

Big Wheels and Band Organs Part I

Fred Dahlinger, Jr.
Copyright 2006

There is a long-established tradition of music accompanying fairground and carnival midway attractions and mechanical rides. The practice reaches back into the 1800s, with the hand organ being noted as a companion to rudimentary flying horse machines by mid-century. These hand-cranked instruments were the most economical means to furnish a ballyhoo to attract patrons and to provide a musical atmosphere that could overwhelm the mechanical noise of the device. As rides grew in size, so did the organs, getting larger, increasingly complex, more powerful and better sounding. The highest quality music implied that the operator had a better ride than his neighbor, resulting in the purchase of tickets. That's what it was all about, as far as the showman was concerned.

The band organ is synonymous with the American carousel, but it has been applied to many different types of ride experiences. These include: imported British-built rides, like switchbacks, gallopers and the "Sea-on-Land"; swings; the "Whip," as well as the lesser known "Tickler" and "Teaser" devices, all invented by W. F. Mangels; an undulating circular ride known as the "Over the Jumps"; Circle Swings and Chairplanes; and even full-sized roller coasters.

Origins

The practice of augmenting a pleasure wheel ride with a musical atmosphere originated in Europe. A few wheel operators in Germany continue the practice to this day, despite the very poor business conditions that provide no consideration for the traditional music feature. We have not discovered common examples of American wheels with organs until well into the 20th century. With incidental exceptions, band organs were first presented with American wheels during the early years of the Great Depression. They became a bright spot for the application of organs just as many showmen were otherwise abandoning their use in favor of sound amplification systems. A number of these instruments survive today, though their days in wheel service have long been forgotten.

Pleasure wheels have been part of the American amusement scene since the mid-nineteenth century.¹ They were typically found on state and county fair grounds and in early pleasure gardens located beside rivers, lakes and in metropolitan areas. The Ferris name was applied to them after engineer George Washington Gale Ferris erected a huge 250-foot diameter example at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. A number of individuals and fabricators proceeded to design and build a variety of large stationary wheels, some of wood and others of metal, most of which are little known or remembered today, except by experts. Only a few American wheels with open, facing bucket seats like those on German wheels, were made. One manufacturer, or importer, was Joseph Brousseau of Orange, New Jersey, who advertised his

"Observation Revolving Swing" in 1894. A Brousseau type wheel, with circular seats, is known from a photograph that records it adjacent to a Hurley family carousel in Revere Beach, Massachusetts. C. W. Parker later manufactured a bucket-style wheel, though it appears to have been sold mostly for static park applications.

Portable wheels, intended to be transported between engagements and quickly erected and dismantled, originated about 1900. They proliferated with the growth of the traveling carnival business, one which essentially gained a complete format about 1898. Early traveling showmen employed wheels made by Jay G. Conderman and the Eli Bridge Company of Jacksonville, Illinois. The latter make, initially manufactured in 1906, eventually dominated the field, the Sullivan family that founded and owned the firm catering to the needs of traveling showmen with a quality product and excellent support service. Band organs were most frequently associated with examples of these portable wheels. A few roll-operated Tanglely air calliopes were later positioned beside some wheels for entertainment purposes, but they were rare exceptions.



Figure 1. An early view of Anton Emde's "Russische Schaukel" documents the placement of the Model 33 Ruth in a nicely crafted wheel arrangement. Author's collection.

German Wheels and Organs

Medium-sized wheels of impressive appearance have been part of continental European fair operations since about 1880.² They were known by names such as “Riesenrad” or “riding wheel,” “Russische Schaukel” or “Russian swing,” and “Luftkarussell,” or “air carousel.” The wheel was erected behind an elaborate façade that doubled as a rotational bearing support and service and access platform housing.

Fitted into one side of the elaborately decorated wheel front was a trailer-mounted band organ. Photographic documentation confirms that instruments ranging from 40 to 96-keyless in size provided the music for these constantly rotating devices. Manufacturers represented include Gebrüder Bruder, Wilhelm Bruder Sons, A. Ruth & Son and Gebrüder Wellershaus. As far as we have been able to determine, there was nothing special about the organs that were applied to European wheel service. They were of the same specifications as outfitted for wanderkino (bioscope), carousel and other amusement services. Delightful music surely was appropriate to the sedate, slow rotational speed of the big wheels, providing a restful and enjoyable interlude above the general din and hurry of the midway. Happily, we can report that a significant number of these organs survive in preservation in Europe today. There are many examples in the literature, making comprehensive coverage impossible. Our remarks will be confined to just a few notable examples.

One of the smallest wheel organs was the 43-keyless Gebrüder Bruder Model 111 installed on Heinrich Frentzel’s Riesenrad. It made the tour of Swiss fairs, including Basel.³ An unusual-looking Model 33, 52-keyless A. Ruth & Son instrument with a French-styled façade was furnished in 1913 to a

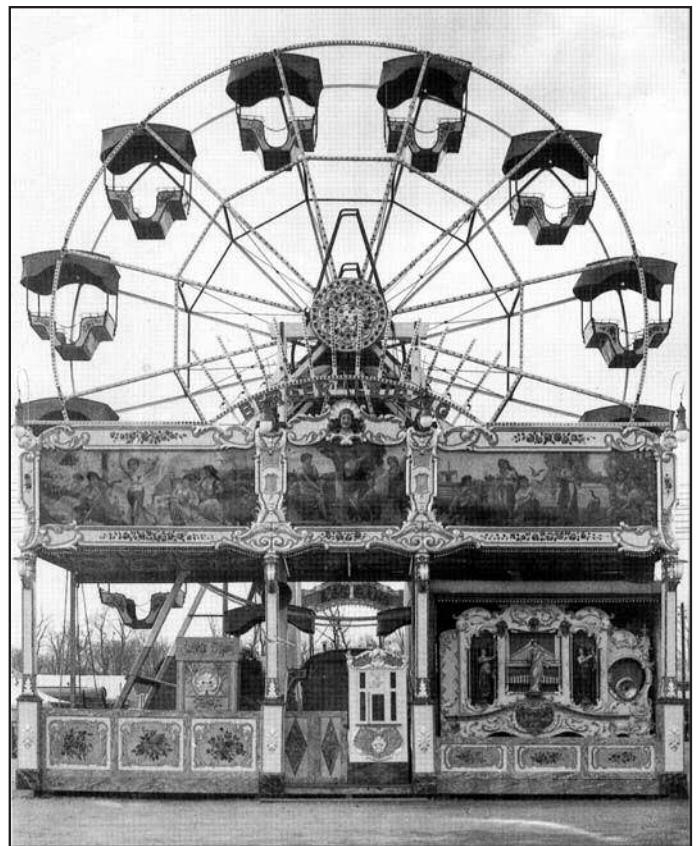


Figure 3. The largest German organ in wheel service was the 1907 Model 38 Ruth utilized by Georg Berger of Leipzig. The snare drum side wing had to be modified to fit the space available.

