

## The Sanfilippo Organ Collection

Ron Bopp

Having recently returned from Europe (the Bumbling Bruder Tour) and seeing all those wonderful organ collections caused me to wonder just what collections we had in the states that could even parallel them. It didn't take long before I remembered that one of the largest collections of outdoor mechanical musical instruments sits on the outskirts of Chicago, IL—the Sanfilippo Organ collection—a collection which I have been fortunate to visit on many occasions.

The Sanfilippo organ collection has been amassed by Jasper (**Figure 1**) and Marian Sanfilippo, beginning with the 80-keyless Gebr. Bruder which was purchased in 1976. Since that time, over 25 examples of outdoor mechanical organs and calliopes have been acquired. Today, each has its place in the collection, which is displayed in the large Sanfilippo home as well as the Carousel building. American and European organs are well represented in the form of band organs, fair organs and dance organs as well as the loud-voiced calliopo-category machines.



Figure 1. Jasper Sanfilippo, collector extraordinaire.

Photo: Sanfilippo Family.

While walking around the collection one is made aware of the beautiful accomplished restoration of each organ. This is not only a tribute to the owner and his technicians but also a contribution to the preservation effort necessary for future enthusiasts to appreciate and enjoy. American instruments include three from the North Tonawanda, New York, firm of North Tonawanda Musical Instruments Works (a style 191, 192 and an elaborately-decorated 82-key band organ); eight from the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company, also of North Tonawanda (styles 105, 150, 153, 157, 165 and 180; an unusual Caliola with attached drums and also a most rare brass-piped Caliola model); and a National Calliopo made by the National Calliopo Corporation of Kansas City, MO.

The European instruments represent a virtual tour of that continent, including the countries of Germany, Belgium and France. There is an 80-keyless Gebrüder Bruder from Waldkirch, Germany and an 85-keyless Ruth fairground organ also from Waldkirch. The Hooghuys firm from Grammont, Belgium is present with both a 57-key fairground organ and an 84-key dance organ. The country of Belgium is also represented with a 121-key Gebr. DeCap made in Antwerp, a 115-key Mortier as well as a 92-key Fasano dance organ. The country of

France, however, wins the prize for the most representative European organs. One can find a 65, 87, and 89-key Gavioli, and a 60, 67 and 92-key Limonaire, all made in Paris.

The organs have been collected over a 23-year span. Several prominent collectors have been involved with the acquisitions as well as several prominent restorers in the restoration process. The organ collection essentially represents a slice of time in large organ history in the United States. Thousands of mechanical music collectors and other hobby enthusiasts (coin-op, phonograph, theater organ and others) have viewed and enjoyed the organ collection. The outdoor mechanical organ community has benefited tremendously from this exposure and enjoyment.

The following is a verbal and photographic description of the collection. Much of the quoted organ data is from the Sanfilippo collection display signs

### American Organs and Calliopes

#### North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works (NTMIW), North Tonawanda, New York

•**Style 191 North Tonawanda Band Organ**—this organ represents a typical skating rink organ popular during the first two or three decades of the 20th century (**Figure 2**). Originally thought to be a Style 192, this organ apparently was a Style 191 with the drums removed from the top (Fig. 269, page 173, *The American Carousel Organ*) and placed on the side. Needless to say, it is a very attractive military band organ.

The early history of this organ is unknown, however it was acquired from Frank Rider in 1989. It has 133 pipes with drums and cymbal and the notes accompanying the organ state:

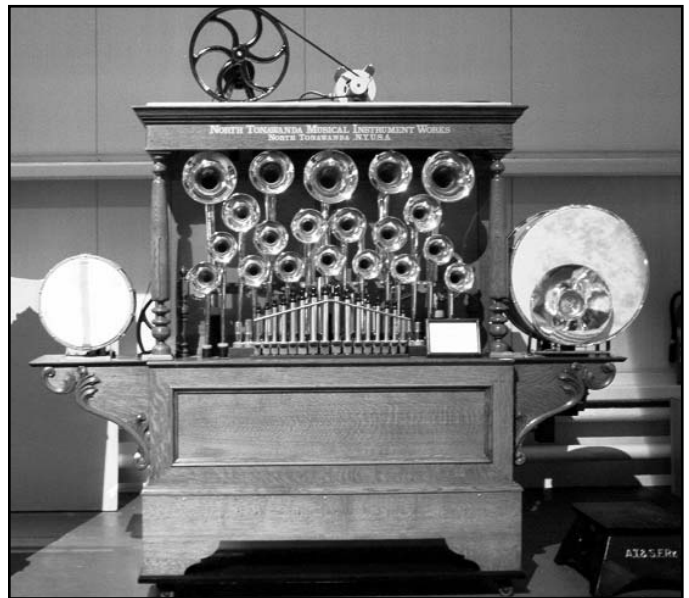


Figure 2. The North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works Style 191 military band organ.

In 1906, two years before the Wurlitzer Company bought out deKleist, a group of employees left to form the North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works. This firm's early band organs played from pinned cylinders and were similar to deKleist Military band organs, with brass trumpets, trombones, clarinets and piccolos. Most models play endless paper rolls.

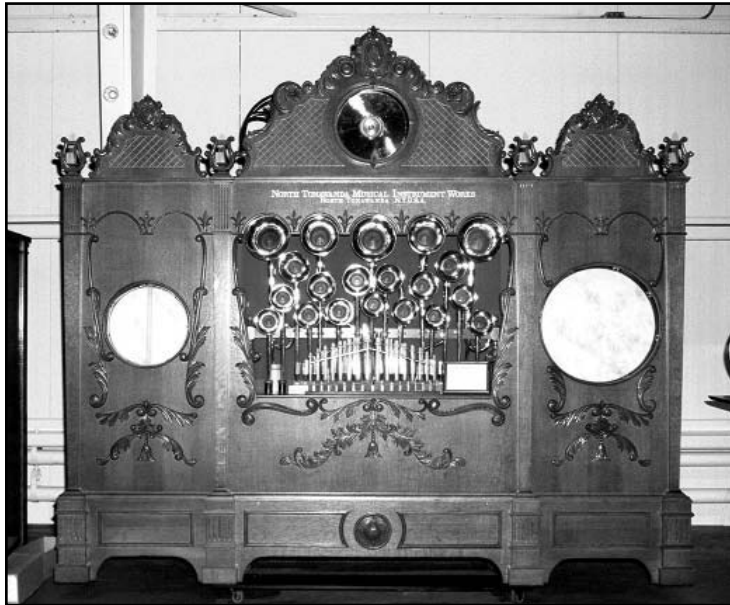


Figure 3. The Style 192 North Tonawanda Band Organ with its beautiful oak-scalloped case and attached carvings.

