 2000, Charles Tyler (an avid Kansas City phonograph collector and street organ musician) cranked his OGM organ on the stage of the Missouri Repertory Theater in the University of Missouri's production of *Inherit The Wind*, a play about the Scopes "Monkey Trial". Charles and his organ shared the stage with Jiggs, a two-year-old monkey. While it was a lot of work, Charles enjoyed himself, and indirectly, brought the enjoyment of mechanical music to many others.

Charles is pictured on the right holding Jiggs behind the OGM cart organ.

Charles, a new COAA member, has attended organ rallies sponsored by the Heart of America chapter of AMICA and the Mid-Am chapter of MBSI.



Paul Eakins' Gay 90's Organ Collection

Ron Bopp

My entrance into the world of mechanical music, and specifically to the area of outdoor mechanical organs, had its start with Paul Eakins (Fig. 1) and his wonderful museum in St. Louis, the Gay 90's Melody Museum (Fig. 2). My interest in this hobby began in 1970, just about the time when the museum was in its last year of operation. My family lived in St. Louis and a trip downtown to the Arch, Busch Stadium (where the St. Louis Cardinals called home) and the Gay 90's Melody Museum was inevitable. Later in the year, the museum closed its doors to be followed by a flyer in the mail advertising all of the instruments. The saddening by this sudden termination of a new friendship was made only worse when I saw that my favorite instrument of the whole lot, Sadie Mae (the pink fairground organ), was for sale for much more than I could muster, a staggering \$8,000.00.

The memories of the museum still linger with me to this date and inspired me to produce an audiovisual program on the life of Paul Eakins (*I Believe If I Got Hold Of One Of Those, I Could Make It Work*) for the 1996 AMICA convention in St. Louis. From this information I would like to elaborate on the organs in Paul Eakins' collection and museum. I refer to these as being owned by Paul Eakins but it was a joint effort with Laura, his long-time partner and wife. Paul passed away in the late 1980s and Laura still resides in their hometown of Sikeston, MO.

Paul had worked many years in the heating and cooling business. He was a workaholic and the competitiveness of his business interest led to the medical condition of ulcers which then led to "slowing down" (as dictated by his personal physician) and working more with a hobby—in

this case, mechanical musical instruments. Paul was quoted in an August 11th, 1962, article appearing in the St. Louis Globe Democrat as saying "Nothing I learned in the

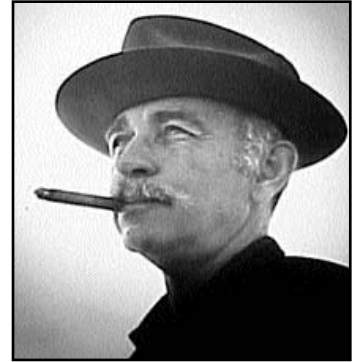


Figure 1. Paul Eakins, circa 1970s.



Figure 2. The Gay 90s Melody Museum, across from Busch Stadium in St. Louis, circa 1970.

heating, plumbing and air-conditioning business was any good at all in helping me figure out how to go about fixing them [the mechanical musical instruments] but, it's just a matter of common sense." Paul did most of his restoration work, especially the organs (sometimes staying up to 4:00 a.m. to do it) but did have help from Ray Conley, who later worked for G. A. MacKinnon of Charlotte, NC and later, the Floyd Miles "Miles Musical Museum" in Eureka Springs, AR. As a pioneer collector he was one of the first to tackle large fairground organs in the early 1960s — noteworthy especially because there were no restoration references on the topic.

The Eakins' were involved with two public displays of mechanical musical instruments: the first was the Gay 90's Village in Sikeston, MO, and the second was the Gay 90's Melody Museum in downtown St. Louis. A quote from one of his record albums, *Fantastic, Honky Tonk Player Barroom Piano*, adequately sets the tone for this collecting advocacy:

The Gay Nineties Village has been characterized as the Disneyland of the Midwest. It is one of America's foremost amusement centers. The Gay Nineties Village came into being when Paul Eakins, a mechanical engineer with a growing plumbing and heating business, had to create a new and less strenuous life for himself on the advice of his doctor. He turned to the hobby of collecting and restoring elderly nickelodeons. As often happens, the avocation became a new career. Paul has gathered at Sikeston, Missouri, one of the largest collections of calliopes, band organs, orchestra pianos and automatic banjos in the world, and has become a leading expert on their care and feeding.

The Museums

The Gay 90's Village museum was open to the public from 1961 to 1966. The Gay 90's Village was part of a large tourist attraction which resembled a Wild West town. Next to the museum was another family-owned business, the Indian Trading Post. At first Paul's interest was American nickelodeons, but as he continued to collect he progressed to European instruments and in particular, fairground organs.

In 1966 Mr. William Dooley, on behalf of the Lewis-Howe Company, a family-owned business that manufactured Tums antacid as well as "Natures Remedy," contacted Paul. Behind the Lewis-Howe business on 4th Street in St. Louis stood their warehouse (Spruce and Broadway). The city of St. Louis at the time was in a large urban renewal project and was tearing all the old buildings down. Mr. Dooley had a Coinola S orchestrion in his living room and with this interest in mechanical music and the neces-

sity to preserve his warehouse, an idea then surfaced for a museum. Paul Eakins was contacted and this was the beginning of the Gay 90's Melody Museum. The machines were not purchased from Eakins, but rather leased for a three-year period.

The physical set-up of the museum was very interesting. Each instrument was showcased in its own booth (28 altogether) and was enclosed in front by a wrought iron fence to keep the customers at arms length. Each was tripped by a remote coin collecting box (25 cents) and there was always a description of that particular machine nearby. Entrance into the museum would find you on the first floor in the midst of several large fairground and band organs. A second floor also housed interesting but lesser important machines.

The Gay 90's Melody Museum opened in July 1967 and remained open for three years until closing in 1970. Fortunately for collectors and historians today the museum was fairly well documented by postcard advertising and photographic slides that were for sale at the time. The music of the machines in this museum as well as Sikeston's Gay 90's village has also been well preserved in over 44 music albums and tapes promoted by Paul and Laura Eakins.

The museum, and its organs in particular, must have made a substantial impression on the locals as the headlines of a July 18th, 1967, St. Louis Globe-Democrat declared "Sounds of Gay 90's to Battle 20th Century Stadium Sonics" (remember, the St. Louis Cardinals baseball stadium was just across the street). The article went on: "The gang in the bleachers at Busch Stadium will have to be pretty riotous to drown out Big Bertha, Madam Laura, Sadie Mae and the Emperor—especially if they're all sounding off at the same time."

As mentioned above, Paul Eakins remained owner of all of the machines in the Gay 90's Melody Museum. This was his limit in the operation of the museum, however. It is speculated that the museum, while having a good traffic flow and business, was not a moneymaking proposition. While all the machines in the museum were the property of the Eakins, not all of his and Laura's machines were in the museum, as many remained in Sikeston.

The Organs

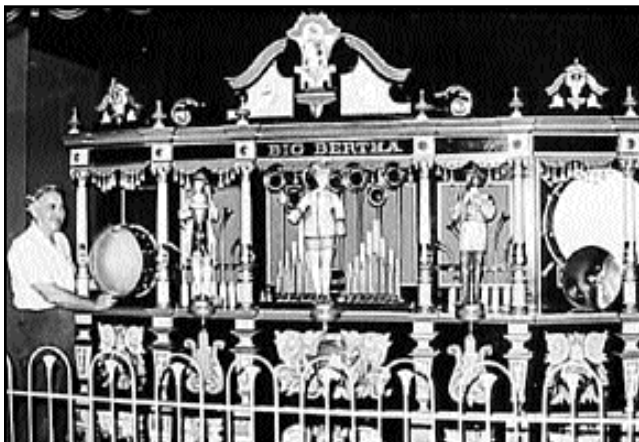


Figure 4. Paul Eakins demonstrates Big Bertha, a 82 fair organ. See text below for discussion of its origins.

Paul Eakins had happily rescued three fair organs from rotting conditions where they were stored in Gulf Shores, Alabama. These three had all been featured on one gigantic carousel in Ramona Amusement Park, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The first was **Big Bertha** (Fig. 4) supposedly an 82-key Limonaire fair organ that featured a buxom director up front along with two bell ringers. Several organ authorities agree that this was not a Limonaire, however, and historian Tim Trager suggests that it might have been a Frati as it is similar to the large Frati at Knoebel's Grove in Elysburg, PA. The organ was converted by Artizan to play the Style E 87 key roll. The organ is now extensively altered and displayed in an elevated position on a dining room wall of the Grand Floridian Hotel in Disney World, where sadly, it plays with all the stops off because it is too loud for the dining room.

The second of these was an 87-key Gavioli Dance Organ, **Madam Laura**. Also playing book music, this organ was said to have been painted in colors to suggest a huge valentine. The façade is decorated with three graceful figures, with the central one being the lady director from whom the organ gets its name. While this may have been a Gavioli organ, it is the same organ as illus

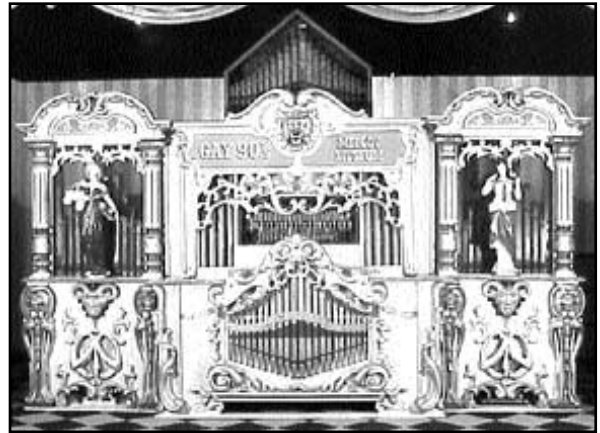


Figure 3. The Emperor, a 80-key Mortier Dance Organ which uses book music.

In addition to the many coin-operated pianos and orchestrions that graced the collection were several selections of band and fair organs. While only a few pianos were given a title, Paul had named most of the organs (apparently having a fascination with women) and some examples are Big Bertha, Sadie Mae, Madam Laura, Hot Lips Houlihan, Katy Lou and Big Nelly.

One of the largest crowd pleasers at the museum was the **Emperor**, a Mortier dance organ that was made in Belgium in the late 1880s. Playing from 80-key cardboard books, the Emperor contained 418 pipes plus 44 xylophone bars and the usual organ traps. Paul Eakins purchased this organ from the Vat Hoesbek Beek Beer Garden in Mishawaka, Indiana. As described in a record brochure, the Emperor was noted to be "lavishly decorated with arabesque carvings, hand-carved figures, and lions heads. When this machine plays, it attracts people as did the Pied Piper of Hamelin." The Emperor eventually was sold to Disney World where it was never used, and is now in the Neilson Collection in Pennsylvania.

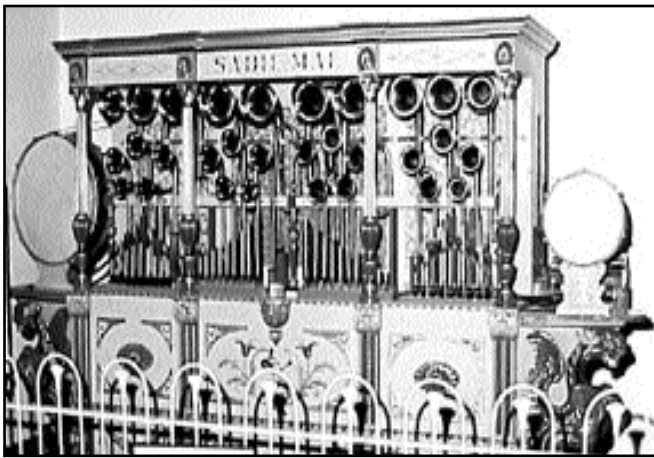


Figure 5 (left). Sadie Mae, as she sat in the Gay 90s museum. Her color was pink and the brass trumpet and trombone pipes made a great contrast. On the right (Figure 6) is the identical organ but pictured earlier as a North Tonawanda Barrel Organ Factory (deKleist) Style 28A.



trated on p 906 of Bower's Encyclopedia -- an 87 key Muzzio organ (Muzzio sold organs made by Frati [primarily] but also some from Gavioli—John Muzzio and Son of New York was an importer of fair organs around 1910.). Madam Laura originally played from a pinned barrel but was converted by Muzzio to play 87-key book music. It is now in a private collection in North Carolina.

The third and most interesting (historically) organ was a 99-key Gavioli (wrong, but we will elude to that in the following paragraphs) brass trumpet organ named *Sadie Mae* (Figs. 4 & 5). This organ contained 20 brass trumpets and 10 brass trombones as well as violin, flageolet, piccolo, clarinet, flute, cello, bass and accompaniment pipes. It was originally played from a pinned barrel but later converted to play Gavioli book music. This is the instrument I referred to at the beginning of this article, being offered for a whopping sum of \$8,000.00 at the time the museum closed. It subsequently went to Disney World (as did most of the Eakins collection) and in producing their album "America on Parade" the Disney Studio chose Sadie Mae to represent the Eakins collection. Relevant to the following paragraphs was Paul Eakins account of the façade (as described on a record album "Loudmouth Sadie Mae"):

The ornamentation is magnificent, typical of the style that Europeans love so well. On each side, below the drum sections, are most unusual stylized dragons with gold teeth. The central decorations are sprays of flowers with a lute and two woodwind instruments. Curled around this are two little green snakes. The exotic draped wreaths on the lower façade consist of a great number of intricately carved flowers tied with cross-bound ribbons. The classic laurel leaves are used in outline carvings enclosing oval medallions. Decorative newel posts add to the elegance of the organ. Behind the brass horns may be seen the lovely blue and gold silk brocade setting off their beauty. The same beautiful blue also sets off the bells. The main body of the organ is a flamboyant pink, along with trim of reds, blues, aquas, and gold.