Image courtesy Archiv Becker.



Figure 2. The Emde organ can now be seen and heard at the museum in Cloppenburg, Germany. The decorative scheme appears to be the same as originally applied to the front.

Dirk Feenstra photo.

German showman named Hans Leis. By about 1926 it was in the possession of Anton Emde of Bremen, Germany, who placed it with an elegant wheel that featured a chariot tableau with two horses projecting out from the façade (fl. 1928). **Figure 1** The chariot configuration was later placed over the entryway to Emde’s Auto-Renn Bahn (fl. 1937), a circular flat ride, with the organ housed in a canvas enclosure to the right. The organ was finally in the center of a conventional carousel operated by Franz Heinemann of Rastede, Germany. Today the organ is preserved and presented in the regional outdoor museum in Cloppenburg.⁴ **Figure 2**

Both Emde and Georg Berger started with swings and then moved up to owning larger and more capital-intensive devices. Berger, of Leipzig, Germany, had several different wheels during his career. His “Grand Gondelfahrt Russe” or “Grand Russian Gondola Ride” was once enlivened with tunes from a German cylinder organ of about 45-keys, later to be replaced by a Model 79 Wilhelm Bruder Sons instrument.⁵ To the best of our knowledge, the largest German-built organ to serve with any wheel was a 1907-built Model 38, 96-keyless A. Ruth & Son instrument. It was acquired



Figure 4. Ruud Vader brought the ex-Berger 38 Ruth to the 2005 rally at Waldkirch, Germany, where it was a crowd favorite.
Author's photograph.



Figure 5. This is how Biermann's Riesenrad with the Style 43 Wellershaus organ looked to Harry Beach at the 1958 Oktoberfest.
Author's collection.

afterwards by Berger and placed in a wheel façade. **Figure 3** Even though it was outfitted with a narrower, economical façade of the type generally seen on Model 36 Ruth instruments, the width of the organ front was too great for the space provided. The snare drum side wing had to be modified to facilitate its placement in the wheel front. Through astute negotiations facilitated by a quirk in laws governing East-West family relations during the existence of the Iron Curtain, German organ collector Wilhelm Feuerriegel was able to bring the instrument across the divisive border to West Germany. This fine instrument is now the property of Ruud Vader of Kolhorn, Holland. It can be enjoyed today at rallies in Holland and Germany.⁶ **Figure 4 (and back cover).**

Some German wheels were erected behind elaborate facades embellished with larger than life figures and other elaborate, carved, cast and painted ornamentation. One of the best known as a result of its frequent appearance at the Munich Oktoberfest was operated by Biermann-Saure, later by Schütz and then Spangenberg. An original condition, 70-key, Style 43 Gebrüder Wellershaus organ built in 1910 was with the wheel. **Figure 5** American ride and park operator Harry Beach, owner of a fine Model 38 Ruth organ, visited the Munich Oktoberfest in 1958 and photographed the installation, which he identified as "Biermann's Riesenrad." The well-traveled and experienced Beach reported "The large decorative front with lifelike carved statues and a large band organ are especially attractive."⁷ **Figure 6** Sold to collector Klaus Meyer in 1994, the organ was restored by Stefan Fleck of Waldkirch in 1997-1998. Visitors to the 1999 Waldkirch organ festival were able to enjoy the music



Figure 6. Four larger than life maidens acted like sirens to attract patrons to the Biermann wheel, their alluring melodies provided by a fine Wellershaus organ.

Circa 1950 Paul Horsman photo, Al W. Stencell collection.

Esterl in 1925. Until 1960 it was the largest wheel in southern Germany. **Figure 8** The accompanying organ is generally identified as a Gebrüder Bruder in the literature and has a façade similar to some Model 107 machines. It does, however, lack the raised panels to either side of the central opening that distinguish that specific machine from the Wilhelm Bruder Sons Model 79, which is the identification that the author would assign to the machine. Whatever the original identity of the chassis, the instrument was rebuilt and modified by Heinrich Voigt to play a Ruth Model 34, 54-key double-roll system in 1939. Voigt rebuilt it again in 1951, adding a glockenspiel, ocarina register and small façade figures.

from this fine machine, along with other appropriate amenities at the Fleck premises. It evoked memories of decades before, when local people gathered to listen to the latest instruments completed by Waldkirch's renowned craftsmen.⁸ **Figure 7**

The tradition of pleasure wheels with organs continues in Germany today. A wheel with a modified Bruder organ is operated by Herbert Koppenhöfer of Munich. His 14-meter "Russian Swing" was built by Franz Gundelwein for Josef



Figure 7. Guests visiting Stefan Fleck's organ shop in 1999 were treated to music from Biermann's Wellershaus organ, an original condition machine playing perfectly. Author's photograph.