•**Style 192 North Tonawanda Band Organ**—a second organ from the NTMIW is a full façade, oak-cased military band organ (Figure 3). Estimated to have been made around 1910, the early history of this organ is unknown but it was acquired in the late 1980s from the Trager collection. Featuring a scalloped case to surround the top trombone pipes this organ makes a striking appearance. It contains 133 pipes as well as bass drum, snare drum and cymbal. The description accompanying the organ notes that:

Military band organs feature shiny brass pipes representing piccolos (the slender cylindrical pipes in the first row), clarinets (the larger cylindrical pipes in the second row), trumpets and trombones. They were very popular in roller skating rinks, where their music could be heard easily over the din of the skaters. North Tonawanda and Wurlitzer both advertised how perfectly their organs kept the beat, a necessity for skating in time with the music.

•**82-keyless North Tonawanda Band Organ**—a most interesting organ indeed (Figures 4 & 5). This very large band organ plays the Style E roll (87-key) which utilizes some perforations for operating organ figures. Originally this organ played at Euclid Beach Park in Cleveland, OH, where it was used (on a Flying Pony ride) along with a duplicate organ (used on a carousel). The

organ passed through the hands of several prominent collectors (Kapel collection, Herb Brabandt, Don Rand, and Bob & Flo Avary) before arriving in the Sanfilippo collection in the late 1980s.



Figure 5. The original façade for the 82-key NTMIW.

Figure 4 details the organ as it is today and Figure 5 is a photograph of the organ façade before restoration as it appeared coming from the factory (it is identical with its restored “twin” located in California). The organ contains 293 pipes, bass and snare drums, cymbal, two bell ringers and a bandleader. It plays the Style E roll which lends the excellent music arrangements. Accompanying notes reveal:

One of the largest American band organs, this organ has separate musical sections for bass, accompaniment, melody, piccolo, trombone and trumpet like a large Gavioli. Its trombones are the largest ever used in any American band organ. At one time it was converted to play Wurlitzer 150 rolls that used less than 30% of its potential. Don Rand later reinstalled an authentic duplex 82-key mechanism obtained from Ross Davis. The beautiful carved front was made by Dentzel for a different organ; the small original front is in storage. Both this organ and another identical one were used at Euclid Beach.



Figure 4. The beautiful 82-key North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works organ with Dentzel façade.

**Rudolph Wurlitzer Company, North Tonawanda, New York •Wurlitzer Band Organ, Style 105**—the smallest band organ in the collection, the early Wurlitzer Style 105 has a lot of pedigree (**Figure 6**).



Figure 6 (above). The Wurlitzer Style 105 military band organ with flywheel and motor mounted on top.

Figure 7 (below). A catalog depiction of the deKleist No. 18 military band organ



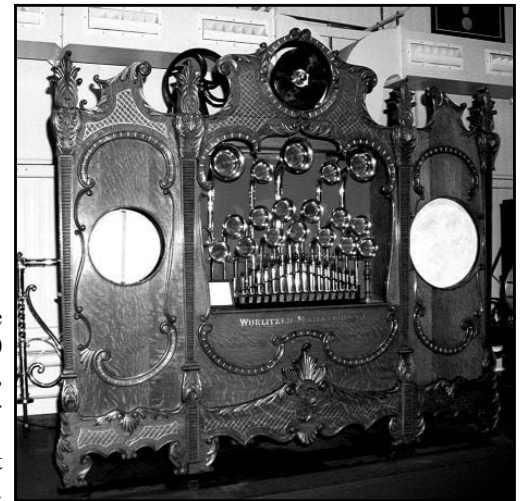
**•Wurlitzer Band Organ, Style 150**—a popular Wurlitzer style of organ, it somewhat resembles the Style 192 North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works detailed previously in this article (**Figure 8**). The Style 150 however had only three bass notes and six fewer pipes but non-the-less, it was loud. The organ was complete with 127 pipes, and bass and snare drum. It plays the popular Style 150 roll. Again, early ownership is unknown but it has passed through the collections of Osborne Klavestad (Stagecoach Stop in Shakopee, MN), Dan and Marilyn Slack and Charles Geitz before arriving at the Sanfilippos in 1989.

The Style 150 was a most endearing model of band organ originating from the deKleist No. 20, and progressing with different names (Style 3537 and Style 20) until its discontinuation in the early 1920s. Wurlitzer literature bragged upon the Style 150's features noting that "It is equal to a band of from seven to

ten men, and will amply fill a rink with a floor surface of 8,000 to 10,000 square feet."

Figure 8. The Wurlitzer Style 150 military band organ, finished in a beautiful oak case.

Photo: Robert Ridgeway.



The accompanying description of the organ is interesting as it notes:

From 1905-1910, "Military Band Organs" were popular, with brass trumpets, clarinets and piccolos. Many were sold to skating rinks. The Wurlitzer 150 demonstrates just how loud a small military band organ can be. With only 3 bass notes and 2 sharps of the chromatic scale, the music must be altered to play mostly on the "white" notes. This means a higher percentage of its pipes are in play at any moment, making it much louder than a full-chromatic organ of the same physical size. Of all the adjectives applicable to the music of the 150, "bombastic" might be the most appropriate.

**•Wurlitzer Band Organ, Style 153**—reported to be one of the prettiest small carousel organs and this organ certainly lives up to that claim (**Figure 9**). The organ was referred to in Wurlitzer sale catalogs as the "Style 153 Duplex Orchestral Organ" and was meant "For Three-Abreast Carouselles and Open-air Dance Pavilions." Over 169 of the Style 153s were made between 1916 and 1936.



Figure 9. Wurlitzer's "Style 153 Duplex Orchestral Organ" plays the Style 150 roll. Photo: Robert Ridgeway.