Over 20 years later, and having never being displayed for the public, Sadie Mae surfaced again in the late 1990s and was sold to a St. Louis collector. Close inspection by several collectors at that time revealed that this organ was not a Gavioli organ as originally believed but rather a very early North Tonawanda Barrel Organ Factory (early deKleist) No. 28A. The snare and bass drum and cymbal have been removed from the top of the organ and placed on either side. Was it a deKleist-made organ or was it made by Limonaire? Opinion is divided amongst contemporary historians but never-the-less, it was not originally a Gavioli. Interesting

is the fact that this organ is probably the one and same organ featured in deKleist's 1901 catalog. The markings on the oak wood paneling on the facade of the existing Sadie Mae in the Weber collection match exactly those in the 1901 catalog.

A fourth organ in the Eakins collection was the *Gypsy Queen*, a 52-key Gasparini fairground organ (Fig. 7). The organ was originally a 61-key barrel-organ, which was later converted to book operation. This organ had five figures on the front and was named from the Gypsy lady painted on the top of the façade. Tim Trager believes that this organ has always been a 52-key organ and was later converted from a 52 key book organ. Eakins spent 1300 hours restoring it. It was sold to the Bellm museum in Sarasota, Florida, after the museum closed and now resides in another Florida collection.

The last of the large European organs was *Pinkey*, originally an 89-key Hooghuyts fair organ which was converted to play the 82-key Artizan paper roll system. Three articulated figures highlighted this organ as it played. Even though Eakins touted this as a Hooghuyts, historian Fred Dahlinger noted that "the grandson of the Hooghuyts organ builders looked at photos I supplied and stated it was not a Hooghuyts." Again, contemporary historians agree what the organ is not and that it is probably one of the series of Gavioli organs with the façade that features a large moth



Figure 7. Gypsy Queen, a 52-key Gasparini fairground organ.

in the middle of the facade. This organ was also sold to Walter Bellm and it also resides in the same collection as noted with the Gypsy Queen.

The group of American band organs represented in the Eakins' collection was a good sampling of Rudolph Wurlitzer's entry into the band organ business and these included the Styles 103, 104, 148, 153 and 157. The Wurlitzer Style 103, or *Jenny* as she was



Figure 8. Paul Eakins with his last remaining organ in 1987.

fondly named, was the smallest of the mass-produced Wurlitzer band organs. Jenny was one of the few (if any other) Wurlitzer 103s to be primarily featured on a recording. In addition, *Hot Lips Houlihan*, a Wurlitzer 104, likewise entertained thousands with its own recording (Fig. 8). After Paul Eakins' empire of mechanical music was sold off during the 70s and 80s, Hot Lips Houlihan was the only organ remaining in his possession when Bill Pohl and I visited Paul in Sikeston in 1987.

A Wurlitzer Style 148 Band Organ, *Sara Jane*, was a splendid example of a Wurlitzer brass trumpet organ. I can recall that when I visited the museum in 1970 the temptation of "trumpet toss" must have been too great for the younger admirers and a grate had been installed over the brass pipes to prevent someone from "scoring." "Carnival Life with Sara Jane" was one of several records featuring this popular organ.

Katy Lou was a Wurlitzer Style 153 Military Band Organ, again fortunate enough to entertain thousands with its own recordings. Katy Lou, along with Jenny, the Wurlitzer Style 103, were two organs that did not

go to Disney but rather ended up in "Russ Nichols Circus Music" caravan. Advertised as the "Largest traveling display of Band Organs in the World" Russ and Connie Nichols of Columbia, MO, purchased these two organs as well as the Tanglely Calliope at the closure of the museum and put all three in a semi-trailer where they displayed them at rallies and fairs.

Perhaps the most infamous of the American organs in the Eakins collection was the *Queen of Kings Island*, a Wurlitzer Style 157 Orchestral Organ. Obtained from a carousel in an amusement park on a pier in Asbury, NJ, this organ was restored to its original condition and then, after the Gay 90's Melody Museum closed, was sold to Kings Island Park in Ohio. Kings Island bought it to replace the another Style 157 that was sold to mechanical music restorers Haning and White (that particular organ ended up in the Bronson collection in Dundee, MI). Harvey Roehl noted in a 1966 "House Organ" that it was used for some of the commercial ads for Campbell's Pork and Beans on the radio.

In addition, the collection included the Artizan Factories Inc. Style C-2 military band organ, known as *Big Nelly* which played the 61 note style D roll (Fig. 9). Harvey Roehl in a Vestal Press House Organ review, noted that this organ was one of the best sounding organs. It was sold to Walt Disney World who later moved it to Euro Disney near Paris.

Other American organs included a Wurlitzer Style 105 band; a Wurlitzer Caliola and an original Tanglely Calliope.

The Gay 90's Melody Museum closed on September 1, 1970 due to a lack of support by the St. Louis population. Although there were 50,000 visitors in the first 8 months the numbers dwindled and the mechanical musical machines left the St. Louis area. As reported in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat in late 1970 "Sour notes on the cash register have sounded taps for the Melody Museum." About six of the instruments were sold directly off the floor but the rest were taken back to Sikeston with some of them going to collectors and Bellm's Music of Yesterday Museum in Sarasota, Florida and the rest to Disney in Florida. Paul Eakins, in his mid-seventys, died from a series of strokes in the late 1980s. Laura Eakins resides in Sikeston and has continued to sell cassette tapes.

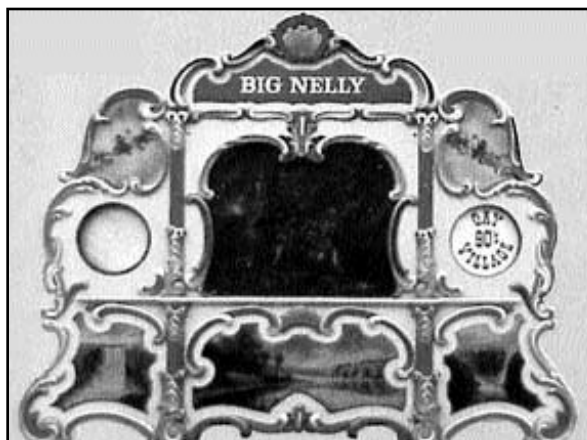


Figure 9. The Artizan Factories, Inc. Style C-2, known as Big Nelly.

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Ron Bopp is a long-time collector and historian of mechanical music with an emphasis on fair and band organs.

... Continued from page 1 (*Mechanical Organs of the American Traveling Circus, Menagerie and Wild West*)

Two hand organs, along with a bass drum and an Italian cymbal to accompany it, passed from one menagerie owner, John Miller, to two others, Thaddeus and Gerard Crane, in 1821.

English instruments were the types typically used by early American showmen. Most of them were imported on speculation by merchant sea captains and music supply houses. The French and German organ building industries did not yet flourish and offer readily available exports until the middle of the nineteenth century. For the time being, the principal source of many American imports, England, remained the primary supplier of early traveling showmen's instruments.

Joseph Beloudy, the maker of the instrument with the 1821 menagerie mentioned previously, is a documented English manufacturer of hand organs. They are so named because they were placed into action by turning a hand crank protruding from the case containing the mechanism. Fortunately, a very rare Beloudy organ still exists in England and provides some insight into the size and simplicity of the instruments that entertained Americans in the first decade of the nineteenth century (Fig. 1). The traveling organs were not tall, upright units of the parlor type one would find in homes of the wealthy, but short, compact devices which were easily carried by a single person and stowed within a restricted space. These small instruments had two or three stops, or types of pipes, numbering 60 or so in total. The small cases caused the pipework to be extremely short, yielding quite high-pitched pipes for the most part. We would probably describe them as shrill or squeaky, or perhaps tinny, in our contemporary terminology. When they went out of tune or played improperly they could be abominable, as many mid-nineteenth century commentators on street hand organs later attested.

The early organs did not include percussion devices. In several cases the menagerie owner hired not only the hand organist but also had someone "double in brass" by beating upon a drum or playing a set of cymbals to accompany the organ. At other times one or more people playing a violin or clarinet may have accompanied the organ. Before condemning this musical ensemble, one must remember that the rural populations in particular were starved for music. Access to secular sheet music was limited and musical instruments and those who could play them were relatively uncommon. If one could hear a favorite melody from the homeland, a classical selection or the latest popular composition on a menagerie hand organ, there was little to complain about because there was no alternative. "Good music" could be interpreted to mean the only music.

When the organist was identified, he was usually a youth or black. In 1826 one Daniel Benedict had responsibility for the mechanical and musical organ of the Doolittle menagerie. He was a youthful white man. Black men performed the duty with the 1870 C. T. Ames Menagerie and the Sun Bros. Circus of about 1914. The black man's association with the organ-cranking position became so entrenched that the North Tonawanda, New York carousel manufacturers at the turn of the century (1900-1901) fitted mechanical black figures to the barrel organs on their track mounted machines. They endlessly cranked away their useful life in this menial position.

The mass appeal of the menagerie waned by the 1840s and the animal collections became an adjunct of the expanded circus activities. Other types of traveling enterprises, including itinerant museums and sideshows, similarly came to be annexed to the circus. The circus scene was dominated by the big top, a one hundred or so foot diameter tent that housed a 42-foot diameter ring, in which the performance was staged, and seating for the patrons. The show moved on a daily basis commencing in 1825, when the tent

to house the show first came into use. It traveled overland, by horse, wagon and carriage, and moved to a new community every day except the observed Sabbath. Making its presence known was accomplished by advance advertising and the making of unusual sounds and presentations in the city on the day of exhibition.



Figure 1. This rare organ was made by Beloudy of England. It is thought to be of the type used by the early American traveling menageries. Courtesy Michael Bennett-Levy.



Figure 2. The Davis Bros. Circus sideshow annex of 1911 featured a small hand organ to attract a crowd. It is shown here on the bally platform in front of the bannerline. Courtesy Circus World Museum

The circus had an enduring appeal and an ability to draw a diverse crowd under nearly all circumstances and in virtually every locale. In time, the distant sounds emanating from the hand organ in the menagerie, museum or sideshow came to be regarded as one of the symbols of the arrival and presence of the circus in smaller communities. As a reporter for the 1872 Jackson, Michigan, *Daily Citizen* wrote, "The voice of the melodious hand organ was heard thro (sic) the land mighty early this morning. Circus Day." The J. E. Warner & Co. circus had arrived that morning to entertain the Jacksonians (Fig. 2).

In addition to the hand organs of the circus, it was not uncommon for itinerant organ grinders that set out on the road from major cities in the spring to follow circuses and become part of the din of Circus Day. They were among the camp followers that relied upon the circus to draw a crowd from which they could extract their "coppers." The frequency of organ grinders seems to have reached something of a zenith of awareness in the mid-1850s, when the trade became pronounced across America as the result of immigration from particular Italian provinces. In 1854 there were singing girls with an organ and tambourine in the vicinity of the Franconi Hippodrome. Some stout, sunburned German girls cranked out discordant renditions of "Old Hundred," "Jim Crow," "Old Dan Tucker" and similar pieces in 1855 near the Van Amburgh & Co. Menagerie. The general impression of these music providers may be reflected in one reporter's account of a visit to a giant's tent in 1864, where "The music was a horrid hand organ which grated harshly on the ear, and our citizens were glad to have it cease."

Enterprising showmen determined other means by which an idle hand organ might be returned to service. Applications which have been identified include elephant acts, clown and performer gags and general performance accompaniment. Prior to the development of the military drills, which characterized elephant acts for many years, simple physical maneuvers and skits were performed by pachyderms in the ring. The first impresario to present an elephant cranking an organ has not been established, but in 1855 there was a unique example of a horse cranking a hand organ in the ring. This

was done by the trained horses Prince and Napoleon on Signor Chiarini's Italian Circus, combined with Raymond & Co.'s Menagerie. Sands, Nathans & Co.'s two elephant act of 1858 featured Albert cranking an organ while Victoria "waltzed" to its melodies. Similar pachydermatic operation of hand organs has been identified with the Cooper & Bailey circus in 1876, the Howes Great London show of the late 1870s, W. W. Cole in 1886 and the Lockhart elephants with the Ringling brothers at the turn of the century (Fig. 3). The elephant organ and dancing skit was so common by the early 1880s that noted zoologist William T. Hornaday (1854-1937) included it in his list of elephant acts when he surveyed the circus use of pachyderms in 1883.



Figure 4. The Kassino act of little people featured a typical street-type hand organ mounted on a small goat cart. the organ was half as big as the men who cranked it. Courtesy *The Billboard*.

The most ambitious attempt at elephantine music was the Adam Forepaugh "Musical Band of Elephants," schooled in the "Mysteries and Intricacies of Instrumentation" by Adam Forepaugh, Jr. (1859-1919), son of the great showman and an animal trainer of some repute. This grouping discoursed what might be called "heavy" music from a hand organ, accordion, bass drum, cymbal, xylophone and bells, all under the direction of one of their peers who held a baton in her trunk. "Popular operas, patriotic, sentimental and comic airs" were described as the product of this group of animal prodigies, with one writer indicating that airs from the operas "The Beggar Student," and "Iolanthe" could be heard. The Forepaugh elephant band concept was later restaged on the John Robinson Circus of 1903.

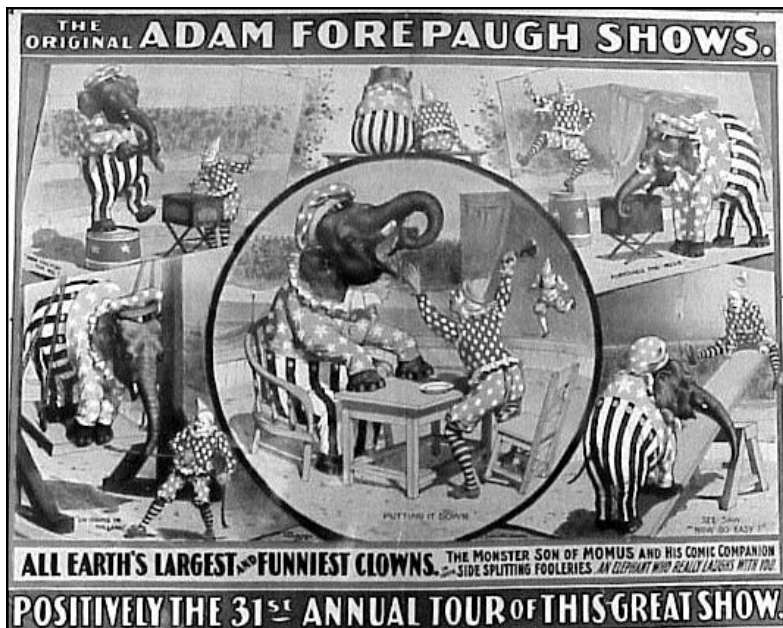


Figure 3. Elephant-crank hand organs were part of elephant acts as early as the 1850s. Here is such an act illustrated in an 1894 Adam Forepaugh circus poster. Courtesy Circus World Museum.