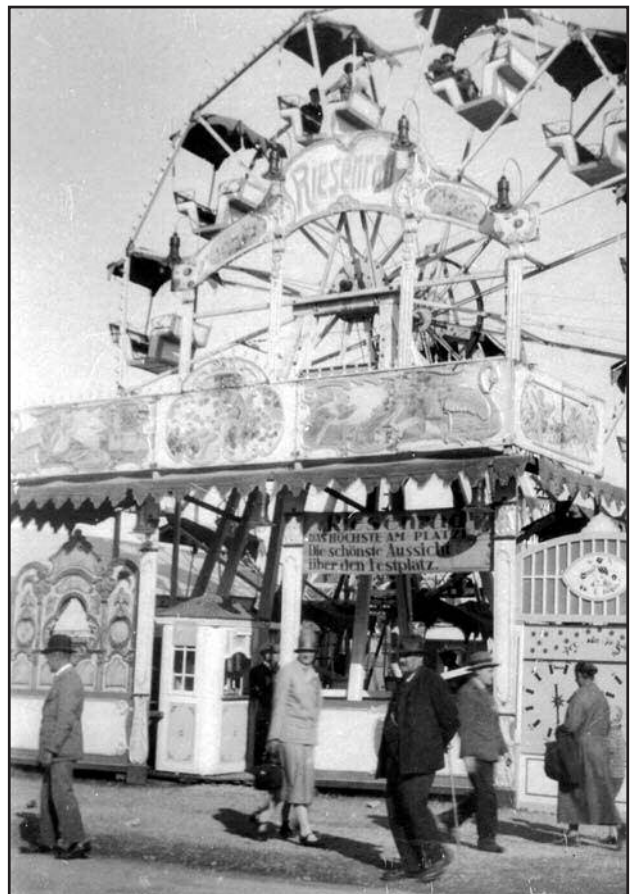


Figure 8. Though it bears no identification, it is thought that this view shows the Koppenhöfer wheel and Bruder organ before major modifications were made. Author's collection.



Figure 9. This undated view of the Koppenhöfer Riesenrad shows the Bruder organ on the left side, before the older style wheel façade was modernized. Author's collection.

Figure 9 All of the modifications have yielded an organ with a unique sound and appearance. Readily identifiable by a multitude of lights and other applied decorative elements, the instru-



Figure 10. The Koppenhöfer wheel with its Bruder has made numerous appearances at the Oktoberfest in Munich. It is shown here at the 1988 event. Bob Goldsack photograph.

ment has the distinction of being seen and heard in the 1954 film production *Carnival Story*, filmed on location in Germany. The 75th anniversary of Koppenhöfer's operation was celebrated with the issuance of a special compact disk of music (Chor MusicProduction CD 3037). One survey of German rides indicates that the Koppenhöfer old-style wheel may be the last of its type in operation today. **Figure 10**

One of the best wheel installations of recent times was presented by Adolf Steiger. His riding device is one of the largest portable wheels in the world, measuring an incredible 61 meters. It has been accompanied by a slightly modified Model 37 Ruth, one that was reportedly built in 1904. **Figure 11** A glockenspiel was added to the instrument at a later date. It has a baroque front, similar to the Model 37 in the museum at

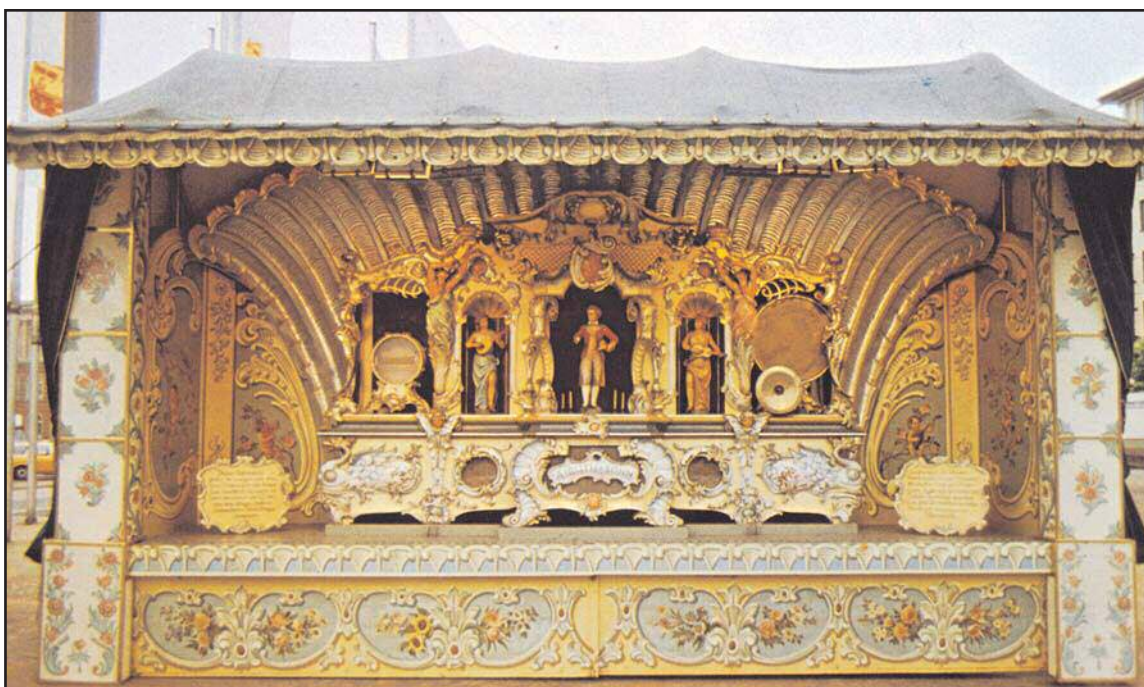


Figure 11. One of the biggest organs in wheel service today is Adolf Steiger's augmented Model 37 Ruth, housed in a fancy trailer decorated in an elegant baroque style. Author's collection.



Figure 12. What may be an expanded Gavioli-Mortier dance organ earns the crown for being the largest wheel organ in Germany. It has been presented by Dieter Ernst in Germany. Author's collection.

Bruchsal, Germany. The Bruch family of Düsseldorf also operates a very large, portable wheel and has an entire array of Ruth organs, ranging from Model 34 to 38, which can be placed adjacent to it.