This particular organ is dated 1923 and reported to have cost \$1,900.00 at that time. Its early lineage is unknown but it recently went through Hershey Park (Hershey, PA); the Hap Paulson carnival (Newcomerstown, OH), Roy Haning and Neal White (OH) and finally Jerry Cohen (CA) before coming to the Sanfilippo collection in 1991. The organ contains 154 pipes along with bass and snare drums and cymbal and uses three automatic registers playing a Wurlitzer Style 150 roll. Accompanying information about the organ relates:

After about 1920, carousels replaced skating rinks as the main user of small band organs in America. Amusement operators recall that the reflection of carousel lights in the shiny brass horns of the older military band organs attracted insects that would fall into the pipes and cause them to quit playing. This is why carousel organs typically had wooden trumpets with the resonators pointing downward, with a screened-in front on the organ cabinet [passengers on circling horses couldn't use the horns as target practice either—Ed]. When Haning & White bought this one from Hershey Park, it was painted dark chocolate brown. The Cohens had it repainted in the original style.

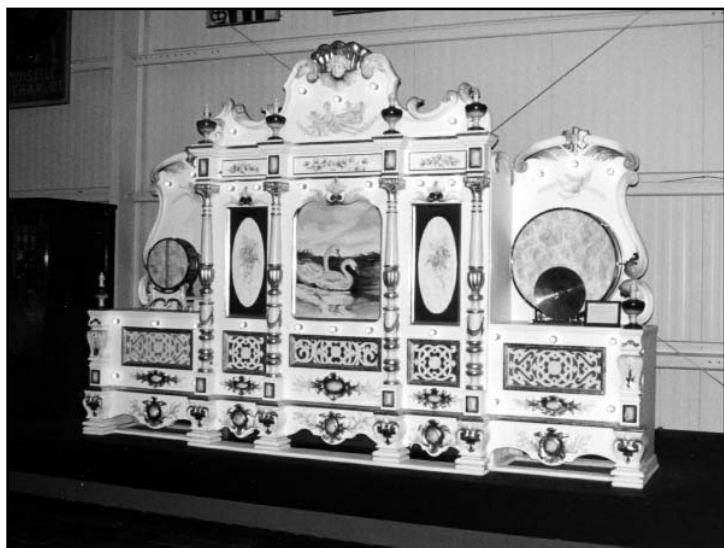


Figure 10. The Style 157 Wurlitzer band organ. The organ uses Style 165 band organ rolls with a duplex roll mechanism.

•**Wurlitzer Band Organ, Style 157**—this organ has a large center section with decorative side wings for drums and percussion (Figure 10). Two case styles were offered and this organ is similar to a factory photograph (Figure 189, page 123, *The American Carousel Organ*) as opposed to most that were similar to that which was offered in a 1928 catalog (Figure 190, page 123, same reference as before). The organ contains 208 pipes with bass and snare drums as well as castanets, triangle, crash cymbal and tympani. It plays the Wurlitzer Style 165 roll on a duplex roll mechanism. As well as having the added percussion, Wurlitzer literature went on to boast about the decorative aspects as well:

To further set off the organ, the decorative front is wired for thirty-four 16 C.P. [candle power—ED]

lamps, with an additional red lamp in each drum. These lights are usually furnished in red, white and blue colors, and the organ makes a wonderful display at night.

The provenance of this organ is known as it was originally on Daniel Bauer's carousel in New Bedford, MA; Genessee Park, Rochester, NY; Bill Hames Shows, Ft. Worth, TX; Thunderbird Amusement Park, Baton Rouge, LA; and finally in the Paul Mazarella collection, Medinah, IL, before coming to the collection in 1986. Informative notes accompanying the organ include:

The Wurlitzer 157 was marketed to customers who wanted fancier music than that played by a 153, but didn't have room for the much larger (and much more expensive) style 165. This organ plays two 165 rolls alternately, with no silent time during rewind. From 1916 to 1930, Wurlitzer sold about 20 157's, of which eight or ten are known to exist. This one was originally used in Daniel Bauer's Dentzel carousel in the 1920's. Bauer offered it to the Allan Herschell Co. in 1953, who declined it. Paul Mazarella acquired it from Bill Hames Shows about 1976 and sold it to the Sanfilippo collection in 1986.

•**Wurlitzer Band Organ, Style 165**—this Style 165 organ represents the earliest-known surviving specimen of the 24 made by the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company (Figure 11). It was shipped on September 7, 1915 to the Sylvandell Amusement firm in Aurora, IL, and ironically, as noted below, made its restored debut not far away in the same town. It contains 212 pipes with the same percussion effects as the Style 157 listed above. Being the earlier model it has two bell ringers and a single cherub mounted in front of the swell shades. Later models featured the cherub on top of the façade and the last-offered model deleted the bell ringers and cherub as well.

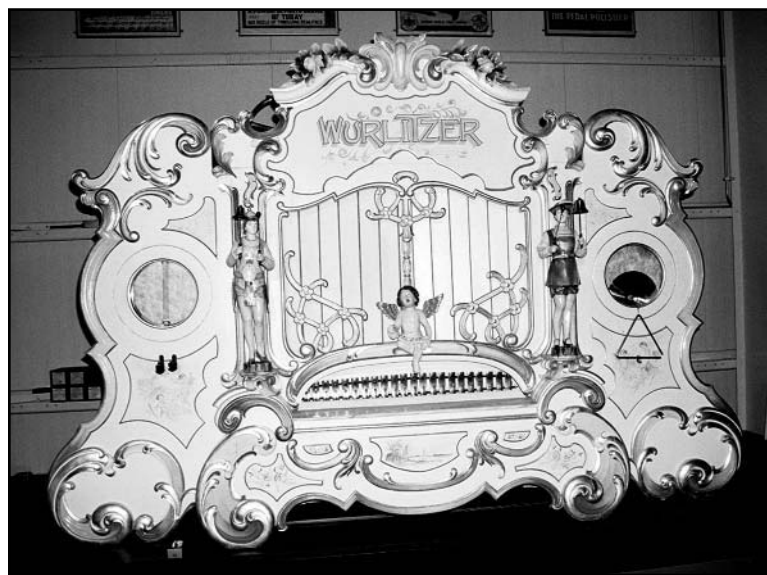


Figure 11. The Style 165, a most popular large organ made by the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company. This was the first-produced organ of this style by the company. Photo: Robert Ridgeway.