A few clown gags employed organs as either ethnic or incidental music sources. The Kassino Midgets, a group of little people who were hired by both Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows and the Sells-Floto Circus in the 1920s, had a hand organ mounted on a small cart pulled by a goat for one of their gags (Fig. 4). Three clowns, Del LeClair, Al Darrow and Perky Perkins staged a gag in which LeClair cranked a hand organ and Perkins donned a monkey suit and metal cup. Darrow played a cop who roused the two as they begged for money. It was a takeoff on the oft-repeated street scene of the Italian with his hand organ and monkey. Ethnic caricatures were a staple of the stage and ring at the turn of the century and the common Italian association with street instruments provided fodder for several comedy artists. One example, the Deltorelli & Co. act on the 1910 Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows, did skits titled "The Streets of Italy" and "Caruso and his Professor," working a cart mounted street piano into their work.

While on the subject of street pianos, it should be noted that they were not as commonly found at circuses as mechanical organs. The earliest mechanical piano to be discovered was a "Self-Acting Piano" located in the 1874 museum of Adam Forepaugh's circus. It was reportedly an attraction at the 1873 Vienna World Exhibition and had a repertoire of fifty tunes, being no doubt some type of cylinder-operated piano. The other known examples are the fine crank piano in the 1891 Walter L. Main circus side show, a Pomero-made instrument with a mandolin attachment on the Charles Alderfer show in the late 1910s, an unattributed crank piano with the Atterbury horse opera in 1921 and another on the motorized Bardon & Doss outfit in the 1920s. A coin piano, popularly called a nickelodeon and characterized as the type found in bordellos, was with Dave Gillespie's 1914 touring troupe.

Neither the hand organ nor the crank piano is properly called a hurdy gurdy. The hurdy gurdy is actually a hand-cranked violin, examples of which were reportedly operated by a German named Sanders on the 1826 Quick & Mead show and by another party on the 1827 Washington Circus. A precursor to one man band novelties was with the Nixon & Kemp Circus in 1857, described as a man with several bells on his head and playing a French violin in his hands which played by a crank—no doubt cranking away on a true hurdy gurdy.

From the inception of the American circus in 1793 until the relatively recent advent of reliable sound reproduction technology, it was circus practice to hire musicians to accompany live ring performances. Circus musicians, or "windjammers" as they are called in the business, could adapt and pace their live, scripted music to accompany the performers' efforts in the ring. On occasion mechanical instruments were utilized to replace or augment bands. About 1885, "Old" John Robinson recalled that when he first entered the business in 1842 that the band consisted of a hand organ, a clarinet and a bass drum. In 1859, when the band walked off Gil Eldred's show a crank organ substituted for them at the next performance. A similar circumstance took place on the M. L. Clark & Son circus about 1910, when the band went on a bender and was replaced by the show's organ wagon. In 1894 Frank Irvin's 25-cent wagon show claimed their seven-piece band was strengthened by a large orchestrion of an unknown nature. In the case of the later menageries, where ring activity accompanied the zoological offerings, hand organs typically sufficed to accompany the pony riding monkeys and such. In 1877 the *New York Clipper* reported that Van Amburgh & Co. Menagerie proprietor Hyatt Frost (1827-1895) had dispensed with the "old favorite," the hand organ, in favor of a six piece band. Undoubtedly the sophistication of the menagerie audience had advanced to the point that simple organ melodies were no longer adequate even for rural populations.

The earliest of the wagon-mounted show organs were actually pipe organs with self-playing attachments. They were constructed by a famous New York builder of church organs, Henry Erben (1800-1884). Well known circus innovators Gilbert Spalding (1812-1880) and Charles J. Rogers (1817-1895)

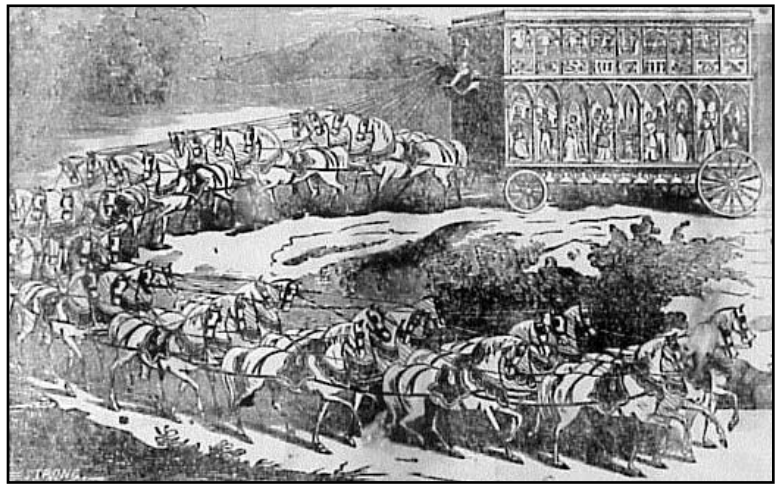


Figure 5. The Spalding & Rogers Apollonicon of 1849 was the first large wagon containing an organ to travel with an American overland circus. Courtesy Howard Tibbals Collection.

caused the first such contrivance to be built as a special attraction for their North American Circus in 1849. To carry the heavy burden over America's rudimentary roads, New York omnibus and horse car manufacturer John Stephenson (1809-1893) built a vehicle that was called the Apollonicon, after the Greek muse Apollo (Fig. 5). After experiencing difficulties during a few years' use, it is believed that the Erben organ was removed and placed on the duo's Floating Palace, a full theater mounted on a barge, with the Apollonicon subsequently utilized as an enclosed bandwagon. For those familiar with pipe organs, one can imagine the problems attendant to lugging a several-thousand pound instrument overland, subject to the vagaries of weather and less than expert maintenance and tuning.



Figure 6. In 1850 the G. C. Quick menagerie featured the Automatodeon, concealing the organ inside with painted scenes and draped material. Courtesy Circus World Museum.

The owners of G. C. Quick and Co.'s Menagerie of 1850 desired to duplicate the Spalding and Rogers achievement and arranged for Erben, and no doubt Stephenson, to clone a near copy that they called the Automatodeon (Fig. 6). One must remember that neither of these devices contained a prime mover

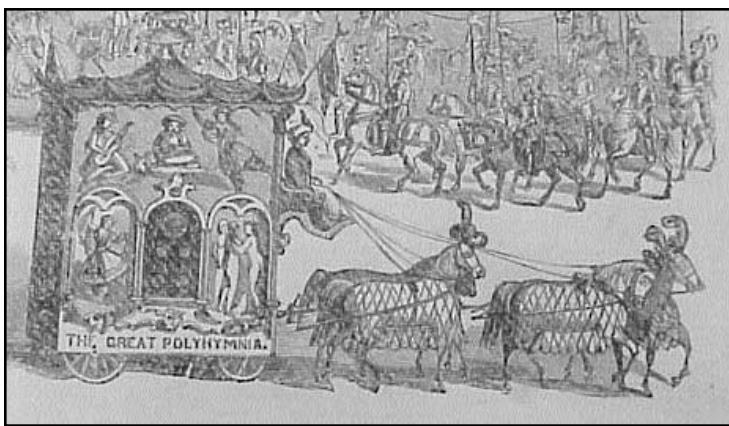


Figure 7. The Polyhymnia was an organ that served with the Yankee Robinson circus in the late 1860s. Note the decorative use of bells and exotic decorations to enhance the vehicle. Author's collection.

or device to power the wind source. An individual, or perhaps two, was pressed into service to pump the lever which filled the chests with wind from the feeders, pump or bellows, as they might commonly be called. Following the Erben instruments came the Apolonian (sic) of the 1858 E. Ganoung & Co. Consolidated Circus and Menagerie and the Polyhymnia of the 1866 Yankee Robinson show (Fig. 7). Both were short-lived attempts at hauling a large musical device across the country roads. None of these musical extravaganzas lasted more than a couple seasons in overland operation, further progress in the organ wagon line being inhibited until the adoption of rail travel by circuses in the 1870s.

As Peter Sells (1845-1904) recalled it, expansion came like an avalanche upon the circus business in the 1870s. The implementation of rail operations by circuses brought an immediate increase in their audiences and a boost to both their popularity and profit possibilities. Flush with success and cash, boosters and visionaries like P. T. Barnum sought out special acts, exhibits and features with which to dazzle their patrons. Among the first things Barnum acquired was an organ wagon, which the show called the Harmonicon. Such grand titles, at first taken from the names of the Greek Muses, were directly from the circus bill writer's voluminous vocabulary of alliterative language. Perhaps W. C. Coup (1836-1895), who featured at least three organs on his circus, had the grand-

est of all, The Salpingasian Chariot of Mnemosyne (Fig. 8). In this case the instrument lived up to the billing, being a 20 foot long monstrosity which not only housed a large organ but also had a Victorian-like false facade which elevated upwards from inside the wagon to about fifteen feet for parade purposes. Other circus organ wagons included Adam Forepaugh's Car of the Muses, W. W. Cole's Arionicon, John H. Murray's Apollonicon and the four Steam Musical Orpheades of the early 1880s John Robinson show.

Though little direct testimony has been discovered, considerable circumstantial evidence supports the conclusion that many of the virtuoso circus organs of the 1870s and 1880s were the handwork or responsibility of Wesley Jukes, a glassblower and ingenious mechanic who constructed and repaired automata, unusual display mechanisms and mechanical organs as early as 1871 for P. T. Barnum's Traveling World's Fair. Born in Pittsburgh, Jukes' career spanned over forty years, ending with an engagement in Chicago where he may have maintained the remnants of the W. C. Coup Rolling Palaces electric organ. Jukes' work associated

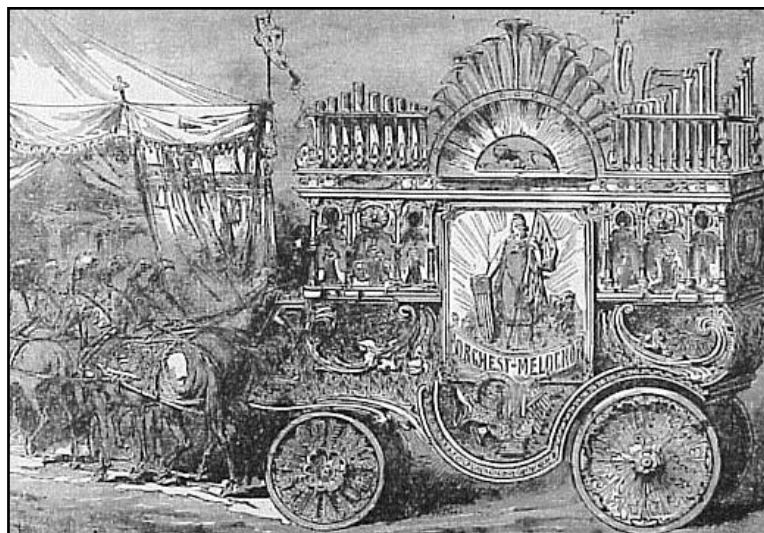
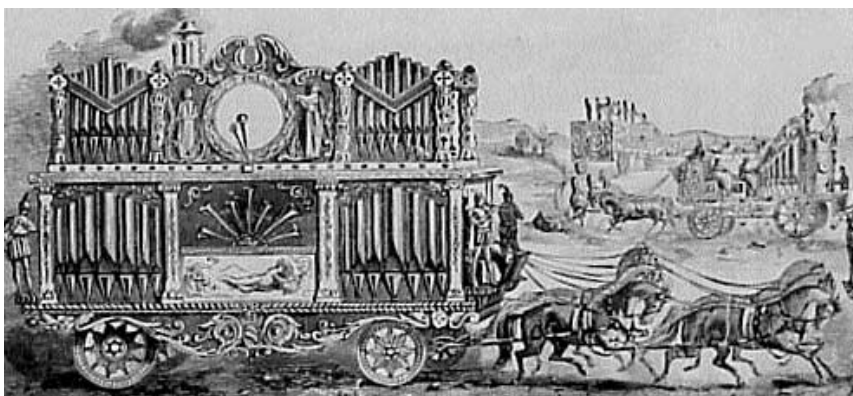


Figure 9. Wesley Jukes probably built the organ that resided in this 1882 Nathans & Co. parade wagon. Courtesy Circus World Museum.

him with the 1882 Nathans & Co. New Consolidated Railroad Shows, where he cared for an organ wagons called the Great Golden Chariot of Beethoven and the Musical Car of Orpheus,



*Perhaps
the greatest of all
circus organ wagons . . .
Salpingasian Chariot of
Mnemosyne*

Figure 8. Perhaps the greatest of all circus organ wagons was W. C. Coup's Salpingasian Chariot of Mnemosyne, shown in this 1882 engraving. Courtesy Circus World Museum.

the latter said to be powered by a new electric engine (Fig. 9). There was also the Jukes Automatic Museum and two cars of automata, the Mechanical Car of Yorick with groups of automatic clowns and the Chariot of Kaiser Wilhelm, with mechanical birds flying and singing and automatic speaking figures. Perhaps among the most interesting of Jukes' mechanical contrivances were the automaton bands, which mimicked the movements and sounds of an entire human band (Fig. 10). On top of one Coup tableau wagon he installed such an ensemble that was called Brannigan's Band.



Figure 10. Another of Jukes' creations was the automaton band. Here is one that adorned the roof of a W. C. Coup circus tableau wagon about 1882. Howard Tibbals Collection.

The wagons that conveyed and housed the mechanical organs originated in a number of ways. As already indicated, John Stephenson probably constructed both the 1849 Apollonicon and the 1850 Automatodeon. E. M. Miller of Quincy, Illinois, is credited with the construction of the Polyhymnia in 1866. Barnum's famous Orchestmelochor wagon started life as a bandwagon in 1868 and was substantially altered in 1879 to contain an organ. It is possible that one or more of the Coup organ wagons may have been built new by E. J. Quimby of Newark, New Jersey. Another of the organ wagons was built new in 1881 for the Burr Robbins Circus by Hodge & Buchholz of Janesville, Wisconsin (Fig. 11).