The largest instrument, in terms of key-size and frontal width, to serve with a German wheel is Dieter Ernst's "Riesenrad Organ." **Figure 12** Text notes supplied by the owner to Chor MusicProduction identify it as being a 100-key Mortier dance organ built in 1915. It has 547 pipes plus drums, cymbal and glockenspiel. The claim for it being the joint work of Mortier and Gavioli, which had gone out of business before the specified date of construction, suggests that there's more to be learned about the history of the instrument. If, indeed, it was originally a "Gavioli-Mortier," it would date to the earlier years of the 20th century. The scale has been expanded and the current façade is a replacement for the one that was lost. It last played in 1939. After the discovery by Ernst, he arranged for rebuilding of the instrument by van den Broek of Holland. The organ accompanied Ernst's huge portable wheel, one of the biggest in Europe.⁹

American Wheels and Organs

Itinerant showmen traveled across the eastern portion of the United States back to the early years of the 19th century, but the American carnival business started in earnest in about 1898. A successful, season-long tour by Frank Gaskill's outfit is generally considered to be the origin of the modern carnival industry. Supported by Americans who enjoyed lessened work hours and increased disposable income, the carnival industry flour-

ished simultaneously with amusement parks at the beginning of the 20th century. Each entity utilized organs to enliven show fronts, carousels and other forms of rides. Somewhat surprisingly and in stark contrast to foreign practice, we've discovered only a single example of an American wheel accompanied by a band organ until the late 1920s. Frank E. Layman, a showman operating locally in the St. Louis area, had a large C. W. Parker Carry-Us-All and a Big Eli wheel that he set up to either side of a trailer-mounted organ. The instrument is thought to have been a Gebrüder Bruder Model 107, fabricated sometime after 1908. Layman kept his rides going into the 1920s, and perhaps much later.

Acquired knowledge of the continental European wheel and organ practice may have inspired several American showmen to team up wheels and organs for American carnival midway applications at a later date. Whether and how the intelligence was actually transferred is uncertain. It was relatively uncommon for American showmen to visit European fair midways, and it was just as unlikely for the foreign showmen to tread American soil. Occasionally a report on foreign fairs and rides would appear in an American trade journal, and once in a great while a foreign ride manufacturer would place an advertisement in a domestic American trade publication. That sort of activity was most common during the years after World War I, when war reparations and a general economic malaise decimated homeland sales prospects for German ride manufacturers.¹⁰ The "Roaring Twenties" were also a time when Joseph G. Ferrari, an experienced Anglo-Italian showman who had first arrived in the U. S. with his brother in the 1890s, made repeat-



Figure 13. Charles Miller must have been quite taken by this 1931 feature of the Munich Oktoberfest, a Wilhelm Bruder Sons Model 79 with a fancy wheel apparatus.

Image courtesy Eli Bridge Company.

ed visits to Europe. He imported many rides, especially the thrilling Chairplane, and new and second hand organs to the United States. It may well have been a conversation with Ferari that eventually sparked the wheel and band organ presentation in the U. S.

There is later evidence of direct transfer of European practice to American showmen. A mid-1932 issue of the Eli Bridge Company's house publication, the *Big Eli News*, carried a photo taken in Europe in 1931 by Chicago showman Charles E. Miller. It illustrated a Jugendstil-facade Model 79 Wilhelm Bruder Sons instrument in the elegant front of a German wheel.¹¹ **Figure 13** During the season of 1930, Miller matched up a pair of Big Eli No. 5 wheels on his midway. Following his European jaunt, in 1932 he placed an Artizan Factories, Inc. Style X-A-2 Military Band, a 46-keyless device, between them. Miller, whose traveling midway moved by motor truck over the streets and highways, also fabricated a portable painted façade with entryways that led to the wheel loading platforms. Ticket booths placed to either side of the organ enabled riders to enjoy the music before taking their seat on the ride, but it must have been pretty hard on the ticket sellers being so close to the source of the loud music. All of the improvements flowed from what Miller had observed in Europe.¹² **Figure 14**

The Royal American Shows Giant Ferris Wheels Gavioli

Many organ enthusiasts are familiar with the big 89-key No. 4 scale Gavioli organ that was re-discovered in the mid-1950s in a Kansas barn. After extended negotiations, the great organ was acquired by Carl Sedlmayr, Sr., and his son, C. J. Sedlmayr, Jr., for their Royal American Shows. After an extensive rebuilding it was presented as a feature of their midway for several decades. To the best of our knowledge, this Gavioli organ never served in conjunction with a pleasure wheel, other than a small one that may have been located in the show's kiddieland. RAS did have an earlier and smaller Gavioli that served to provide a musical atmosphere for some history-making pleasure wheels.

In America, if one is good, two or more are better. Thus, in 1928, a pair of enterprising showmen, Elmer C. and Curtis J. Velare, became the first to erect "duplex" Big Eli wheels side by



Figure 14. After seeing an organ with a wheel in Germany in 1931, Charles E. Miller came home to Chicago and added an Artizan to his pair of Big Eli devices for 1932.

Image courtesy Eli Bridge Company.

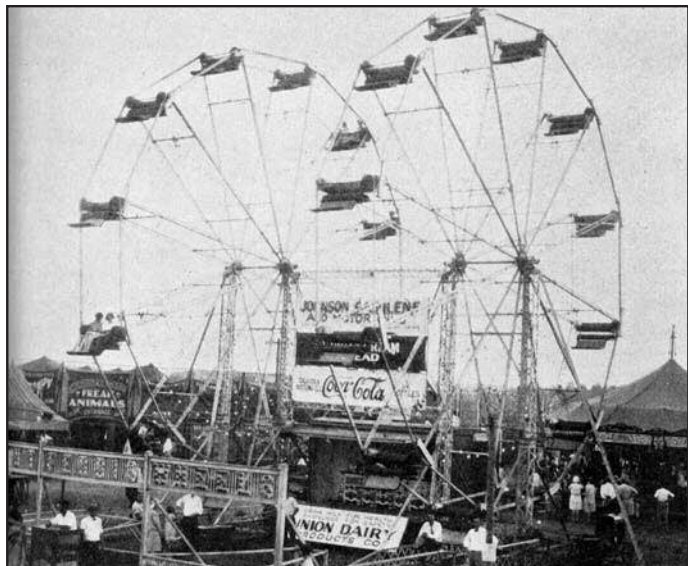


Figure 15. Starting in 1928, the Royal American Shows became the first attraction to feature permanently-coupled, duplex wheels, as well as an organ between them.

Image courtesy Eli Bridge Company.

side. Others had done it temporarily in years before. Enoch Butcher did it on the Polack Bros.' World at Home Shows in 1924 and the Velares had arranged a pair on RAS in 1927, but their 1928 outfit on the Royal American Shows was the first to present a double or duplex as a permanently coupled attraction on any midway. Situated between the two devices was a fine Gavioli band organ. A boom in the application of organs to wheels took place following the origin of this multiple Big Eli installation.¹³ **Figure 15**



Figure 16. Carl J. Sedlmayr, Sr. was a legendary carnival business leader, eventually building his Royal American Shows into the single largest railroad show in existence.