Many COAA members will remember seeing the organ appearing at rallies in a red 1962 Ford truck. It was this truck that the organ was in when purchased and it went through a restoration at the time in order for Jasper and his staff to take it to the rallies. Now it has been removed from the truck and sits proudly inside the carousel building. Interesting information appearing with the organ includes:

Of all the Wurlitzer band organs, the 165 was the largest regular production model. This one was originally sold to the Sylvandell Skating Rink and Dance Hall in Aurora, IL, in September 1915. It was on a large elevator and played for both the dance hall on the main floor and the skating rink in the basement. Wurlitzer repaired it and sold it to a new owner in Washington, PA in December, 1923. Later, Jim Wells used it for many public appearances in Washington, D.C. After being acquired by the Sanfilippo collection, it was restored, and made its modern Chicagoland debut at Blackberry Farm Village in Aurora in 1991.



Figure 12. The Wurlitzer Style 180 band organ. 510 pipes and a large scale roll provide complex music.

•**Wurlitzer Band Organ, Style 180**—this is the largest organ made by the modern Rudolph Wurlitzer Company—and this was the first one manufactured—approximately 1922 (Figure 12). The organ was advertised in later catalogs with a photo that was only similar to the appearance of the finished product. The actual factory representation of the organ was found in the Wurlitzer archives in the Smithsonian Institute as seen in Figure 13. The only visual deviation between that photo and the Sanfilippo organ is the presence of just one snare instead of two. The other existing Style 180 does have the twin snare drums. Figure 14 details the inside of the organ as photographed at the Wurlitzer factory.

This Style has 510 pipes with 30 reiterating UnaFon bells; bass and snare drums, and wood block, cymbal and crash cymbal. It plays the Style 180 rolls (the Style 180s were retrofitted with a Caliola roll frame by the Wurlitzer factory because of the low demand and high price of the Style 180 rolls). This particular organ was sold to West Park, CO; after its use there it was in the hands of an unknown user, then Tom Champion of Terre Haute, IN, Pioneer Automobile Museum (Murdo, SD) and finally Jim Wells of Fairfax, VA before being acquired in 1994. The late Mike Kitner did the mechanical restoration work.

Figure 13. (right) A factory photo depicting the Style 180. Note the double snare drums on the left side.



Figure 14 (right, below). A factory photo showing the back, inside of the Style 180.

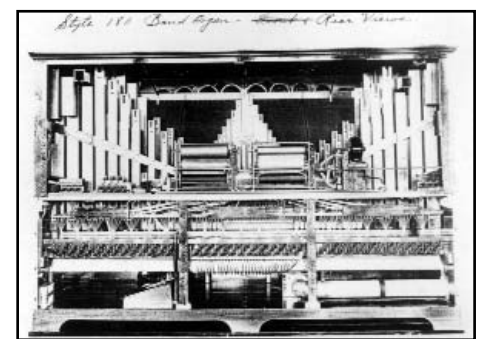


Figure 15 is a photo of when the organ was owned by Jim Wells. Accompanying information about the organ includes:

The 180 was the largest band organ made in the U.S. This is the first of six made, and the only one remaining that plays 180 rolls. One other complete 180 and an incomplete one exist. Wurlitzer converted both to play Caliola rolls when it became impractical to make new rolls for such a small market. A original Spencer organ blower provides air and vacuum because the organ is too big for a bellows-type pump.



Figure 15. The Sanfilippo Style 180 when in the Jim Wells' collection

•**Wurlitzer Caliola**—Wurlitzer's answer to the Tanglely Calliophone, the Caliola was introduced late in the era of American mechanical music (Figure 16). While most models were offered without drums, this particular specimen is quite attractive with the optional bass, cymbal and snare drum. Wurlitzer Caliola rolls contained perforations to play the drums. A keyboard was optional and this unit had it. The early history is unknown (other than it was made in 1929) but it was acquired from Tom Fretty in 1989. Finish options were red or green crackle lacquer and the red was chosen in restoration.



Figure 16. The attractive Wurlitzer Caliola with red crackle lacquer finish.

Photo: Robert Ridgeway.

Caliolas and Calliopes were often used to attract attention, whether at a fair, circus or parade. A Wurlitzer factory letter dated March 9, 1929 noted:

“Please look over the enclosed circular describing the new WURLITZER CALIOLA. Picture to yourself what a wonderful advertisement this will be for you if placed on a truck or wagon and run through the streets of the city in which you are exhibiting.” In the circular described reference was made to the Wurlitzer Factories in North Tonawanda, NY and it was pointed out that: “It is a matter of record that these factories are pointed to with pride by America’s foremost engineers as being among the first two or three institutions in America most worthy of inspection by European musical experts visiting the United States.”



Figure 17. The Wurlitzer Caliola with brass whistles and a green crackle finish. A perfect example of a very rare machine.

•**Wurlitzer Caliola**—a rare organ indeed, with brass whistles replacing the wooden pipes (Figure 17). While most Caliola models were offered with wood pipes at least six were manufactured with brass pipes (or whistles), making them very attractive in appearance. Like the Caliola mentioned previously this unit has 44 whistles, the bass and snare drum, and cymbal. It also has an attached keyboard for hand-play. The early history is unknown but it was acquired from Randy Shaner in 1990 and restored to an original green crackle finish. Jasper has related that this restoration of the crackle finish was very difficult to duplicate. Accompanying information includes:

Most Caliolas had large wooden flute pipes; this one is a rare example with brass whistles. Air is supplied by a band organ pump in the bottom of the case rather than the blower used by Tangley and other makers of air calliopes. The Caliola was one of Wurlitzer’s last entries into the mechanical music field, first introduced in 1928. As recently

as 1970, one Caliola was used in a carousel by an amusement company who kept it covered under a heavy canvas tarp while playing, to muffle the sound!

#### **National Calliope Corporation, Kansas City, Missouri**

•**National Calliope, Model B**—this calliope represented a competitor to the Tangley Calliaphone and the Wurlitzer Caliola (Figure 18). National Calliopes were offered in two models, a 43-note Model A and a 53-note Model B, the latter being the unit present in the collection. Most instruments made and sold were of the Model B style. The National Calliope Corporation (Kansas City, MO) was quick to point out in their advertising flyer that: “The NATIONAL Calliope is the largest automatic Air Calliope in the world. It has ten more whistles than any machine made and nationally distributed.”