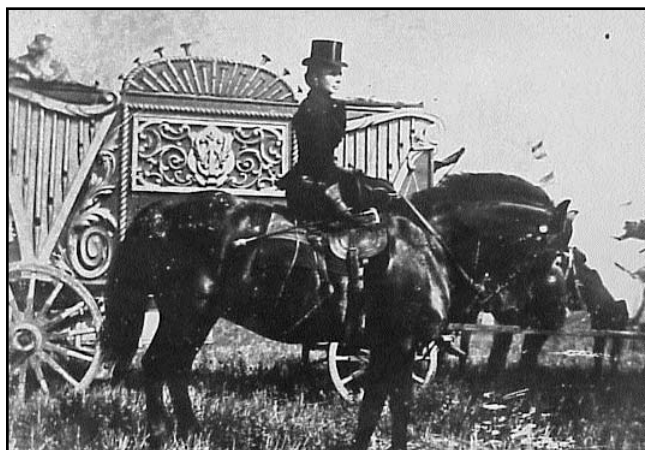


Figure 11. The lady rider is Mrs. Al (Louise) Ringling, but it's the Ringling Bros. circa 1894 organ in the background that is of interest here. Author's collection.

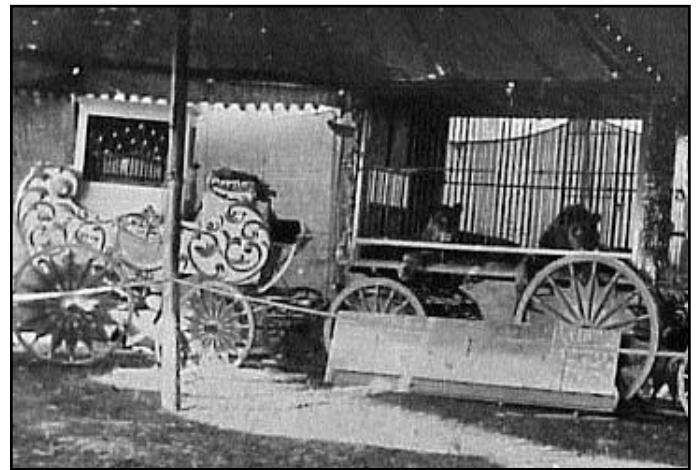


Figure 12. The military organ of the Mighty Haag Circus was placed inside of a small chariot and then displayed in the menagerie tent. Hopefully the lion nearby was a music enthusiast. Author's collection.

After the Orchestmelochor was altered to a tableau in the mid-1890s, the Barnum & Bailey show's twenty-some year old bell wagon was converted into an organ conveyance. The M. L. Clark show pressed a small chariot built by the Thompson Bros. of New Orleans into service to carry a new organ. The Mighty Haag circus similarly mounted a small military style organ in a small carved chariot and used it in both the daily parade and to enliven the menagerie tent (Fig. 12). The large Pawnee Bill Wild West organ wagon of 1904 is thought to have been built

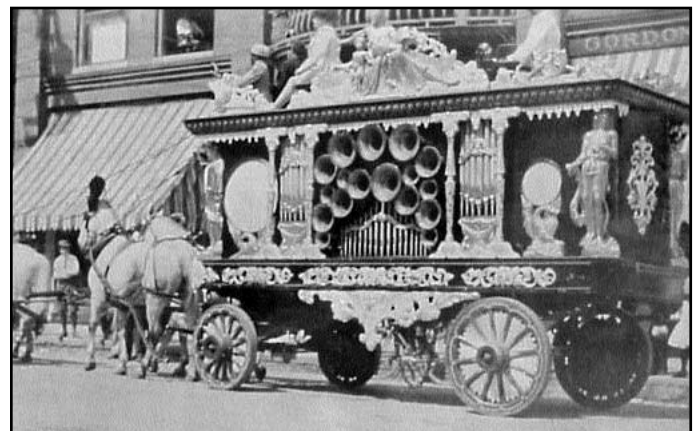


Figure 13. The 1904 Pawnee Bill Wild West organ wagon had large fake pipework on both sides of the wagon. A large military band organ must have been concealed inside the wagon. Courtesy Albert Conover collection.

by a Philadelphia wagon construction firm, likely Fulton & Walker, with carved ornamentation supplied by the Dentzel carousel firm, which may also have supplied the organ works (Fig. 13). Several of the wagons were fitted with drop bottoms, providing additional space to accommodate the height of the organs. At least two vehicles were fitted with telescoping devices that permitted a decorative pipe facade to be elevated during parade, artificially increasing the impressiveness of the device. The pipework fitted in these elevated pieces are thought to have been non-functional for the most part, but some percussion instruments, such as drums, might have been operable.

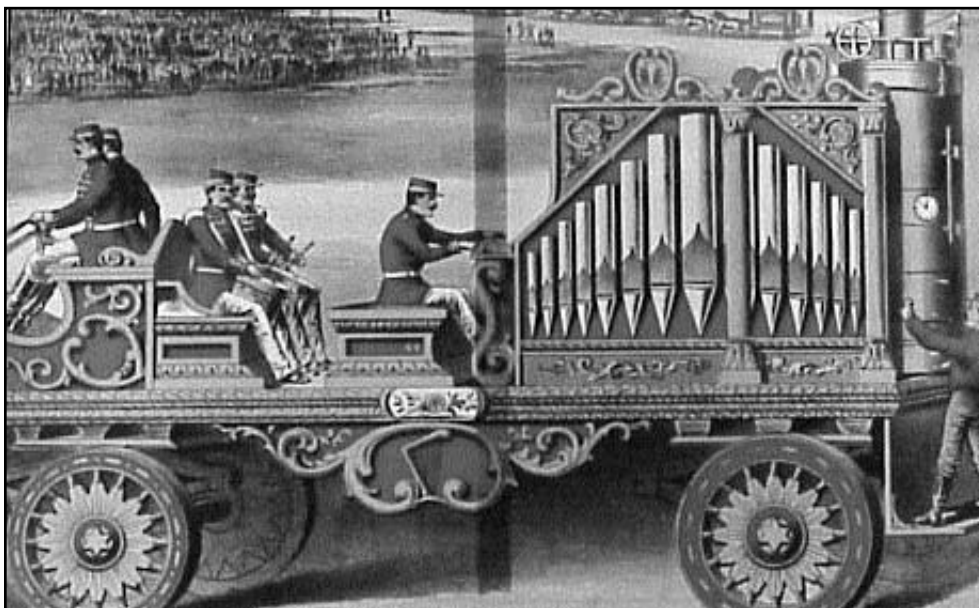


Figure 14. This circa 1876 poster may depict the Harmonicon of the P. T. Barnum circus. The drummers and keyboard artist may have been automaton figures, but the boiler fireman was likely a real person. Courtesy Howard Tibbals collection.

The typical motive power for most of the wagon-mounted organs of the 1870s was a little, perhaps one to two horsepower, reciprocating steam engine which was fed with steam from a small, vertical, fire tube boiler, all of which was housed within the decorative wagon. Contemporary knowledge of the steam calliope, coupled with clouds of smoke issuing forth from the boiler stack, often resulted in these organ units being referred to by the misnomer "steam organ" (Fig. 14). Most reporters must have thought that steam issued through the pipes and caused them to speak, as in a calliope, but such was not the case. Playing on high wind pressure (perhaps eight to ten inches of water column, which is only a one-quarter to one-third pound per square inch), these organs would have been quiet in comparison to their steam calliope cousins, which played on upwards of forty pounds per square inch pressure.

Though circuses had owned and presented steam boilers with calliopes since the late 1850s, fire inside a wood wagon resulted in trouble. On the very first day P. T. Barnum's Orchestmelochor appeared in parade, fire somehow came to exist outside the confines of the boiler firebox, resulting in the destruction of the organ. Thereafter, the Barnum show's organ was hand cranked, surely a tiring task as anyone who has hand cranked a large organ for any period of time can attest. Another example of boiler misadventure is a bit more humorous. In his memoirs, Al G. Fields (1848-1921) related that Ohio circus man G. G. Grady (1831?-1895) tried to outfit his circa 1860s show with a "calliope" by concealing a hand organ and operator inside a closed wagon. To create the impression of steam, straw was burned inside some type of enclosed box, with the smoke to issue forth from the top of the wagon. Grady's knowledge of combustion was less than satisfactory. The fumes and smoke released from the fire nearly asphyxiated the organ grinder before the wagon was broken open to rescue the luckless operator. Unfortunately for Grady, the ruse was exposed in

the middle of the street, to the amusement of local citizens.

Electricity served to power several portable organs. Electric power of one type or another had been available on circus grounds as early as 1879, when the first show-owned electric arc lights were introduced. Thereafter, electric power would have provided testimony to the progressive management of the show that utilized it. The electric motor of the 1882 Nathans & Co. machine has already been noted. It was pre-dated by an electric-powered organ that was reported to be part of the museum annex with J. W. Couch's circus out of Chicago. The large military band organ, which graced the Pawnee Bill Wild West operation, was referred to as an "Electric Organ" in show advertising. The Barnum &

Bailey show reportedly had an electric organ in 1904, the 1906 Mighty Haag Circus claimed that they, too, had an electric organ and in 1907 the Cole Bros. Circus talked about their electric orchestration in parade. In actual practice, an electric motor may have directly driven the organ crankshaft, but it would have been driven in turn by a small generator no doubt turned by an internal combustion engine or other primary power source.

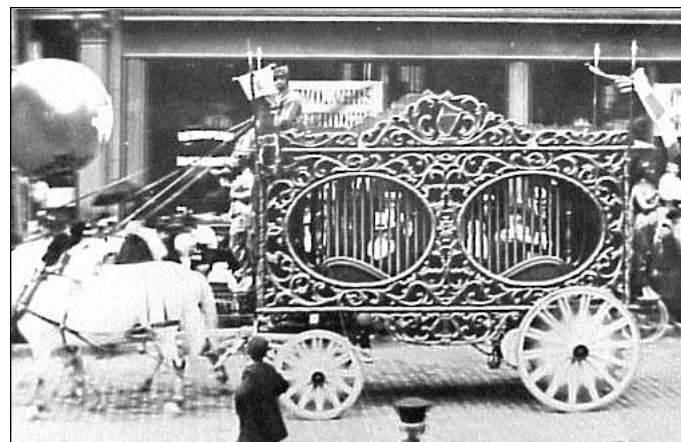


Figure 15. A wagon that formerly hauled a chime of bells was converted into an organ wagon for the 1903 Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth. Circus World Museum collection.

The Barnum & Bailey organ wagon of 1903 was fitted with a French-built gasoline engine, the operation of which initially stumped several so-called Bridgeport experts before someone was able to master it and explain the operation to head usher Charles Bernard, who was responsible for its operation (Fig. 15). From photographs, it is known that the organ was placed in the front half of the wagon and the engine in the rear, each wagon side having two large oval holes for ventilation and to permit the music to reach the parade observers.

One or two references have been found which describe organs being driven by the turning of the wagon's wheels as it rolled through the streets. The drawbacks to this type of propulsion are obvious when one begins to think of the inconsistent music tempo and the lack of power when the wagon was stopped, the operation of the instrument coming to a wheezing end at inopportune moments. Transient pitches from unstable wind, dropping registers and other operational problems would have been harsh on sensitive ears.

No detailed description of any of the early organ wagon interiors has been found. Given their 1870s to 1880s vintage, which pre-dated both perforated cardboard book and paper-roll technology, it is safe to assume that their musical programs were contained on interchangeable wooden cylinders, or barrels, into which metal pins and bridges were fitted according to the organ scale and musical score. A few cylinders would have provided limited tune selection capability, there being six to ten tunes per cylinder at most. It is probable that the organs were cased and not free standing within the wagon interiors, that is to say that the wind supply, chests and pipework were all enclosed within a protective wooden case with access openings for maintenance and to allow the sounds to issue forth. An uncased instrument would have provided perhaps greater space for pipework but would also have rendered the mechanism susceptible to damage from the elements and personnel occupying the wagon. None of the instruments would have been huge by church or later amusement park organ standards, but the appropriate selection of speaking voices would have rendered both loud and pleasing music. A Barnum organ offered for sale in 1877 was described as "a large size trumpet organ, equal to a full brass band." The description suggests either a large brass horn orchestrion, which featured attractive sprays of bright trumpets, or an early form of military band organ. A similar "imitation of a brass band" statement was applied to the next Barnum organ, the

Orchestmelochor of 1879. It is suspected that loudly voiced trumpets, with brass resonators, clarinets and flutes would have been found in most of these wagon organs.

Perhaps the last 1870's organ wagon to survive largely intact, the Barnum Orchestmelochor, was finally dismantled by the winter of 1894 and converted into a regular tableau, the ornate top and instrument being sold at auction on December 11, 1894 (Fig. 16). After passing through the hands of a number of showmen, the original parts that remained were decimated in a Disney Studios wagon reconstruction program in the mid-1950s. The artifact that exists at the Circus World Museum today contains but a few carvings that might date to its days as an organ conveyance. The largest Coup organ wagon was dismantled and made into two wagons by the mid-1890s. Three of the carved muses which originally decorated the elevated skyboards survived the destruction of the wagons and today survive in private collections. Two corner statues from the Barnum & Bailey bell wagon that carried an organ in 1903 and 1904 are preserved at the Circus World Museum. These are the only surviving remnants of a once prominent tradition of circus organ wagons.



Figure 17. Here is a small hand organ that bears the name of Taylor. Larger organs built by Taylor are unknown today. Courtesy Henry Ford Museum collection.

Whether made in the Paris, Berlin or Waldkirch organ shops and bearing his stencil, or constructed in his own New York shop on Chatham Square, organs bearing the nameplate of Henry S. Taylor (?-1895) were the type most frequently offered for sale in showmen's advertisements and auctions of the nineteenth century. Called simply "Taylor organs," they were frequently referred to as "sideshow organs," the name defining their typical place of purpose and perhaps a general level of musical capability (Fig. 17). A large imported sideshow organ of the 1870s was described as having flute and piccolo attachments, a tremolo and four stops, in addition to two cylinders with perhaps sixteen songs between them. The case of it was also iron bound to protect it from the rigors of daily handling. When the Bunnell brothers liquidated part of the equipment that comprised their side show operation on the Barnum show in the early 1870s, one of the two organs they offered to sell was large and nearly new and was priced at \$600.