Author's collection.

short-term partner purchased the Siegrist & Silbon Shows and in 1923 changed the title to Royal American Shows, reportedly after recognizing the title potential in a Kansas City event, the American Royal Livestock Show.¹⁴ Royal American moved on fifteen special, extra-long railroad cars in 1923. In 1924, Sedlmayr entered a partnership with Curtis J. Velare (1880-1970) that lasted a single season. Velare's younger brother, Elmer C., joined Curtis and Sedlmayr in a more enduring partnership that started in 1925. The two brothers had appeared as performers in 1898, but their real talents were determined to be in concessions and especially the mechanical ride business. **Figure 17** They provided operating and mechanical expertise to RAS. Sedlmayr was a gifted leader, contract and marketing man, signing so many great fair contracts that RAS dominated the carnival business within a decade. Sedlmayr often negotiated substantially reduced percentages with fair committees because the greater attendance on the RAS midway more than offset the difference. The show train was increased by five cars, to 20, for 1926; was at 22 in 1932; and moved on between 45 and 50 cars between 1936 and 1942, depending upon opera-

The Velare brothers were partners with the legendary Carl J. Sedlmayr, Sr. (1886-1965) in the ownership of the first edition of the Royal American Shows. **Figure 16** Born in Falls City, Nebraska, Sedlmayr's traveling career started in 1907, his experience including both circuses and carnivals in railroad and overland formats. He thrived in the traveling world, learning all aspects of being a showman. In late 1921, Sedlmayr and a

tional requirements. Always innovative in presentation, technology and operation, few carnivals approached the Royal behemoth in quantity, diversity and splendor.¹⁵

Elmer Velare (1884-1977) was given the credit for working out the details of what was termed "the first Duplex Wheel Unit" during the winter of 1927-1928.¹⁶ **Figure 18** The Velares' second, 45-foot tall No. 12 Big Eli wheel was purchased at the factory in Jacksonville, Illinois in early 1928. By that time they'd decided to build an elaborate entrance for the twin presentation, adding signage reading "Giant Ferris Wheels," in a multitude of lights. A large Gavioli organ was selected to provide the "ballyhoo," an attention-grabbing feature that drew customers to the ticket box like a Pied Piper.¹⁷

During their first year the duplex wheels topped the midway take, by mid-year having equaled the entire prior season's gross from one wheel. Somewhat surprisingly, in the long term the double wheels didn't double the income nor synergistically multiply it even higher. The display was principally a demonstration of the show's marketing prowess and image power, as few midway men could afford

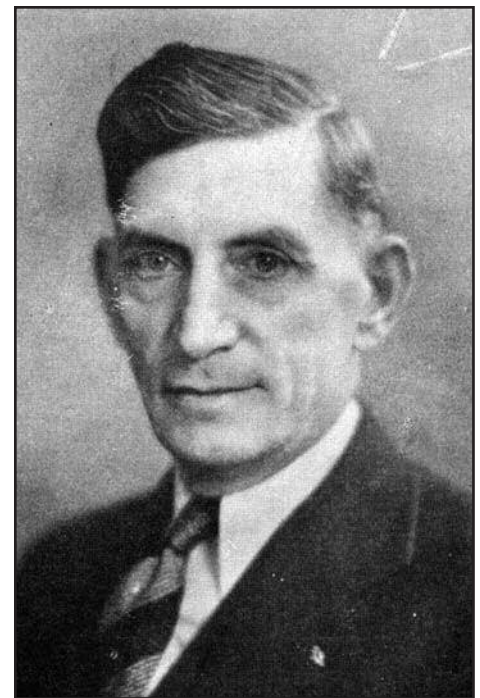


Figure 17. Curtis J. Velare also spent an entire lifetime in the outdoor amusement business.

Author's collection.



Figure 18. Elmer C. Velare was the man who devised the first, permanent duplex Big Eli wheels for 1928 and went on to duplex the duplex for 1933.

Author's collection.



Figure 19. Most views of the RAS duplex wheels, like this 1929 photo, serve only to confirm the existence of the Gavioli, but provide limited specific information. Image courtesy Eli Bridge Company.

such a demonstration. As such, it was initially placed at the head of the midway layout, where its brilliance served as a beacon to all who were in the vicinity.¹⁸ Though it was an aggregate of two individual rides, it might be considered a forerunner of the great, multi-million dollar “spectaculars” that have dominated the best midways. **Figure 19**

Not to be outdone by any other amusement aggregation, the RAS duplexed the duplex, presenting four wheels in-line in 1933. It had been envisioned by Elmer Velare after seeing the results of the first paired wheels. The expansion plans would have been implemented in 1930 if economic conditions had not been so poor. As a result of financial considerations, Velare did not disclose his concept to others until late 1932. Two additional riding devices were purchased and the four Big Eli No.



Figure 20. For the 1933 Minnesota State Fair the Royal American Shows erected the first-ever four-in-line Big Eli wheels. It was a great attraction and earned top money, with a Gavioli in the center. Author's collection.

12 wheels became another midway “first” the following season when they were erected together for the first time at the Minnesota State Fair on September 2 to 9, 1933.¹⁹ When all four were set into motion at night, they provided a kaleidoscope of moving color on the midway. They were an essential part of the excellent reputation built by the RAS organization, resulting in their unequalled retention of the Minnesota State Fair midway contract for the next six decades. **Figure 20**

Sedlmayr penned an article titled “Putting Life in the Midway” for the Christmas 1933 issue of *Billboard* magazine. He was justifiably proud of the way that RAS was progressively and innovatively making great strides forward to build attendance and interest in midways during the depths of the Depression, a time when others found their lots empty of customers. In regard to the multiple wheels, Sedlmayr wrote as follows.

Then we conceived the idea of building a four-unit wheel Ferris Wheel. For years our twin Ferris Wheels had been the talk of cities we played, so this year we thought we would go even stronger and add two others. The result of this is well known to every carnival showman. From the very first it proved sensationally successful, topping the rides' receipts each week.