This unit was sold used to the Gooding Amusement Co. (Columbus, OH); it later passed onto the hands of Jim Miller of Reed City, MI and then Dan Slack before being acquired by the Sanfilippo collection in 1991.

Figure 18. The Model B National Calliope with 53 brass whistles was made in Kansas City, Missouri.

Accompanying information includes:

The National model B was a deluxe air calliope, with 10 more whistles than the common Tangley CA-43. Is extremely loud, clear tone attracted attention from a long distance, making it popular with outdoor advertisers. Like most air calliopes, it can be played by hand or automatically from a 10-tune A-roll, making it musically versatile.

#### **European Fair and Dance Organs**

##### **Gebrüder Bruder, Waldkirch, Germany**

•**80-keyless Gebr. Bruder Fairground Organ, Style 104**—this is the first organ acquired (1976) for the Sanfilippo organ collection (Figure 19). Bruder organs of this size are always impressive to which to listen and this one is no exception. It contains 305 pipes, orchestra bells and traps including bass and snare drums, cymbal and triangle. The organ, although an 80-

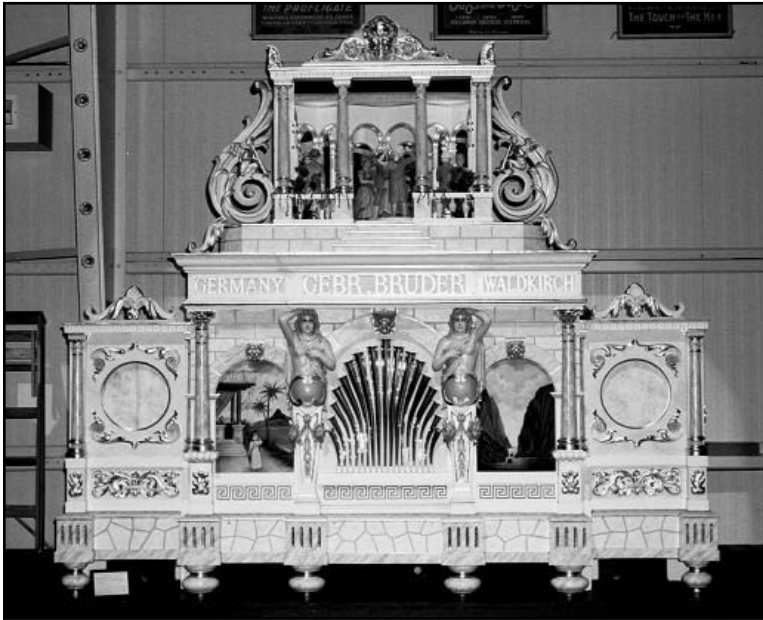


Figure 19. 80-key Gebrüder Bruder fair organ complete with moving figures on the top portion of the façade. Photo: Robert Ridgeway.

keyless Bruder has been converted in its past to play modified 78-keyless Ruth 36 music. The modifications add the original Bruder register controls that are absent in the Ruth 36.

History of this organ includes being sold by the Berni Organ Co. of New York City, NY; Feltman's Carousel (Coney Island, NY); Max Norwicki (Milford, CT), Howard Hynne of Oak Creek, WI and finally Jim Carrol, Chicago, IL, before being the first acquisition of the Sanfilippo collection in 1976. Jasper related to the author that the façade was intact but the rest of the organ was in pieces and essentially “a pile of wood” before restoration. It took two years to accomplish restoration. At the time of restoration the Sanfilippos were “in their infancy” of collecting mechanical musical instruments and the organ had been placed in the gift shop at his business for entertainment of the customers. The staff however felt the organ was too loud so it had to be removed.

The accompanying information continues to inform as it states:

The Gebrüder Bruder company was one of Germany's foremost makers of fairground organs; the Bruder family built mechanical organs for several generations. This organ, a 94-keyless Bruder, a 65-key Gavioli and a large Frati military band organ simultaneously stood in the center of the large Feltman's carousel in Coney Island, built by Mangels and Illions. Either this organ or an identical twin was used on the Flying Horses Carousel at Savin Rock, CT. The organ originally had a small gazebo with mechanical dancing couples on top. When this instrument was acquired the top was long gone and had to be completely recreated.

**Gebrüder Richter Company, Dusseldorf, Germany**

•**Gebr. Richter 76-keyless Fairground Organ**—this organ was previously seen in the Dan Slack Collection and acquired from Marilyn Slack in 1991 (Figure 20). It was made circa



Figure 20. 76-keyless Gebrüder Richter fair organ, recently from the Slack collection. Photo: Robert Ridgeway.

1905 and while the early history is not available, it is known the organ originally was a barrel organ and converted later by Richter to the keyless book system. It passed through the hands of the Hannes de Boer family of Almelo, Holland (it was then used on a swing ride); Louis van Deventer, also of Holland; G.W. MacKinnon, Greg Tuttle, Dan and Marilyn Slack before coming to the Sanfilippo collection.

**Andreas Ruth & Sohn, Waldkirch, Germany**

•**85-keyless Ruth Fairground Organ, Style 37B**—this organ represents the most current restoration in the collection and visitors anxiously await its typical German sound (Figure 21). Built in 1912 the Style 37B Ruth has over 300 pipes and typical trap work. The beautiful façade is attributable to Wilhelm Bruder.



Figure 21. The Style 37B Ruth fair organ with a Wilhelm Bruder façade. The organ mechanism is in the process of restoration and is nearing completion. Photo: Robert Ridgeway.

The early history of the organ is unknown but it has passed through the hands of Emil Bergert, Bois Blanc Amusement Park (Boblo Island, MI) and Howard Hynne, Oak Creek, WI,

before entering the collection in 1987. Other documentation includes:

Ruth built some of the most magnificent fairground organs in Germany. This example was expanded by Voigt to the “37 Neu” scale, a late expansion of the 36 scale with added registers for more orchestral capacity. It has an exceptionally sweet tone quality and pleasing variety of registration between doppel flute, violin and forte ranks. After restoration it promises to be one of the finest fairground organs of its size in the United States. This instrument originally had the extended façade top but this section (and figures) was missing when acquired. This upper section and three female figures had to be recreated.