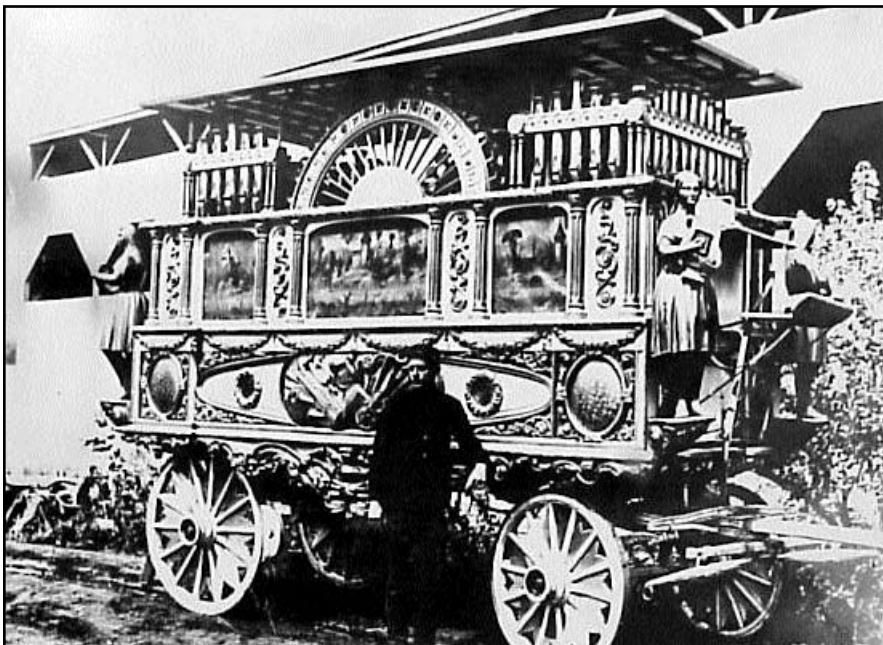


Figure 16. The most famous circus organ wagon was the 1879 P. T. Barnum show's Orchestmelochor. It's shown here in 1891, with its top pipework and roof in a semi-elevated position. Author's collection.

Beyond the great organ wagons and hand organs furnishing incidental music in tents, showmen had other mechanical music features created for their patron's enjoyment. Forepaugh's 1874 museum included an automatic trumpeter and a mechanical organist who cranked a hand organ while smoking his pipe. One envisions an early savoyard-type device when reading the description. One of the Barnum show organs was decorated with mechanical figures that played with the music. It was positioned inside one of his museum tents in 1878. Among the other musical novelties that could be seen in Barnum's tents were a Gideon's band, a monkey band and a mechanical cornetist, which brought a lowly three-dollar bid when it sold at a surplus auction in 1880.

In addition to the orchestrion like organs, a number of circuses procured instruments that can properly be called band organs. The American term "band organ" originated in the mid-1890s. Presumably the addition of percussion devices, such as drums, cymbals, bells and chimes, caused the change from "hand" organ because the instrumentation now replicated the sound of an entire band. A second adjective, "military," was frequently applied at the same time because the pipework and percussion produced the sound of the popular military bands of the period, including brass trombones, trumpets, flutes and piccolos. While the metallic resonator organs were louder than their wood pipe counterparts, they more easily went out of tune with atmospheric changes and also attracted more interest from winged insects, which viewed the polished brass as so many points of attractive light. Quantities of bugs often clogged the pipe throats or pipe reeds after finding escape from the alluring shiny resonators to be impossible.

Though most resources identify the German immigrant Eugene deKleist (1867-1913) as the first American band organ builder, the "first" American builder of larger showmen's organs was Henry Taylor. Only a few of Taylor's smaller hand organs survive today, but as early as the 1880s he was constructing medium size barrel organs with at least 60 keys. Until the arrival of deKleist in the early 1890s, the only other American supplier of organs that may have consistently solicited showmen's orders was the Molinari family of Brooklyn, New York. Their business seems to have focused more on the street organ trade than larger organs, but they advertised for show work in one late 1880s showmen's guide.

American circuses featured a variety of different band organ makes, there being no rationale applicable to the various acquisitions. A deKleist band organ served with the Al Bowdish circus. The Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows owned a 68-key cylinder-operated Frati organ, made in Berlin, and later had it converted to play continuous book music by Christopher Eifler. Perhaps the same, or another, Frati organ must have been with the Ringling-owned 1910 Forepaugh-Sells show, as they made a repair payment to Frati agent August Pollman at the beginning of the season. The Sun Bros. Circus had a medium size 58-key Wilhelm Bruder Sons organ from Waldkirch, the center of the German show organ industry, with their small railroad show. When the Barnum & Bailey show was in Europe in 1902 they had some dealings with the famous Berni brothers, buying a French brass horn organ, probably a Gavioli, from them.

Hoosier showman Ed Barlow added a North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works military-style organ to his show in 1908. The M. L. Clark circus had a Gavioli trumpet organ mounted in a small open parade chariot and a similar conveyance carried the deKleist military trumpet instrument of the Mighty Haag show. Sig Sautelle's various circuses had organs in 1898 and 1902, and in 1912 a Gavioli military band organ with chimes, a popular attachment which added brightness and enhanced carrying power. Andrew Downie's Walter L. Main operation had a cylinder-operated deKleist military organ that was repaired by Wurlitzer in the 1910s. All of these organs were used on the circus show grounds, the Ringling unit also going in parade after its acquisition in the early 1890s. Pawnee Bill's Wild West band organ, owned by the Mighty Haag circus after 1908, was the last frequently seen and heard circus-type organ wagon, surviving until about 1914.

There is some information available concerning the cost of a complete organ wagon setup which helps to explain why only the better capitalized shows fielded large organ wagons. Two Chicago individuals offered a former Barnum organ apparatus for sale in 1877 and claimed that it had originally cost \$5,000. The small tableau-like organ wagon which was built for Burr Robbins in 1881 was entered on the builder's books at \$700, which did not include the organ or its power source. When Pawnee Bill tried to peddle his 1904 organ outfit a few years later he recalled that it had cost \$3800. Mechanical organs of the size and type which would fit an organ wagon application listed from \$500 to \$1500 in a Molinari catalog from the turn of the century, a time when elaborate circus tableau wagons were being constructed for between \$1500 and \$2000. W. C. Coup noted that bandwagons and tableaus cost \$1500 to \$3000 two to three decades earlier. Escalating the costs to include an elevating apparatus for a decorative top, a steam boiler and a steam engine or other portable power source, one can see that the cost of a first class organ wagon could easily have approached three to five thousand dollars. This was double to triple the cost of the louder and more traditional steam calliope, which ranged in price from \$1500 to \$2500 new, and from \$400 to \$600 at resale. The only circus organ for which a purchase price has been found is the French organ and gasoline engine which were acquired by Barnum & Bailey for 1903. A ledger entry lists the cost at the equivalent of \$1543, near the top end of the range stated above. Bargains could be obtained. When two steam organs associated with Jukes were offered at two different auctions in 1882, they brought bargain winning bids of \$500 and \$700, perhaps 10 to 25% of their original construction price. Pawnee Bill's went at private sale for \$1200 in late 1908, less than one-third of the original price only four years previous.

Perhaps the largest circus band organ was a mammoth 82-key North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works mechanism which is believed to have traveled with the Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth. Probably carried in the years 1917-1918, it is known to us only by an entry in a 1919 inventory when it was considered surplus. It was mounted on a Mack truck chassis and was among the earliest motor trucks owned by a railroad circus. Circumstances suggest that it was very similar to a contemporary Ward Baking Company advertising unit

which was contained in a decorative body constructed by the Rech-Marbaker Company of Philadelphia, the principals of which included former circus wagon manufacturers Jacob Rech (1828?-1904) and Fulton & Walker, who did circus work as early as the 1870s. The North Tonawanda catalog price for this 82-key roll operated organ was \$2200 to \$2800. A heavy duty motor truck cost between \$1500 and \$3,000, with the decorative body perhaps running another \$500. This may have been the most expensive circus organ ever at between \$4,500 and \$7,000.

Wurlitzer is the best known of the American band organ builders, but perhaps only two of their products were used on an American circus lot. They were the two instruments which accompanied the C. W. Parker Carry-Us-All style merry-go-rounds on the Yankee Robinson and Sells-Floto circuses in 1915 and possibly subsequent years. These were small military band organs, about the size of a common Wurlitzer 125. Very likely they were second hand instruments which were selected from Parker's usual stock of instruments.

One of the last band organs carried by a railroad tent circus was the unidentified device which toured with the 1917 or 1918 Sells-Floto Circus. Described by its unidentified manufacturer as "the biggest ever put on four wheels," the late Bill Woodcock saw it in the show's parade and remembered that it endlessly ground out the then popular song "For Me and My Gal" in the menagerie tent. No tent show carried another mechanical organ until Circus Flora featured a Pell hand organ, made in England, at dates in 1986 and 1987, something of a return to the earliest menagerie practice (ed—played by *Carousel Organ's* Assistant Editor, Angelo Rulli). Nick Weber's Royal Lichtenstein Circus of 1991, a school show operation, carried a new Stinson-made Caliola, a device with a calliope-like name but which in fact is an organ with wood pipes, and sometimes, drums and a cymbal. Both of these organs played perforated roll or cardboard music, respectively, readily available from various sources, and catered to nostalgic tastes, as did the small hand organ owned by the Russell Bros. Family Fun Circus in 1995. The famous Royal American Shows 89-key Gavioli band organ served as entry entertainment to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's 1995 Clown College graduation ceremony in Baraboo, Wisconsin. A few years ago a major indoor circus and a large new wave circus both requested the Circus World Museum staff to explore several options to outfit them with a significant traveling organ. The Big Apple Circus eventually acquired a special British-made organ of 44 keys. Alan Pell created the organ based upon the design of Bob Yorburg of Mamaroneck, New York.



Figure 18. The Ringling Bros. organ wagon of 1903 was manually played. It may have been the heaviest organ wagon to ever travel with an American circus. Courtesy Albert Conover collection.

Playable by either a midi-disk system or a plug-in keyboard, the organ is featured as an integral part of Big Apple's stellar ring performance.

Hopefully in the near future an American circus will again carry a melodious and imposing mechanical organ, equal to that which can be seen with high quality European circuses. The Swiss national circus, Knie, once carried an impressive art nouveau-fronted Limonaire organ of at least 66 keys. Today, Circus Roncalli features an enormous 96-key Ruth/Voigt organ on their midway, surprising listeners with its smile-making melodies as it sits amongst the other showground memorabilia which owner Bernhard Paul has collected, restored and preserved.

The story of American circus mechanical organs will close with a non-mechanical example, if only to clear the air as to the nature of this well-known instrument. In addition to their mechanical organ, steam and air calliopes, unafons and the Classic Cathedral Chimes from Moscow's Famed Kremlin Tower (actually a bell wagon made entirely within Wisconsin), the famous Ringling brothers also placed a conventional straight pipe organ in a wagon in 1903 and used it both in their daily street parade and in the cathedral scene of their big top spectacle "Joan of Arc" (Fig. 18). This manually played organ was built by George Kilgen of St. Louis. It had four 61-key manuals, only one of which was functional, a 27-note pedal and 581 speaking pipes. The instrument was housed in a truly bulky wagon built by the Bode Wagon Company of Cincinnati that cost \$1425. Despite the brothers interest in it and several efforts to keep it serviceable, some inherent constructional difficulties caused its deletion from the show after only a few years use. Ed Cross, the organist, played such staples as Mendelssohn's "Wedding March," Sousa marches and patriotic pieces like "My Country Tis of Thee."

Fred Dahlinger, Jr. has been interested in band organs ever since he first experienced the 89-key Gavioli of the Royal American Shows about 1962. He currently serves as the Director of Collections and Research at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin and is the author of two books and over 50 articles on circus topics. One of his Museum projects was to manage the restoration of the RAS Gavioli, bringing it back to its full musical potential.

The Story of Captain John Leonard's Fascination with Military Band Organs

Captain John Leonard

I grew up in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and my family vacationed at Toronto Island, just south of Toronto, an important shipping port on Lake Ontario. Hanlan's Point, one of the three sections of the island, boasted of a large amusement park in the 1890s. The island was a major tourist area.

Naturally, there was a carousel with a band organ. I recall riding to the park on my bicycle and listening to the organ. I don't remember any of the tunes, but remember the banging of the beater hitting the big bass drum and cymbal. The carousel rounding boards had pretty scenes painted on them. One of the boards had the words "Herschell Spillman & Co., North Tonawanda New York, USA Builders." The carousel was a two-abreast model and all the horses were rockers. There were also two chariots for those who wanted to sit. One rocked and the other did not.

The carousel was operated by Mr. William Reed, whose nickname was "Pud." He also had a refreshment stand where he sold pop, ice cream, and candy bars, etc. Reed always dressed in dark and looked like a preacher. They used a real brass ring to offer riders a chance to win a free ride. Reed's wife sold tickets and he would sit on a bench and keep his eye on the entire operation. The operator would ring a bell to signal the start of the ride, then he would throw in the clutch to engage the carousel. As soon as the carousel was at full speed, he would walk over and turn on the band organ, which ran by pulley off the main drive motor. After one tune, he would shut it off then walk back and turn off the carousel. Not a very long ride, especially on a 10-tune roll, but the cost was only 5 cents, which I guess was quite a lot back then. If you caught the brass ring, of course you got a free ride. During the great depression, Pud at least kept a couple people working, which was a good thing.