In the location of the Ferris Wheels we found it was a decided advantage to place them at the rear end of the lot instead of at the entrance. In the rear position ride patrons could see the entire grounds before them. They saw people, fronts, tents and when they came down they would instinctively walk to the place where they had noted peculiarities from the giant Wheels. At night the attractive lighting system would keep their eyes on the Midway and prove such an unusual treat that many each night would ride the Wheels just to get an aerial view of the lights.²⁰ **Figure 21**



Figure 21. Light made the Royal American Shows come alive at night, creating a magical world for all who trod the midway. The multiple Big Eli wheels were positioned just inside the signature entry marquee that was added in 1937. Author's collection.

Adding to the brilliance of the illuminated RAS midway were four immense searchlights that had been fabricated for the battleship “Charleston.” The ship was cancelled under the terms of the Disarmament Agreement. These were mounted on top of elevated platforms erected above two huge, portable 25KW D. C. generator wagons that the show built. The searchlight beams were reportedly seen 50 to 75 miles from the showgrounds. Another update occurred in 1936, when the entire Royal American Shows title was placed in lights at the height of the wheel shafts, with relatively novel neon lighting being implemented.²¹ Seven Caterpillar diesel light plants with sky-reaching, 72-foot tall light towers were acquired the same year, the constant improvements causing one trade reporter to pen a story about the innovations titled “The Show That’s Never Finished.”²² The progressive attitude and actions practiced by the proprietors of the Royal American Shows propelled it to the top of the carnival business. One could argue that the Gavioli organ with the multiple wheels had been the first step in the path to the top.



Figure 22. This fractional enlargement serves to clinch the identity of the organ that was placed amidst the four-in-line Big Eli wheels. It was a Gavioli with a façade in the style that inspired the Wurlitzer 157. Author’s collection.

Though it was an era that was rapidly embracing sound reproduction and amplification systems, the Velares and their peers chose band organs as the appropriate device to supply a musical atmosphere for these wheel installations. In their case, they positioned a wagon-mounted Gavioli band organ between the wheels, mounting a large illuminated star over it. **Figure 22** The entire installation garnered substantial favorable press wherever it appeared. One entire side of the organ wagon lifted upwards, facilitating the viewing and listening of the instrument. The fixed sidewall of the wagon appears to have been embellished with a painted scene that may have been inspired by the local Minnesota legend of Hiawatha. **Figure 23**

One image has been found in Royal American Shows documentation dating from the 1930s that is believed to be this Gavioli. It had been somewhat altered with the placement of figures and the application of carnival paint, but the heritage of the device is unmistakable as being from Paris, France.²³ **Figure 24**

The instrument was probably a 57-key, book-operated machine when built around the turn of the century. More than

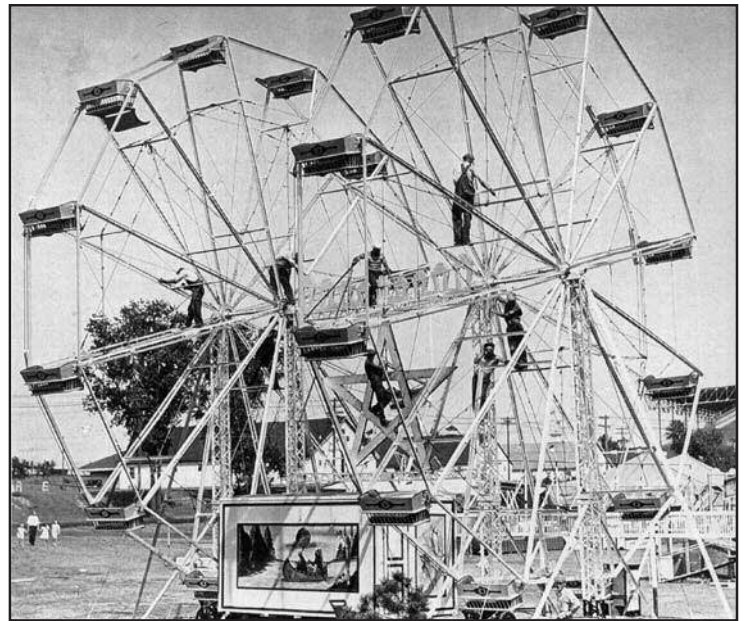


Figure 23. Seven ride boys posed creatively for the photographer in this circa 1932 view taken in St. Paul, but the object of our interest is the nicely painted organ wagon between the wheels.

Image from St. Paul Daily News, courtesy Minnesota Historical Society.

a dozen examples of the style, one or more of which later inspired the Wurlitzer Style 157 façade in the 1920s, can be documented in the U. S. and Europe. The façade design must have been a featured style as an illustration of it also appeared in an early Dentzel catalog. It is quite likely that the RAS instrument had been converted to duplex Wurlitzer 165 roll operation by the time it served on the wheels. The Rocky Springs Park Dentzel carousel, now back in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, has a similar instrument that was also modified to a duplex 165 configuration. The circa 1901 Dentzel carousel at Dorney Park, Allentown, Pennsylvania, which burned on September 28, 1983, was also a 165 duplex conversion. A surviving piece of carving from the RAS façade enables an estimate to be made of the organ size. It was about seven feet tall by nine and one-half feet wide.

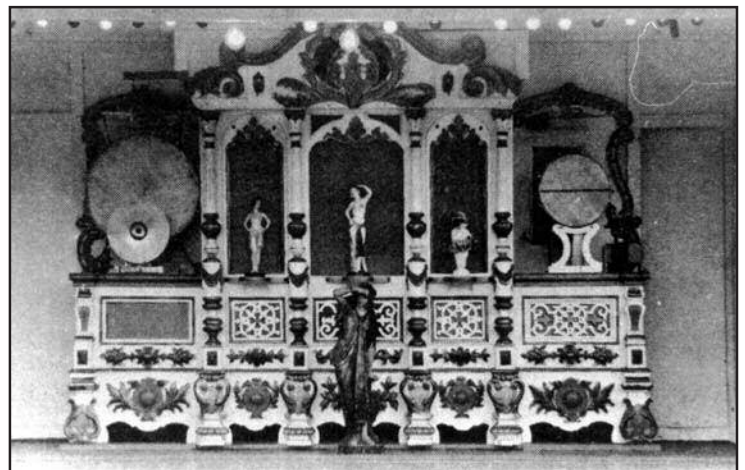


Figure 24 This organ was likely the one that served on the RAS duplex and duplex-duplex wheels starting in 1928. It was originally a 57-key Gavioli, but was likely modified to rolls in the US.