### Louis & Charles Hooghuyts, Grammont, Belgium

•**57-key Hooghuyts Fairground Organ**—for its size and number of pipes the Hooghuyts fair organs are among the loudest of organs (**Figure 22**). This 57-key organ was built by Louis and Charles Hooghuyts of Grammont, Belgium, in 1920 and contains 200 pipes and the usual traps. Its lineage is completely known as it originally went to Joseph Etienne of Belgium; then



Figure 22. A 57-key Hooghuyts fair organ.  
Photo: Robert Ridgeway.

to Emil Baude, Belgium; Leonard Grymonprez, Belgium; Wallace McPeak, Mesquite, TX; Jim Miller, Reed City, MI; back to Wallace McPeak and then to Dan and Marilyn Slack of Fremont, OH before being acquired by the collection in 1991. The accompanying information notes that:

Louis Hooghuyts began manufacturing fairground organs in 1880. Most other Belgian companies specialized in building more softly-voice dance hall organs, but Hooghuyts built some of the loudest organs ever made for outdoor use. This organ, bearing a Model 79 Wilhelm Bruder Sohns façade, was started by Louis about the time of World War I and finished by his son, Charles, in 1924, with “German” trombones. It is a very powerful organ for its size.

•**Hooghuyts 84-key Dance Organ**—this large dance organ was built by Louis Hooghuyts in 1924 (**Figure 23**). The organ has the usual dance organ pipework including an unusual vox humana rank with tremolo, a xylophone and the usual percussion. The organ began its life with an organ rental agency, Theophiel Versyp of Belgium, then was used in a restaurant, De Toerist, in Loppem, Belgium; another restaurant, Hugo Flamant in Arlington, TX and then acquired from Johnny Verbeek, Belgium, in 1989. Additional information includes:

According to Marc Hooghuyts, great-grandson of Louis Hooghuyts, this organ and the 57-key Hooghuyts also in the Sanfilippo Collection were the last two organs being built at the time of Louis Hooghuyts’ death in 1924. Louis’ son, Charles, completed the organ, and a Mortier façade was added. During restoration of the façade, the “Mortier” name was found under the subsequent layers of paint. The vox humana pipes, housed in two little compartments on either side of the xylophone, add a unique tone quality found in very few dance organs.



Figure 23. Louis Hooghuyts 84-key dance organ, complete with a Mortier façade.

### Gebrüder DeCap, Antwerp, Belgium

•**Gebr. DeCap 121-key Dance Organ**—known as the “Zenith” this organ was one of the most colorful organs, both in sight as well as sound (**Figure 24**). This particular organ was built in Antwerp, Belgium, in the early 1950s and contains 693 pipes.



Figure 24. A 121-key Gebrüder DeCap dance organ—the “Zenith.” 693 pipes plus numerous trap effects are contained behind this large façade.



The 121-key instruments were the largest production models made by DeCap. Amazingly, it had three tremolos, four electronic voices, three accordions, two saxophones, bass and snare drums, and multiple percussion including cymbal, hi-hat cymbal, tom-tom, temple blocks, wood block, and maracas.

The organ originally was owned by the Teugels Brothers, Belgium, Arthur Prinsen, also Belgium, then Roy Haning and Neal White of Troy, OH before coming to the Sanfilippo collection. Watching the organ play is a real delight with the changing light patterns that are associated with register changes. The framed information elaborates:

The 121-key dance organs were the fanciest and most powerful organs ever built by DeCap—only 21 or 22 were made. This organ (“Zenith”), the 121-key DeCap in the Bronson Collection (“Pigalle”), the 121-key DeCap in the Ghysels collection (“Frangema”) and the 101-key Mortier with DeCap front in the Brown collection all belonged to the Teugels Brothers, who had a dance organ rental business in Belgium. This organ features several different lighting circuits connected to the automatic registers, so the front changes colors when different ranks of pipes play.

#### Theo Mortier, S.A., Antwerp, Belgium

•**115-key Mortier Dance Organ**—this organ has 825 pipes, percussion and 24 automatic registers (**Figure 25**). Originally this was a 101-key instrument but it was expanded during restoration to include 115-keys as well as MIDI playback. Theo Mortier began business by first buying and using Gavioli organs in his wife's café. Soon he began renting and then selling the Gavioli organs until the Gavioli firm couldn't keep up with his orders. Around 1898 he began producing his own “Mortier” organs.

The organ was first used in Klarenbeek, Belgium; then sold to Boldini's traveling circus (Europe); “De Meerpal” of Dronten, Belgium and finally Johnny Verbeeck of St. Job in't Goor, Belgium before coming to the Sanfilippo collection. Additional comments accompanying the organ include:



Figure 25. The beautiful 115-key Mortier dance organ sitting at the bottom of the music room stairway. Photo: Robert Ridgeway.

Classic dance organs were used instead of orchestras in many Belgian Dance Halls [see article by Arthur Prinsen, page 4 of issue #13 of the *Carousel Organ*—Ed]. A great organ such as this one could earn a fortune for its owner. This Mortier was originally built as a 101-key organ, and was expanded during restoration by Johnny Verbeeck to include a second counter melody section. It is considered to be one of the most beautiful classic dance organs in existence.



Figure 26. E. Fasano 92-key dance organ, a relatively uncommon organ to find in any collection. Photo: Robert Ridgeway.

#### E. Fasano and Company, Antwerp, Belgium

•**Fasano 92-key Dance Organ**—this organ represents one of just a few made by this relatively unknown Belgian maker of dance organs (**Figure 26**). Arthur Prinsen related that because of the particular building practices of Mr. Fasano there were just a few examples produced. This organ was made around 1920 and as the accompanying information about the organ notes:

E. Fasano was one of several former Mortier employees who left the large company to establish their own businesses. Fasano built organs using Mortier and other parts and this organ has an appearance and tone quality similar to a Mortier of comparable size.

The early history of the organ is unknown—it was acquired in 1987 from John Ruggieri of Elmer, NJ.

#### Gavioli & Cie., Paris, France

•**Gavioli 65-key Fair Organ**—this fairground organ was made to represent 30 musicians (**Figure 27**). Housed on the upper landing of the Music Room in the *Place de la Musique*, this organ commands a stage-front appearance as only a narrow passage and balcony railing separates it from the large opening over the stairway and then appreciative listeners some 100 feet away. In addition the organ façade is much larger than the organ, giving an appearance of a very large organ.