I later learned that the carousel was shipped from North Tonawanda, NY, to Centre Island in 1914. Its cost was \$2,000, but I don't know if that included the band organ; probably not. I never saw the back of the organ but was told it only had a single roll tracker bar. I also don't know what style it was but I think it was a 146 Wurlitzer. Reed told me the rolls cost \$12 each. Sometime around 1937 he replaced the music with a 78 RPM phonograph and the organ wasn't used after that. I can still recall one of the songs: *The Merry Go Round Broke Down*. As I stood there as a child I recall wishing

that it would. I think Reed was one of the very first to use recorded music on his carousel. About 1939 he got the organ repaired by Eatons, a large department store in Toronto. I don't know what they did, but the organ finally played again. Unfortunately, Reed decided not to use the organ, even though it worked. I remember how sad I was that he wouldn't use the organ.

There is a sequel to this story. About 1957 the city of Toronto decided to rejuvenate the park. The carousel and building were dismantled. They sold the carousel and organ to Eatons. I tried to locate the organ, but was not successful. They sent me on a wild goose chase, but I had no luck at all. I told the Carousel Society and Alan Herschell III about what happened, with the hope they would have better luck, but never learned the organ's fate. Eatons is now out of business and what happened to the carousel and organ is anybody's guess.

Hanlan's Point boasted of an honest-to-goodness amusement park with a three-abreast Dentzel carousel, a Wurlitzer duplex 165 band organ, a grandstand, roller coaster, steam railroad and lots of other rides. The park was named for the family who settled there in the 1850s. They established a hotel for summer visitors and featured all kinds of attractions such as scuba diving, etc.

Like most amusement parks, the place was started by a street railway company. They ran the streetcars to the docks where one could board a ferry to the island. There was a separate

entrance to the park so that the transfer from the streetcar would not permit entry to the park. The railway company built the grandstand around 1900 and big ball games were featured there. Legend has it that Babe Ruth once hit a ball out of the park and into the bay. The ball was never found.

In 1920 the franchise for the street railway reverted to the City of Toronto and they decided not to renew it but rather took over the operation as a government entity. At

that time the company then sold the streetcars, ferryboats and the park to the highest bidder, who was Lawrence Soloman, who also owned the Toronto Maple Leafs baseball team. Soloman arranged a deal with the city to start up a new amusement park. The city-owned streetcars ran right past the location, it was close to the lake, and easily accessible with the then newly-popular automobile. The park was named Sunnyside and



Figure1. Captain John Leonard with his freshly restored North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works Style 173 circa 1996

it remains to this day. Solomon purchased a new Spillman carousel, a four-abreast model with Wurlitzer 165 band organ. The organ now resides at Disneyland in Anaheim, California. Solomon also purchased a Derby (horse) Ride made by Pryor and Church which also had a Wurlitzer 165 organ. The ride has since been sold at auction and its whereabouts and the fate of the band organ are unknown. The park at Hanlan's Point was taken over by the Island Airport and Toronto Harbor Commission in 1936. The old grandstand and stadium was torn down, but the Dentzel carousel remained and a few of the other rides as well. A few of the ferryboats stayed too, but business was nothing like it was in the old days as only one boat was used. The three-abreast Dentzel carousel was kept with the Wurlitzer organ and the organ was played all the time, whether the carousel was running or not, under the new management at Hanlan's Point. It was a happy time to go and listen to the band organ play all those tunes of the 1920s, like *Oh Katerina*; *Oh, How I Miss You Tonight*; *Chicago*; *Always*; and many others. In addition, the operator, Tommy Neale, was a friendly sort and a veteran of World War I. He'd talk with me, but never let me go behind the organ. He said someone from the office might report him and he could be fired. This was the depression, and if one looked sideways at the boss, you could get fired.

I spent so much time there I was beginning to be a bit of a nuisance and the park employees tried to shoo me away. I finally did get a job with a fellow who ran some of the concessions in the park. Luckily for me, I worked almost next to the carousel, so I made money and could listen to the band organ. Sort of a young fellow's version of paradise, as it were. Also, there were lots of girls around. I'd give away free candy from the Ball Game concession that I managed, so it was a happy time. I worked there all of one summer and part of the next.

By this time World War II had started and I applied for a job sailing on lake boats and so around the 1st of July I reluctantly said good-bye to Al Colton and shipped out. I stayed there for two years and then joined the Canadian Navy. In 1943 I was quartermaster in the naval barracks at Toronto and had lots of time off, which was spent around Hanlan's Point. I even moonlighted for Mr. Colton on some of my days off and also for another concession stand. Tommy Neale, the carousel operator, had joined the veteran's reserve army and a new man was running the carousel. He was a conscientious objector who was a bit on the religious side. He tried to preach to me, but I just let him talk. However, he did let me go behind the organ and watch the duplex roll system work. Eventually, I was able to change the roll while the organ was playing.

In 1944 I was drafted and soon was on my way to duty in the North Atlantic. One advantage to duty in this area was that I was able to dock in and out of New York City and generally, while we would be waiting, a convoy would spend 5-6 days in Staten Island. There I was able to visit Coney Island by taking the ferry for a dime. Those were the days. I had a great time riding the Steeplechase, Feltmans, and Luna Park. The organ on the carousel was a Wurlitzer 146A which was destroyed in the fire there in 1945 or so. I also got to Palisades Amusement Park and spent time listening to the big BAB band organ. The roll frame was on the outside of the organ, very unusual. I also vis-



Figure 2. A much younger Capt. John Leonard in 1962. At 39 years of age he was the proud owner of his new organ which he displayed for the first time at the Milton steam show in Milton, Ontario.

ited the old B.A.B. factory in Brooklyn and the man there, I believe his name was Antonuzzi, showed me around the place and told me lots of stories. I was not sure who he was, he was a big man and smoked Italian stogeys and he knew band organs. He told me a story that one time he was called to a carnival where the owner said he was having trouble with the band organ. It apparently played at the last location, but stopped working after being moved. Upon investigation, he came to learn that when the roustabouts moved the organ into the carousel, they rolled it end over end instead of carrying it. No wonder band organs had such a short life on carnivals and the workers hated the organs. I heard another story about a band organ being thrown off a bridge as the carnival moved from one town to another.

*... when the roustabouts
moved the organ into the carousel,
they rolled it end over end instead
of carrying it. No wonder band
organs had such a short life!*

By 1945 the war in the Atlantic theater was over and there was quite a celebration in Halifax, Nova Scotia, that nearly ruined the city. I used to go up there to Halifax Common, where the Bill Lynch show was performing, and listen to the band organ on the carousel. It seemed to me it was a Wurlitzer 146A. Later that summer I was drafted home on leave of 60 days, prior to going to the Pacific theater. I got back to Hanlan's Point a few times, but also visited the park at Sunnyside. By that time the Wurlitzer 165 had been converted to play Caliola music rolls and a lot of the notes were missing. I could never hear the music

on the Derby Racer as the ride made so much noise because the horses ran on a railroad track and it was noisy. I don't know what happened to this organ. The park was dismantled about 1957 and as I was walking through the park I saw a roll frame laying on the ground, but it was from a Wurlitzer 150. That's all that remained from that beautiful organ.

As it turned out, I did not go to the Pacific theater because when I returned from leave the Japanese had surrendered and the war was finally over. By October I was a civilian and returned to sailing. The years that followed did not allow much opportunity to listen to band organs. But I made one last visit to Hanlan's Point in the summer of 1947. I had a couple weeks off

offered \$25 for it, perhaps I bid too low, but Ralph Tussing of TRT Mfg. Co., told me, at that time, that's about all it was worth. I did not see the organ again for about 25 years and by that time I had been promoted to first mate on the ships and one day I took some time off to go over to the island and look at the place where I had spent so much time in my youth.

It sure was sad. The carousel was still there, but nobody was around. Vandals had stripped just about everything off of it. The organ was only a shell, just the four sides. I couldn't find anything except a tracker bar, which I put in my pocket as a souvenir. I turned the carousel by hand and got on for "one last ride." I don't know what happened to it, but there were some plans around from Alan Herschell Co. and I heard that the carousel went to Knott's Berry Farm in California in 1961, but I really don't think that's happened.

Today I live in what was formerly known as Port Dalhousie, on Lake Ontario, which is the port that I sailed out of when I first got in the business in 1941. At that time I worked a passenger ship. Today the port is known as St. Catharines, but we prefer to still call it Port Dalhousie. In days gone by there was an amusement park here with lots of rides and a four-abreast carousel with working band organ. When I was off duty I would go to the park and listen to the band organ. It played style 150 rolls and had the name Wurlitzer stenciled on the façade. Later I learned it was really a Frati organ which was built in Berlin, Germany. I don't

know what the real story was, but I suppose the organ was imported to America then sent to Wurlitzer where it was changed to the roll system. It originally was a barrel organ and the door to gain access to the barrel was still on the side of the organ.

Back in the old days (1941), the C.N. Railway owned the park. Later, about 1950, they sold the park to Sid Brookson, who was the agent in the park. Brookson maintained the park, to his everlasting credit. As he got older, he sold off the amusement rides, except for the carousel. After a lot of dickering, the city finally purchased the carousel for \$20,000. The citizens had to come up with the money before the city would buy the carousel. They did this with walk-a-thons, public subscriptions, etc. Finally, they got the money and the city bought it. They asked Fred Fried, the noted carousel authority, for assistance in determining who made it and he said "Looff." He was partly right, but not totally. The maker of the framework, platform, rounding boards and machinery was actually Geo. Kremner of Long Island City, NY. However, the animals were made by Looff. The carousel sits in the park today with its cannibalized band organ.

I had another shipping job in the 1950s and we would go into Port Dalhousie. I was first mate and I would go listen to the organ when we were in port. I knew the park foreman and he let me look at the organ, even the back. We reciprocated by providing the grease necessary for the organ gearwork. One time



Figure 3. Capt. John's North Tonawanda Military Band Organ with actor Robert Redford on the set of *The Natural*. While the organ wasn't actually seen in the movie the music from the organ was used in the background.

and spent some time around the old carousel. The organ still played on the Dentzel carousel. By that time Tommy Neale was a mate on one of the ferry boats to the island. After that I was off to the lake boats again and never saw the carousel or band organ after that. One time in 1949 the ship I was on came into Toronto with a load of grain about 10:00 at night and I looked over towards Hanlan's Point and could see the old carousel running and the lights twinkling; but I didn't have the chance to get off the ship as I had to prepare it for unloading.

During this time of my life I had a long period with something that affects a lot of sailors, alcohol, and I was no exception. I spent many a night ashore in a bar soaking up the suds. Eventually I had to seek treatment and I have been sober since, for which I am grateful. One time between jobs (which was a frequent problem in those days), I returned to Hanlan's Point where I saw the carousel still running, but without a band organ. The man running it told me the organ was broken and couldn't be fixed. I think I know what happened. You see, in those early days they had a man by the name of Horace Malton repair the organ. But by this time Malton had retired and there was no one to repair the organ. In Canada at that time there were church organ experts, but they did not know how to repair band organs. Malton was unique because he was able to repair either. I wrote to the street railway company, owner of the park, and offered to buy the band organ, but they declined, saying they were going to repair it themselves. As it turned out, they never did. I only

they broke a gear wheel so we sent it to the ship's machine shop for new teeth, gratis, in exchange for their friendliness. All around it was a good deal. At that time there was a lot of vandalism at the park. They broke into the carousel and smashed the carved organ figures. This prompted an article in the newspaper and it garnered lots of publicity. A local art teacher arranged for her students to help restore and redecorate the facade and figures. This was a great improvement and fostered even more interest in the carousel and organ. At that time I finally decided "I am going to buy an organ."

In 1955 I wrote to Ralph Tussing and noted that I was looking for a Wurlitzer 165. I thought that if they abused the old organ at Hanlans Point, there would be lots of 165s around. Tussing wrote back to say that he had just sold a 165 to a Mr. Walton in Mentor, Ohio, and he didn't have any other 165s, but he did have others and so he invited me to pay a visit. At that time I didn't have a car or license to drive so I couldn't do it. However, that summer I did have a month off and a friend was driving to New York City and I asked if I could go along. So off we went. When in NY I went to the old B.A.B. factory and saw Mr. Brugliatti (I think that was his name) about buying an organ. They had what looked like a Wurlitzer 146A but they had changed the roll system. I asked how much and he said \$2,500. Of course I had no where near that much money, so I said I'd be back and left. I decided I was going to have that organ so back to work I went to save the money. I worked two jobs that year and the following summer I had the money to buy the organ. A friend went with me to New York City; alas, when we got to the B.A.B. factory we learned the organ had been sold! He did have a smaller organ, equivalent to a style 125 with wooden pipes and he was asking \$750 for it, but it was not my kind of organ. He played a big Gavioli organ in his shop and told me it was the same type as the one at Euclid Beach, Cleveland, Ohio, but that isn't what I wanted either.

I don't know why I didn't buy any of the B.A.B. organs, but I guess I thought it would be too hard to get rolls and ship them to Canada. At that time there was quite a high duty charged by Canadian Customs on band organs. One had to pay extra as they were classified as "amusement devices." Today they are classified as antiques and no duty is required. I again contacted Ralph Tussing at TRT Mfg. Co. in North Tonawanda, NY. So one day a friend and I visited Tussing and he showed me an organ for sale, although he didn't know the maker. He thought it was an Artizan, I thought it was a Wurlitzer. I liked the price and bought it. I had to save some money and he agreed to keep it until I returned. When I did he mentioned that he had an organ that would be \$100 cheaper. He played it for me and because it had brass trumpets, I liked it even better so I bought that instead (Figures 1 - 3).

Because I had never imported anything into Canada, I had a lot to learn. Tussing had all the paperwork done, but it was for export, not import into Canada. It turned out the paperwork was no good at all. So the battle began. The Customs authorities didn't believe me. They phoned Tussing (at my expense). He confirmed that I bought the organ from him. They wanted to

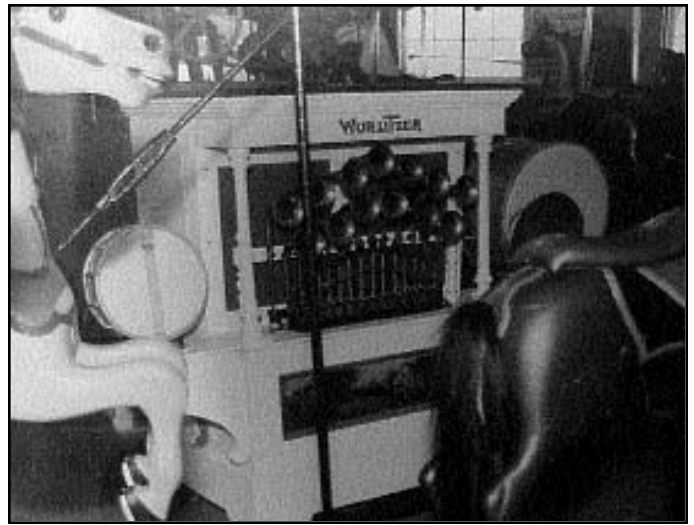


Figure 4. The Wurlitzer Style 125 band organ featured on the carousel at the Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum was formerly in the collection of Captain John Leonard.

know the value of the organ - I think he told them \$1,000. They charged me extra because it was an amusement machine. They also charged me duty on the rolls: \$3.27 per roll. Tussing told me that when carnival people used to buy rolls, they would rub them in grease and dirt so they would look used and they'd get away not paying the duty, but I wasn't that smart.