Image courtesy Laura Sedlmayr.

The prior owners of the RAS instrument are unknown, but one possible source has been identified. James Patterson (1860-1948) was an important showman who operated carnivals and circuses out of a Paola, Kansas winter quarters between the early 1900s and 1925.²⁴ He was well known to both the Velares and Sedlmayr, his quarters hosting the RAS during the winter of 1925 to 1926. Patterson also purchased and booked a Hey-Day ride on the 1926 Royal operation.

Beginning in 1911, a showman named J. H. Johnson operated a large back end show on the Great Patterson Shows railroad carnival. It was called "Nomia" a name derived from Greek mythology. She was one of the naiads, a nymph that presided over flowing and related bodies of water. One would normally have expected to see a water show affiliated with that name, but behind Johnson's was a complete vaudeville-style stage operation, with a chorus line, vocalists, comedian and other variety acts. Johnson and his show were part of the Patterson carnival for three seasons. He then switched to the Herbert A. Kline Shows for 1914 and sold the outfit to Clarence A. Wortham and Tom W. Allen in early 1915. They placed it on their Tom W. Allen Shows unit. Nomia was transformed into "The America Maids" show for the 1916 and 1917 Tom Allen tours.²⁵ The Tom Allen Shows existed through 1919, but the subsequent history of the Maids outfit, which could have been re-themed for 1918 and thereafter, is unknown. Allen partnered in a 20-car outfit for 1920 with John T. Francis, who then proceeded to buy him out and operate the railroad show in his own name through 1932.

Featured under the arch in the center of the Nomia and Maids show front was a 57-key Gavioli fitted with three automated figures. The bases of these unique figures as well as other visual details are the same as those later seen on the RAS instrument. Concurrently, the panel details are unlike those on any other similar instrument known to the author, suggesting that the Johnson and RAS organ may be one and the same. Exacting knowledge of the transfer from the Allen show or a subsequent owner to RAS is lacking, but with so few instruments of the type to trace a continuum of ownership is quite possible. **Figure 25**

The organ was already present on RAS in 1927, pressed into service with the temporary pairing of the wheels.²⁶ A mid-



Figure 25. This 57-key Gavioli served on J. H. Johnson's Nomia show with the James Patterson Shows, a major railroad carnival of the 1910s. Various details indicate that it may be the RAS wheel organ.

Author's collection.

season review noted that a principal attention grabbing item were "the new concert numbers on the Gaviola (sic) organ which draws a big throng of music lovers. It is housed in a special wagon, constructed like a band shell, beautifully lighted, and is a distinct ornament to the midway."²⁷

Berlin-born "Tony" Crescio, the well known carnival organ man, was on the scene in 1931 to rebuild the three Royal band organs, including the Gavioli with the paired

wheels.²⁸ It may have been earlier work by Crescio, who was then working independently out of Leavenworth, Kansas, that caused one reporter to describe the Gavioli as an "unusually melodious instrument" in 1928.²⁹ It may well have been Crescio who proved to be a crucial link in the procurement and placement into operation of the wheel Gavioli, foreshadowing the role that he would take in returning the 89-key Gavioli to service in 1956.

Just how long the organ remained fixed amidst the four-abreast wheels is unknown. Another existing photograph shows the organ wagon positioned adjacent to the Philadelphia Toboggan Company portable carousel that was with RAS in the 1930s. It was furnishing music for the galloping horse experience, perhaps temporarily, while the ride organ was being serviced. By this time a painting of a female, Hawaiian ukulele player was applied to the front panel of the wagon housing the Gavioli.³⁰

In 1939, four carnivals, Royal American Shows, Rubin & Cherry Exposition, Beckmann & Gerety Shows and Hennies Bros. Shows, joined forces and became affiliated under the corporate guidance of the Amusement Corporation of America. **Figure 26** The amalgamation that was intended to control the carnival midway industry fell apart in 1942, following the deaths of several owners and the conditions attendant to war-time operations. The Sedlmayr-Velare partnership that built the Royal American Shows was also dissolved at that time. In the division of ACA assets, Carl J. Sedlmayr, Sr. took title to the "Organ and Wagon," the one formerly utilized with the four wheels. It was valued at \$1500.00. Also going to him was the "Ferris Wheel (Front)," valued at \$300.00, and three vehicles, numbers 50, 61 and 14X, each identified on the inventory as "Ferris Wheel Box Wagon" and each valued at \$450.00.³¹ Two of the four Big Eli No. 12 wheels that comprised the feature



Figure 26. The immensity of the Royal American Shows midway is evident in this overview from about 1939. The star in the foreground was mounted over the Gavioli organ that accompanied the four-in-line Big Eli wheels. Author's collection.

were assigned to Elmer C. Velare and two others to C. J. Sedlmayr, Sr. Two of the wheels are specifically listed, valued at \$2500.00 each.

The Velare brothers held their property for a short period before selling it to Al Wagner, who assembled a large railroad carnival that he titled the Cavalcade of Amusements. They withdrew from road travel, retired briefly and then concentrated on building a ride operations and manufacturing business. Their contribution to the development of pleasure wheels was far from completed.

During 1943 Sedlmayr went into a two-year partnership with Sam Solomon in a new version of the Rubin & Cherry Exposition. Solomon had bought the bulk of the former Rubin & Cherry Exposition, selling half to Sedlmayr. They then augmented it with other assets. The Royal American Shows title was re-activated in 1944 and Sedlmayr bought out Solomon before the 1945 tour. The four wheel setup was revived and continued as an RAS attraction through 1961, with just two being used in 1962 and 1963. The multiple RAS wheels were racked inside four former Rubin & Cherry Exposition box body wagons, numbers 31, 51, 101 and 141, which served to carry them between the 1940s and 1955. They were replaced the next year by four other wagons, numbers 28A to D. At that time RAS was enjoying the hard-earned fruits of their powerful route and were in the process of rebuilding and upgrading the show vehicle fleet.