Figure 65-key Gavioli fair organ, made to simulate the playing of 30 musicians. It has 267 pipes and uses the famed Gavioli book system.

The organ was made in 1905 and contains 267 pipes, five automatic registers, bells, drums and cymbal. It is controlled by 65-key music books (the book system was being promoted by Gavioli in the late 19th Century as his invention) as well as via MIDI.

The organ originally was purchased by Fred Dolle, Brooklyn, NY and then M.D. “Chief” Borelli; Sunset Beach Park, NJ and finally Jim Wells, Fairfax, VA before coming to the collection in 1991. Further information includes:

Gavioli was the leading European maker of fairground organs during the 19th and early 20th centuries, having over 300 employees, a branch factory in Waldkirch, and sales outlets across Europe, England and in New York City. This organ and three others furnished music for “Chief” Borelli’s carousel at Almonesson Lake Park, New Jersey. When owned by Jim Wells, it appeared many times on the White House lawn for public receptions and other events. Gavioli organs are highly prized among collectors. This popular 65-key organ is one of three Gaviolis in the Sanfilippo collection.

•**Gavioli 87-key Fairground Organ (“Militaire”)—**

This 87-key organ has 343 pipes with two automatic registers and bass and snare drum and cymbal (**Figure 28**). This organ is typical of the larger Gavioli organs (if any can be “typical”) and the pipes and the Gavioli arrangements make it a sound to behold. It plays modified 89-key Gavioli G4 scale music.

It was originally handled by the Gavioli & Cie New York Branch when sold to the Berni Organ Co. also of New York; then it traveled to the Philadelphia Toboggan Co. and then to a PTC carousel #44 in Riverside Park, Springfield, MA; eventually the B.A.B. Organ company of Brooklyn, NY, acquired it until purchased by the late Sen. Charles Bovey of Virginia City, MT. It came into the Sanfilippo collection in 1987. The organ was

housed in the church at Virginia City along with a number of other organs.

Interestingly, the Berni Organ Company of New York was the first broker for this organ. Berni brokered a lot of European organs to American customers as Dave Bowers points out in his organ chapter in the *Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments*:

American collectors owe a debt of gratitude to the late Mr. Berni for without him some of the most ornate instruments ever to touch American shores would still be in Europe or, for that matter, would never have been built.

Other documentation includes:

Charles Bovey, a Montana state senator, encountered a New York City organ grinder in the 1950s. Offering the man a tip if he could look inside the organ, Charley found a B.A.B. Organ Co. business card inside, and immediately took a cab to the address on the card. B.A.B., which maintained many of the organs used in Coney Island, still had a group of organs, which were purchased as a lot by the Boveys; some were displayed in the Nevada City Music Hall. This organ is from that group.

•**Gavioli 89-key Fairground Organ**—the centerpiece organ of the “Eden Palais” salon carousel (**Figure 29**). Featuring a peacock in the center section and multiple lights this organ is a sight to behold. The organ was made in the 1900s and plays the 89-key “VB” organ scale. 89-key Gavioli organs are a real treat to which to listen and this organ is no exception. The Gavioli literature refers to their 89-key instruments as a “Powerful symphonic instrument, representing an orchestra of 50 musicians.”

The Caron family in France originally acquired the organ with the Eden Palais salon carousel; it was purchased, but not set up at the short-lived, financially-ailing “Magic Mountain”

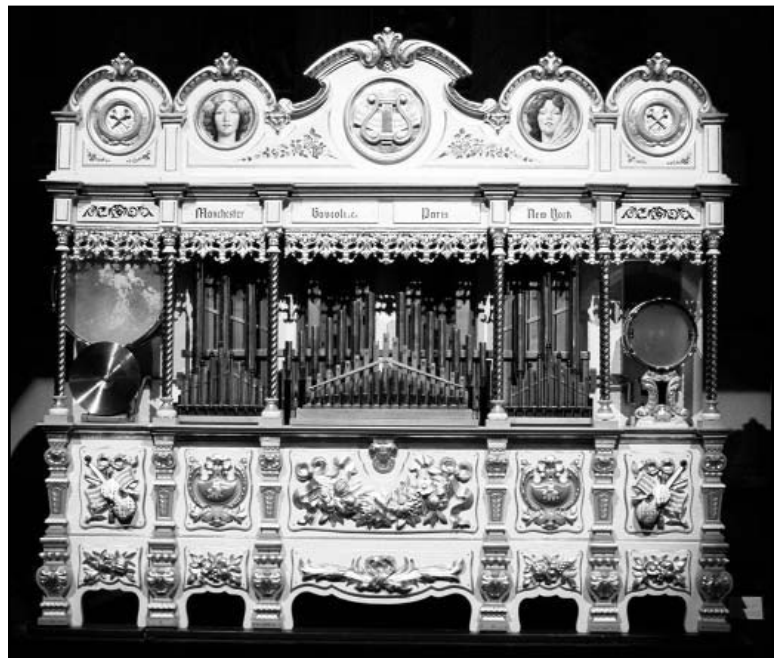


Figure 28. The Gavioli 87-key fairground organ shown in the “Militaire” case style. The organ plays 89-key G3/G4 scale music. Photo: Robert Ridgeway.



Figure 29. The 89-key Gavioli fair organ accompanying the “Eden Palais” salon carousel. Photo: Robert Ridgeway.

theme park in Golden, CO, and finally acquired by the Sanfilippo collection in 1987. Information about the carousel includes:

The Eden Palais salon carousel, with this Gavioli organ, traveled to 13 locations per year in northern Europe for many decades. Much **more** than just an amusement ride, it was a self-contained entertainment palace with stages for live performers, several bars, booths for perimeter seating, and music provided by the Gavioli. The whole affair was lighted by hundreds of light bulbs, and was undoubtedly one of the first places that patrons experienced electric lighting when it was new.

**Limonaire Freres, Paris, France**

•**Limonaire Freres 60-key Fairground Organ, Style 225**— this organ is a compact organ with exposed pipes and beautiful organ figures (Figures 30 & 31). Little is known about this organ as it was acquired recently (1999) at auction. It does play from 60-key music and according to the accompanying information it:

contains no automatic registers, but has separate divisions for five bass notes, six trombones, eight accompaniment notes, 14 clarinets, 10 piccolos and 11 cellos, providing six contrasting musical parts.