I took the organ to Toronto and put it in my dad's garage. Later I moved it to a storage garage and finally to my farm in St. Catharines. I rented the farm and the renter watched the organ for me while I was at sea. That year I made it to the rank of captain so I didn't have any time to take out the organ, but I did play it whenever I was at the farm. Finally, in 1962, I took the organ out for the first time to a steam show in Milton, Ontario. I guess it was a hit as they asked me to come back the next year.

Later I bought two band organs from a carnival operator. One was a Wurlitzer 125 and the other a Wurlitzer 146A. I got them real cheap and then had Tussing at TRT Mfg. Co. repair them and again had to go through all the hassle to get them into Canada. To make it worse, I also had trouble getting them out of the USA. Had to hire a bonded carrier, etc., etc., but finally got them home. For years I wouldn't take the organs into the U.S., but finally things changed and for the past 25 years or so I've had no trouble getting the organs out of and back into Canada.

I sold the two Wurlitzers that I bought from the carnival. The 125 is now on the carousel at North Tonawanda (Fig. 4) and the other I bought back just last year for quite a bit more than I paid for it years ago.

For the past quarter century I've had the good fortune to travel to many band organs, mostly in the U.S.A. The friends I've met has made it all worth while. I wouldn't trade any it for the world, what with all the good friends and good times. So I will leave you now, even though I haven't said enough. But then I never will!

Captain John Leonard and his wife, Pauline, live in Port Dalhousie, Ontario. Capt. John is a frequent visitor to organ rallies in the states, attending both Mid-Am as well as COAA rallies.

MARION ROEHL RECORDINGS

- Some Reflections -

Harvey Roehl

In 1980, when The Vestal Press was still going strong, Marion and I decided to have another sideline business of making recordings of some of our mechanical music machines. This was done completely independently of The Vestal Press, with the required capital coming from our own pockets. Why did we call it Marion Roehl Recordings? I don't know; we could have called it Osopeachy Productions or something cutesy like that, or maybe it was plain vanity. But that's what we did.

From the beginning, we decided to produce what we thought could be sold to the general public, and not necessarily to the hobbyists. Only by so doing would we be able to generate any volume of business, and we knew that that volume would have to come from the gift-shop and souvenir shop trade. We also knew that to meet the requirements of this trade, good artwork for the covers of the products was vital, so we paid plenty of money over the years for this. What do I mean by good artwork? I mean that whatever is on the cover that might catch the glimpse of the casual stroller down the aisle of a gift shop must instantly tell what the products is about, hopefully to the extent that he or she will be sufficiently attracted at least to walk over, pick it up and look at it.

We soon learned that the first thing this casual "looker" does is examine the tune list. If well-known titles aren't there, it goes right back on the rack! Never mind that some really terrific musical arrangements are present; if the prospect has never heard of the tune(s) chances are the gift shop or souvenir stand has lost a sale. The hobbyists don't care -- if word gets around that such-and-such a CD or cassette has some terrific stuff on it, they're going to buy it.

Hearing is believing. We became members of the Carnie's organization in order to be able to have a booth at their trade show, held each year in February in Gibsonton, Florida. We made sure we had simple equipment that would permit prospect-listening with a cheap headset, and this is the key. Listen to these and other recordings with a headset and you think you're in a studio! It was always fun to watch folk's expressions. More often than not, an "I'll believe it when I hear it" look on a person's face turned to a big smile and they'd suggest hubby or wife listen, too, and then the sale was made. A SONY Walkman and a headset work wonders. A "boom box" couldn't work that way. With its tiny speakers the impression can never be the same, and the folks in the neighboring booths wouldn't tolerate it for long, either.

Of course carnivals were never the source of much wholesale business; their stock in trade is cheap schlock. But the carnival managers and owners bought from us for their personal use, and every year many "regulars" would stop at our booth and ask "what's new?" Besides, it gave us an excuse to have a nice Florida trip each February when we desperately needed a couple of weeks of sunshine!

As for markets, we never did anything with recordings of reproducing pianos, on the theory that to the general public, the finest example of perfect reenactment of any artist is just so much more piano music. A market that took us by surprise were sales to the amateur clowns. When we brought out our recordings of calliope music, we figured that circus fans would be the source of great sales. It turned out that this never amounted to much, but sales to the amateur clowns were terrific. How come? There are a huge number of folks involved in amateur clowning for kid's parties, and they all want background music. There's a high-quality fancy magazine, *Laugh Makers*, devoted exclusively to amateur clowning. There are a number of catalog outfits that do nothing but supply this market, and once we got into one or two of these catalogs, the rest of them followed suit. A

smaller spin-off of this was magicians, who often want background music for what they do and some of our stuff seemed to appeal. Several catalog outfits cater to both groups. This leads to copyright matters. When we first started doing recordings, we didn't pay much attention to copyrights—but it was soon obvious that now that our materials were getting "out there" in some volume we'd better make sure we paid applicable royalties. What we



Figure 1. A sampling of the CDs and cassette tapes produced by Marion Roehl Recordings.

secured was the right to sell the product, and this in turn gave the buyer the rights to use the CD or cassette for personal, private use.

As far as was reasonably possible, we tried to use public domain material, and in the case of the amateur clown market this turned out to be important. What our royalty payments did not do, and over which we had no control anyway, was the right for the buyer to use the recordings for commercial purposes. About the last thing a lady doing amateur clowning for kid's parties needs is to be hassled by ASCAP for using copyrighted materials without paying a fee for so doing! So we made sure

our “Clown and Calliope” materials and most of the carousel music recordings were strictly public domain, and clearly labeled as such. This turned out to be a great sales help. Of course the flip side is that tunes most likely to be known by the public may not be available, but for party background music this isn't a factor.

On the other hand, a product like “Christmas Carousel Music” almost has to have tunes like *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* and *White Christmas* for which royalties are applicable. Without these one is stuck with mainly hymn-type material. And by the way, for those readers who are familiar with the product line, when Wayne Holton arranged *Ave Maria* for the Wurlitzer 150 carousel organ roll, I couldn't help but wonder if we'd aggravate the Romans amongst us! Turns out it was done so beautifully that we got tons of positive feedback on the selection, from everywhere.

I enjoy saying that I never owned a microphone. We could have invested in recording equipment and learned how to use it properly, but we elected to bring in professional recording persons to do that work. We'd get the instrument all ready, have our music all set to go, and then let a properly qualified person “do his thing.” This way we always had the benefit of “state of the art” knowledge and equipment; our time was better spent on the instruments themselves and the preparation of the music. The actual production of the recordings, based on the master tapes our recording man would provide, was done by a huge Time-Warner plant, located about 60 miles south of Vestal. We never got beyond the shipping dock so never did see the inside of the place, but we were told they had the capacity of producing a million CDs every 24 hours! And it's easy to believe, based on the number of 18-wheelers lined up ready to take away products. We'd squeeze Marion's minivan between them, pick up maybe 1,000 or 2,000 items, and be on our way.

One day a stranger to us, Larry Kilmer, sent us some 78 rpm records we'd never seen or known of before, records made by the Herschell-Spillman Company. They were all carousel music, and we soon found out that they were made by that firm to be used with their “Merry-Organ”—a juke-box-looking device that was really a sound system played from a record player. Apparently the idea was for the operator being able to get away from having to maintain a band organ. The man doing our “sound work” at the time said he could “clean them up” considerably (they had plenty of scratch and wear) so we went ahead and produced *Historic Carousel Music*. Later we learned that Dick Bowker had a complete set of the originals that he had purchased when in high school.

Dick loaned his like-new 78's to us, with the stipulation that we hand-pick-them-up and hand-return them, which we were delighted to do even though it meant two all-day trips to Pittsburgh. We eventually produced a CD from these. We never did find out what the organ was that had been used for the recording, but the rolls were obviously Wurlitzer 165. Maybe a reader can fill in this mystery for us!

All sorts of interesting little sidelights turn up in every business. As car buff, I was quite intrigued by the little-known exis-

tence of the *Dodge Brothers March*, of which I acquired a copy of the sheet music, written by Victor Herbert in 1920. The fact that Herbert was the writer instead of Joe Schmoie led me to dig into the story. It seems that Horace Dodge, one of the two Dodge Brothers of automotive fame, was by the early 'teens a very wealthy man and he was a patron of the arts in Detroit. Whether he was paid to write the March or did it out of good will I don't know, but in any event the tune is “dedicated to Horace Dodge!” A lady associated with the archives of the Dodge mansion was very helpful; she was able to get for me from Chrysler's files Xerox copies of some internal dealer newsletters of the day. The march was first performed at a big Dodge dealer's convention in New York City in 1920; some 1,000 dealers from all over were there. Herbert himself conducted the Dodge Brothers band, made up on Dodge employees. Neither John or Horace Dodge heard it; they both died earlier that same year.

Each dealer received copies of the march, as well as some 78-rpm records, and it was predicted that soon everyone in America would be whistling the tune “to the benefit of everyone in the Dodge business”—whereupon it was promptly forgotten. Until, that is, when we engaged Tom Meijer of the Netherlands to arrange it for us for our 57-key Gavioli, for a production to be titled *Fair Organ Follies*. This, together with the other gems prepared for us by this wizard noteur made probably the best production we did. And you know what? We went to the factory to get our order and the next day the new owner came and took them away so we really never had the fun of promoting it ourselves, though it has done very well.

We did all our marketing via telephone, though had we been 20 years younger we'd have gone to gift shows. We developed all the business we wanted, operating out of our home with little or no overhead costs, but to build up good volume in the gift shop and tourist souvenir trade one really should get to these shows. In spite of this, we developed a very good relationship with many gift shop owners and managers; folks we never met in person and probably never will. To do business with a prospect, I had to make “cold calls” and I'm pleased to report that not one person ever slammed the receiver on me. Maybe one in 4 or 5 was willing to accept some samples, and maybe 1 in 3 of these eventually became a customer. One big frustration was turnover of shop managers in the bigger outlets—often we'd develop a nice relationship with a shop manager, only to have him or her leave and the replacement wouldn't give us the time of day. Others, on the other hand, were more or less permanent and welcomed our calls. We could tell from our files about when the time was ripe to give them a call.

If the business was so neat and profitable, why did we sell it? Very simple. It ties one down, and we couldn't travel as much as we would like to have. We developed several fine prospects to take it over, but for one reason or another they had to back off - and for very logical reasons other than the nature of what we had to offer. We eventually sold it to Dave Miner in Iowa, and he reports that they're doing well with it and that's good news for both of us! Try his web site; www.minermfgco.com Click on Recordings and you'll see the whole list!

Harvey and Marion Roehl have succeeded in collecting a great all-around selection of mechanical musical instruments; founded and headed the Vestal Press; and provided carousel music via Marion Roehl Recordings.

Gebroeders Decap — Antwerpen, Belgie

A Short History

Roger Mostmans

The origins of the Gebroeders Decap firm

The Gebroeders Decap (Decap Brothers) organ building business was founded by Alois Decap who was born on the 4th February 1864. He was one of the five sons of farmer Livien Decap and his wife Sophie Mortier. Alois married Emma Verhaege, a daughter of Ludovicus Verhaege and Henrica Mortier. It is worth mentioning that both Alois Decap's mother and mother-in-law were called Mortier. Given that the surname Mortier is not common in Belgium, it is possible that there was a family connection with the famous organ builder Theofiel Mortier, especially as he was born in the same region as Sophie and Henrica.

Around 1888 Alois came with his wife and son Firmin to Ekeren, near Antwerp. Alois' brother Armandus also moved to the Antwerp area where he made melodeons, a kind of accordion. At first Alois worked the land, and to augment his earnings, played the accordion at fairs and in caf  s. When his son Firmin was old enough, he went along with his father; this is how they both came into contact with mechanical organs. Around 1895 Alois began renting out and dealing in small organs which at first were delivered by dog cart and later by a mule and cart. By

1914 he owned five organs which together brought in 900 Belgian Francs rental income a month. When the First World War broke out his mule was requisitioned by the army. Later he acquired a horse to move the organs around with.

Alois Decap's marriage produced six children; Firmin was born in Merckem, Livien and Maria in Ekeren, and Frans, L  on and Camille were all born in the Esschenstraat in Antwerp, on

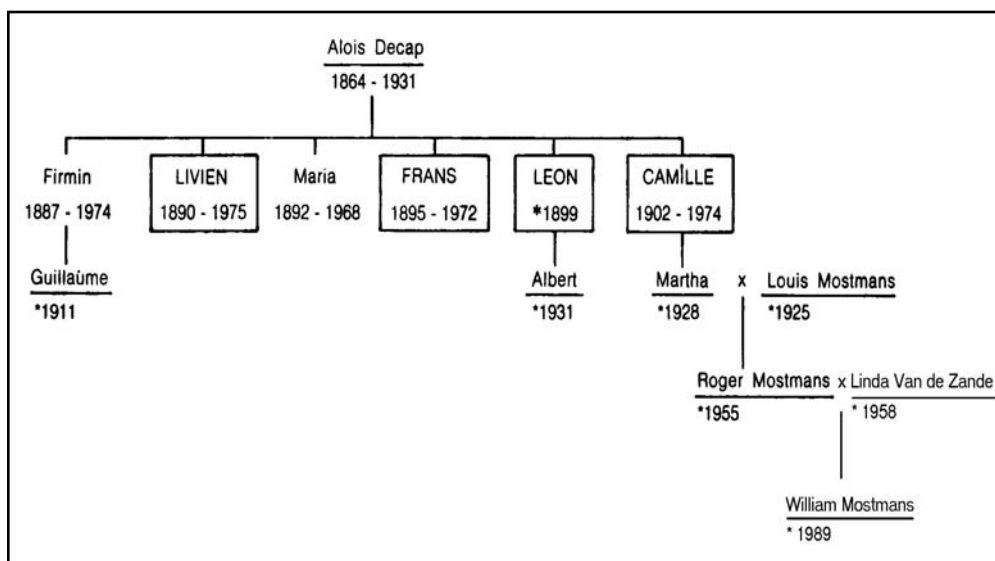


Figure 1. The Gebroeders Decap family tree.

the site where the organ business would later be established. The company is still at this same location today, although the street has been re-named Essenstraat.