•**Limonaire Freres 66-key Fairground Organ, Style 250**— this has been one of the most fascinating organs of the collection that I have observed over the years of my tours (Figure 32 & 33). Its striking good looks, prominent placement in one corner of the second floor of the music room (where light is always pouring in from either side of the organ) and, of course, the excellent music arrangements, have always attracted me and apparently my camera as well as I have scores of photographs of this organ. It was made in 1908 and contains 316 pipes with six automatic registers.



Figure 32 (above). The 66-key Limonaire fair organ with 316 pipes.



Figure 33 (left). The Limonaire catalog details the Style 250 organ pictured above.



Figure 31 (above). While operating with a motor-driven belt the flywheel retains it's hand-cranked handle.

Figure 30 (left). 60-key Limonaire fair organ with three moving figures.

The organ's original owner was Faure Wilbert, France; then an unknown collector and then Marc Fournier of Vienne, France until it arrived in the Sanfilippo collection in 1993. The interesting information along with the organ includes:

Limonaire Freres, founded in Paris in 1840, claimed to be the oldest maker of fairground organs. Their organs were known for great tonal variety, featuring solos on the clarinet, trumpet violin, piccolo, etc. For an organ with only six different bass notes, the 67-key Limonaire does a surprisingly good job of playing interesting music, thanks to clever arranging. The enthralling Wilbert salon carousel was the home of this organ until 1939. A Limonaire employee, Eugene deKleist, came to America in 1892 and founded the North Tonawanda Barrel Organ Factory, which later became the band organ department of the Wurlitzer company, America's largest maker of these instruments.

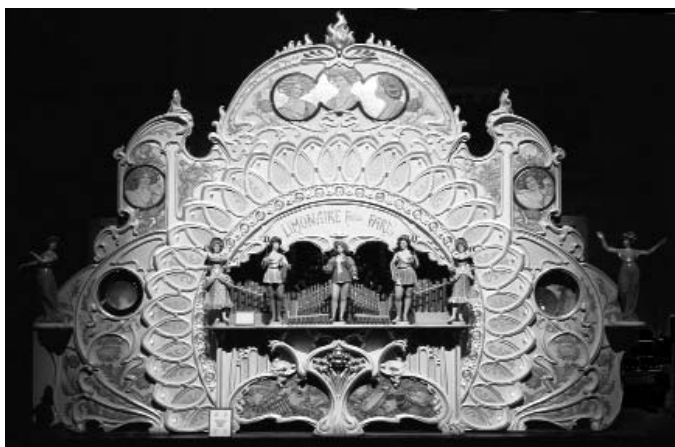
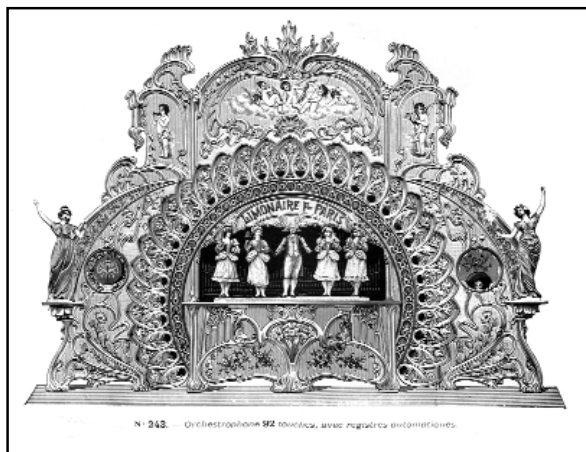


Figure 34 (above). This 92-key Limonaire Freres fairground organ was originally used on the salon carousel "Palais de Fetes."

Photo: Robert Ridgeway.

Figure 35 (below). A catalog photo of the Limonaire detailed above.



•**Limonaire Freres 92-key Fairground Organ, Style 243**—the largest Limonaire of the collection sports an authentic façade and new organ to recreate history (**Figures 34 & 35**). This very large Limonaire utilizes a circa 1905 façade and a new organ construct-

ed by Johnny Verbeeck of St. Job-in-'t-Goor, Belgium. Details of the organ are best left to the accompany description:

This façade was originally used in the fabulous salon carousel "Palais de Fetes," owned by the Caron family, who also owned the Eden Palais. The organ and carousel were destroyed in a fire at Langres in 1932, but the organ façade was unharmed.

### Conclusion

This has been a short review of what is the most extensive organ collection in this country and perhaps the world. While many collectors may have been familiar with the Sanfilippo collection, it is certainly easy to miss something when so much is offered. It is the hope of the author that this will help fill in the details for many of us who make the effort to view and enjoy these organs. For COAA members, a trip, whether it is in person or by this report, to the collection is an absolute must. And for those new to the hobby, what better way to become involved than to enjoy the music provided by these outdoor mechanical machines, *The Happiest Music on Earth*.

The finished organs would not have been possible for us to enjoy without the expert help of many mechanical music restorers including Mike Argain, Marc Fournier, John Hovancak, Mike Kitner, Doyle Lane, Dan Meuer, Dave Ramey, and Johnny Verbeeck.

What is in store in the future for the Sanfilippo collection of organs? Besides the restoration of the organ portion of the 85-keyless Ruth mentioned previously the collection has acquired another 89-key Gavioli fairground organ from the estate of Charlotte Dinger, one of the pioneers in authoring carousel books. The organ will be a significant addition because it plays the late style VB music, with pipe registers giving it an entirely different sound from the other Gaviolis in the collection.

### Appreciation

A special "thank you" to Jasper and Marian Sanfilippo for their permission to provide this information; to Robert Ridgeway, Curator of the Sanfilippo collection, for his help and willingness to put up with my persistence in obtaining information; and to Art Reblitz, who furnished technical information for me directly and also for the signage for each organ, much of which has appeared in the preceding paragraphs. Appreciation also goes to Fred Dahlinger who supplied Art Reblitz with information regarding previous ownership of the organs in the collection.

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Reblitz, Arthur, personal communication and signage

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Ron Bopp is the Editor/Publisher of the *Carousel Organ*. His love of photography, as well as mechanical organs, has helped with the production of many articles seen in various issues of this journal.