Livien, Frans, L  on and Camille would later form the Decap Brothers Company. Firmin became a bargee, Maria a housewife.

Alois Decap and his son Livien began building organs in the Essenstraat in 1902, initially in a modest workshop. Shortly after the First World War a partnership was formed after which the business was officially conducted under the Decap Brothers name.

The Decap Brothers established a true family business in which not only the first and second generations were involved, but also the third and fourth.

It is worth mentioning that Camille Decap's father-in-law made the three-wheeled carts for the many street organs which were built and exported to the Netherlands in the 1920's.

Frans Decap left the company in 1933; Livien retired in 1955 and L  on in 1970. In 1944 Camille Decap's son-in-law, Louis Mostmans joined the firm. He was a furniture maker by trade and specialized in making organ cases, fronts and later pipes.

Camille Decap took over the firm in 1970 and turned it into a limited liability partnership (PVBA). Camille's grandson



Figure 2. A 52 key Decap street organ.

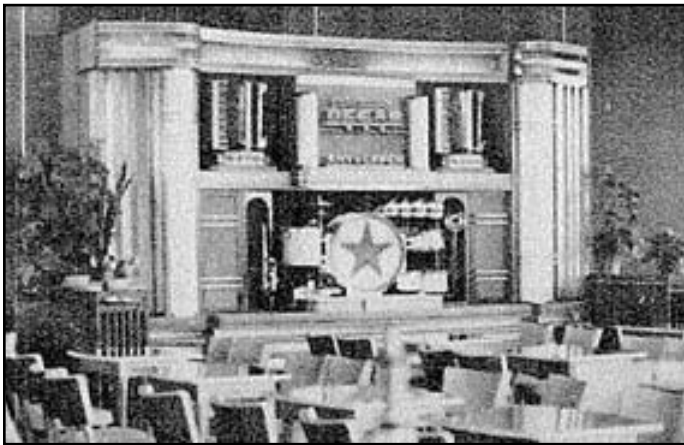


Figure 3. A historical photograph showing the 105-key *Dancing Star* dance organ on location in a dance hall.

Roger Mostmans joined the company in 1972. Since the death of Camille Decap in 1974, his daughter Martha, her husband Louis Mostmans and son Roger have formed the core of the business. In 1997 Decap Brothers became a limited company (NV).

Characteristics of the Decap organ

Decap Brothers have continuously tried to give their organs a unique character. Decap organs are immediately recognizable by their sound as well as their outward appearance.

Decap organs are immediately recognizable by their sound . . .

In 1933 the first self-playing accordions were introduced onto the organs; two years later in 1935 the first full drum kit was incorporated into an organ front. The next year, 1936, dummy saxophones were added to the fronts. In 1943 the wind supply was changed over from the traditional bellows to electric blowers, and the book wheel, enabling continuous play, was introduced in 1955.



Figure 4. Three action figures adorn the front of this 92 key Robot Organ.

Decap organs always have an extensive rhythm section comprising of a full drum kit and extra percussion instruments such as wood block, tambourine, temple blocks, maracas, etc., so that all dance rhythms can be achieved. Some organs include real xylophones or glockenspiels.

In 1953 we first used electronic sound-production in our organs and since then the use of electronics has become commonplace in them. Electronic control systems to replace perforated cardboard (with obvious advantages for commercial users) have also been introduced.

Notwithstanding these modern developments, the old pneumatic technology has remained, and in 1989 we began building traditional full pipe organs again.

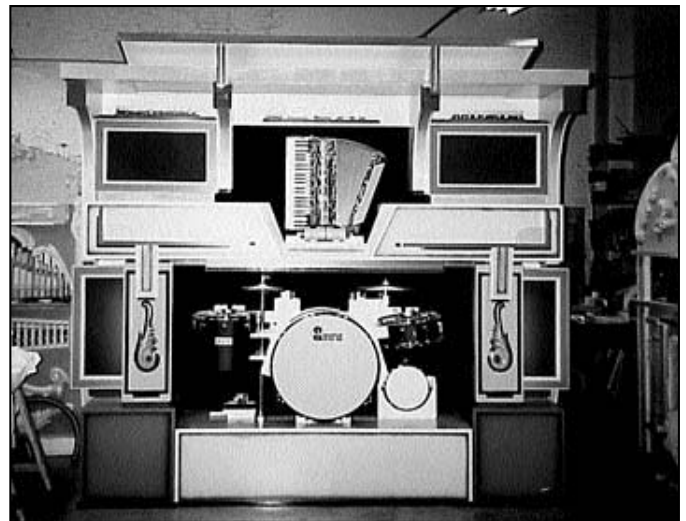


Figure 5. A 2000 (Retrostyle) midi dance organ.

The instruments

In 1902 Alois Decap and his son Livien founded an organ business which would grow to be one of the largest of its kind in Belgium.

At first they only repaired organs which they hired out, but later began to build fair organs for other customers. Gradually, the product range grew and over the years included roll and book playing orchestrions, fair organs, street organs, dance organs, electronic organs, Robot organs and combination pipe and electronic organs.

Eventually the scales and dispositions of the various instruments were standardized. The company built 72, 92 and 121 key pipe organs; 72, 92 and 105 key electronic organs; 92 and 105 key Robot organs and 105 key combination pipe and electronic organs.

In the 1980s computer control was introduced, as were accordion-playing figures; since 1989 52-key street organs have also been made. The first MIDI computer-controlled organ was built in 1996.

Roger Mostmans is the great grandson of Alois Decap and has helped run the Gebroeders Decap firm since 1972. He resides in Antwerp, Belgium, where the tradition of organ building continues.

Emmett Kelly Jr. Clown Festival & COAA Band Organ Rally

Houston, Missouri

Ron Bopp

Over 50 members of the COAA met in Houston, Missouri to initiate the new organ rally season on May 5 and 6, 2000. Eight large organs and as many or more smaller cart organs added to the festivities of the Emmett Kelly Jr. Clown Festival. 30 to 40 clown circulated in the main street of Houston entertaining vis-



Figure 1. Emmett Kelly Jr. taking a rest on the 1950s fire truck which he and his son, Joey, rode in the festive clown parade.

itors. Of course, the big draw was Emmett Kelly Jr. and his son, Joey. Emmett Kelly Jr. comes from his home in Arizona every year to help his home town of Houston with this festive event.

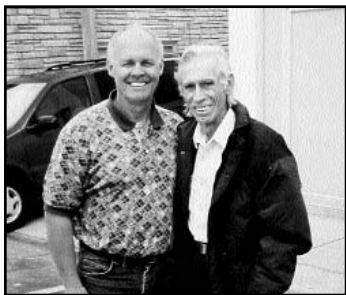


Figure 2. Joe and Emmett Kelly Jr. appear early in the day as plain 'folks.' Photo by Mark Mitchell

Saturday we played all day until the crowd dwindled in the late afternoon. Saturday evening we enjoyed a sumptuous buffet at the Golden Hills Trail Rides Resort, conducted a business meeting (presided over by President Terry Hawthout) and then enjoyed a batch of photographic slides of organs and rallies in the past by Ron Bopp.



Figure 3. Dale Heller and grandson enjoyed playing for the visitors.



Figure 4. Paul Dyer's Dyer 165 attracted attention from festival onlookers.

Rain? Well we did experience some Saturday but only in light amounts. It was the heavy rain in other parts of Missouri that bothered Eastern COAA members in their trip home as Highway 44 was impassible due to the flooding in the St. Louis area.



Figure 5. Tom and Kay Bode crank matching OGM organs.



Figure 6. "Faces in the crowd!"




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Do you have something for the *Carousel Organ*?

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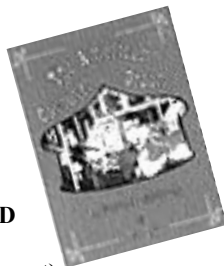
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Gene "Doc" Headley



Doc Headley, faithful attendee of all organ rallies in the mid-portion of the country, passed away on May 15, 2000 at the age of 67. Known for his sturdy laugh and firm handshake, Doc was recognized for his calliope/fire truck combination as well as his smaller version, a Pell organ mounted on a golf cart — all bearing the familiar slogan "Same Day Service, The Headleys." Recently he had acquired a new Stinson organ. Doc leaves behind his wife, Phyllis, and one son and three daughters. In addition to mechanical music he was very involved with community affairs as well as having a love of antique tractors and farm equipment.

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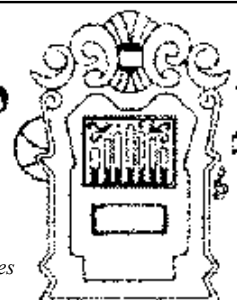


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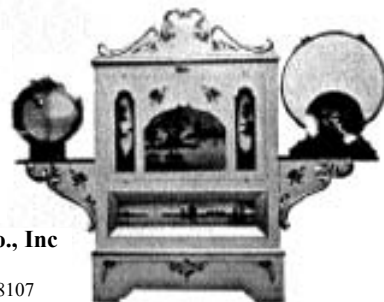
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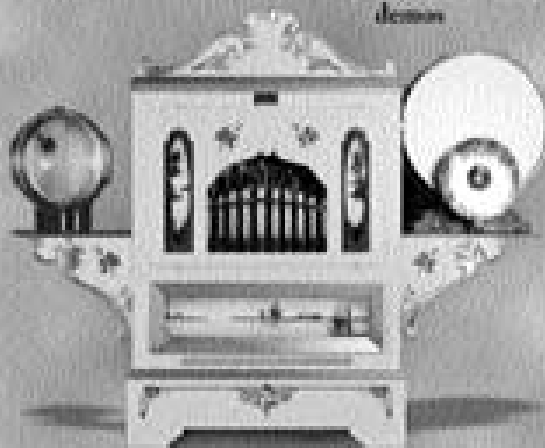
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Meet Your Member

Bill Water's musical interest started with his playing a violin as a child and continues with his membership in the Shrine Drum and Bugle Corp., in which he plays a drum. Bill's interest has always been the large organs, beginning with his childhood memories of going to his father's company picnic, which was always at Euclid Beach Park in Cleveland. Bill was fascinated with the Gavioli and Wurlitzer organs that were in the skating rink and on the carousel.

Our interest peaked when we attended the Pumpkin Festival in Circleville, Ohio a couple years after we were married and saw a huge block long organ (we have no idea who the maker was, but the facade was very ornate and the music great). The beginning of our collection of music was a Story and Clark pump organ which Bill purchased at an auction for twenty dollars and for several years we tried to "corner the market" on pump organs, several of which we still have. Shortly after the first pump organ was purchased, we joined the Music Box Society and from that time on, the Waters family never missed the annual Mid-Am Chapter Organ Rally.



Marge and Bill Waters proudly play their Stinson 165 band organ.

As new collectors, we made the usual mistakes in purchasing mechanical music. Eventually, after spending many enjoyable, happy and informative hours with Carvel Stotts and his lovely wife Helen, we purchased the Stinson 165 that has been taken to every Mid-Am Organ Rally (MBSI) since 1986 when it was purchased. In addition, our collection now includes a number of organettes (for many years we rarely came away from a mart that one was not purchased).

The friends we have made through the musical organizations are some of the best anyone could ever ask for. We have never encountered anyone who would not share their knowledge and graciously open their

homes to let the groups see their collections.

When the Carousel Organ Association of America was organized, we knew there was a need for an organization that specialized in outdoor mechanical music and of course joined immediately. We look forward to many years of great organ rallies organized by the huge number of knowledgeable and fun members!

Another COAA Rally — Bearcreek Farms

Kim Pontius has arranged for the third COAA rally of this year. It will be held at the Bearcreek Farms in Bryant, Indiana. The rally is scheduled for July 28, 29 and 30. Registration is \$5.00 per person and your check and information (including what type of organ you are bringing and what electrical requirements you need) should be sent to Kim at 230 Woodland Drive, Hartford City, IN 47346.

Bearcreek Farms is 200 acres of fun including an antique village (Bloomfield), the Tin Lizzie Museum (classic cars) and a country fair complete with a restored Chance carousel. In addition Swiss Days celebration is being held in nearby Berne, IN.

Motel reservations may be made at the Bluffton Motor In (219-824-5553) in Bluffton, IN. This is 25 miles from the rally site and the nearest motel with rooms available. Camping reservations may be made with Bearcreek Farms and may be made with Carla at 219-997-6823.

Organ Rally Dates

<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Date</u>
Mid-America (MBSI) Annual Band Organ Rally	Crossroads Village Flint, MI	Sharon & Carl Curtis 734-428-0268	July 20 - 22, 2000
COAA Organ Rally <i>Bearcreek Farms</i>	Bearcreek Farms Bryant, IN	Kim Pontius 765-348-0107	July 28 - 30, 2000
COAA/Snowbelt (MBSI) <i>Pioneer Power Show</i>	LeSueur, MN	Ralph Schultz 612-873-6704	Aug. 26 - 27, 2000
Heart of America (AMICA) <i>Old Threshers Reunion</i>	Mt. Pleasant, IA	Gary Craig 314-771-1244	Sept. 1 - 3, 2000
Mid-America (MBSI) Monkey Organ Rally	Sandusky, OH	Bill & Marge Waters 330-334-1344	Sept. 8 - 9, 2000
Fullerton Arborfest and Band Organ Rally	Fullerton, CA	Frank Nix 818-884-6849	Mid-Oct., 2000