The former Gavioli wheel organ was eventually placed in storage at the RAS winter quarters in Tampa, Florida. The action may have taken place about 1953-1954, when a new ani-

ated organ attraction was acquired as a replacement for the venerable instrument. The action took place shortly before the Sedlmayrs discovered the big Gavioli secluded in Kansas City.³² At some unknown time the 157-like Gavioli façade was either dismantled or came to distress. During an early 1990s visit to the Tampa, Florida, winter quarters of Royal American, the author discovered and identified one residual carving from the façade, a piece that had been located at the base of one of the columns. There were layers of carnival style paint on top of previously applied gold leaf. No explanation has been found for the disposal of the remainder of the once melodious Royal American Shows Giant Ferris Wheels Gavioli.

The RAS Wheels Faux Organ

With the old Gavioli sidelined, the Sedlmayrs contracted for the fabrication of a new automated "organ" to be placed between the wheels. Messmore and Damon, a firm found-

ed in 1914 to design and fabricate animated features for amusement parks and other venues, furnished RAS with a clown figure that "played" endlessly upon a faux pipe organ. The firm had assembled one as early as 1950, when it was illustrated in a feature story about the firm's burgeoning business.³³ The designers or assemblers went to the extent of placing angled mirrors inside the wagon so that the keyboard hand motions and simulated "finger action" could readily be seen from outside. Other animation included head and shoulder movements. The



Figure 27. The Messmore and Damon clown and faux pipe organ concealed the sound reproduction system that supplied music for the later years of the RAS four-in-line wheels, and later on the double-double.

Author's collection.

quality of the recording playback and amplification system gave many people the impression that an actual organ was supplying music for the ride experience. Many children must have wondered why the man in the funny clothes never took a break from his arduous task. **Figure 27**

To house the new music source, the RAS wagon master fabricated a new wagon that rode on the undergear from a former Col. Tim McCoy Real Wild West office wagon. The components had been built in 1938 by the Springfield Wagon Company of Springfield, Missouri. It was the only wagon not painted white on the McCoy show; it was blue, perhaps to make it easier to spot on the McCoy show grounds. Following the financial failure and premature closure of the McCoy operation, Springfield reclaimed their vehicles. The blue office wagon was sold to RAS. The new RAS organ wagon was assigned the number 14X for 1954 and 1955, and possibly earlier, and then #114 from 1956 to the last year of service, 1964. It remained intact until some machinery projected over the tracks in a southern city, perhaps Birmingham or Montgomery, Alabama, caught the wagon body. In the resulting carnage the body was destroyed.³⁴ The unique Springfield undergear was salvaged and employed in the construction of the organ wagon. During the liquidation of RAS railroad equipment in the mid-1990s, #114 was sold to carnival historian Fred Heatley and collector Bill Hall of St. Cloud, Florida, the latter securing full ownership at a later date.

The Velares became active with wheel innovations again following the invention of what is now known as the “Sky Wheel.” It was essentially a pair of wheels mounted at either end of parallel beams that rotated 360-degrees about a center axis. The ride was something of a revival and improvement of the Aeriocycle from the 1901 Pan American Exposition, which was relocated to Steeplechase Park for 1902. Credit is given in some places to Curtis Velare for the idea.³⁵ Chicago-based concessionaire and ride enthusiast John F. “Blink” Courtney made a sketch of the plan and received the initial patent in 1939, fol-

lowed by others granted through 1956. The manufacturing rights were assigned to a joint venture of Courtney and the Velare brothers, who obtained the necessary developmental and construction financing. The first Sky Wheel was installed at Riverview Park, Chicago in 1940 and was then moved to different parks around the country. While featured on the Royal American Shows at the Tampa fair in February 1941 it was termed a “Sky Ride,” the name still in common use in 1945.³⁶ It was subsequently booked at various parks and attractions and was eventually acquired by a Colorado showman, Don Dowis (1911?-1959) in 1952.³⁷ Following his premature death in an airplane crash, the wheel went to other members of his family, who continued to hire it and newer Sky Wheels to other shows and venues. It was destroyed in a storm that struck the Cetlin & Wilson Shows, a railroad carnival, on July 21, 1962 at Harrington, Delaware.³⁸

While their first Sky Wheel could be dismantled, racked and arduously moved from one location to another, the first Sky Wheel that was truly portable was not fabricated and used until 1949, when such a device was erected by the Velares at the Los Angeles County Fair. To lessen the weight, it was made from aluminum. The inventive brothers conceived and in 1956 patented a double version of the Sky Wheel, the “Twin Sky Wheels,” known commonly as the “double-double.” Taking a page from their own history, the inventive brothers connected two of the enormous (height claims range from about 80 to 96-foot) devices side by side, holding them erect on a trio of specially fabricated trailers. Not until 1960 was the device actually completed and placed into service. Both the portable aluminum Sky Wheel and the double-double were sold to a leading motorized showman, Al Kunz, who then booked the paired wheels onto the Royal American Shows. The large, yellow and blue-painted wheels, illuminated at night by nearly 500 green glowing fluorescent lights, provided a truly impressive display, made even more memorable when the wheels started into their paired rotation. The wheels were operated in tandem, so that their principal axes rotated at 90-degrees to one another, forming a rotating cross when viewed from the side. Those that were privileged to see them in operation experienced an impressive visual treat. **Figure 28**

The wagon-mounted Messmore & Damon clown and organ attraction was relocated to the “double-double” attraction in 1961. It continued to serve there through 1964, when it was retired. The organ and player apparatus were removed from the wagon and stored at the show’s Tampa winter quarters. It is believed that all or part of the apparatus was sold at the April 26, 1999 auction that marked the beginning of the re-development of the former home base of the Royal American Shows.

Part II will continue the story of more wheel organs in the U. S., including the Rubin & Cherry Gavioli, the well-known James H. Drew Shows Band Organ.



Figure 28. The immensity of the “double-double” on Royal American Shows is evident from this 1963 photo of the unique device. Image courtesy of Fred Heatley.

Fred’s first exposure to band organs occurred during an early 1960s visit to the Royal American Shows in West Allis, Wisconsin, at the State Fair. The big 89-key Gavioli was spotted beside the recently imported Calypso ride, but his memory of the double-double doesn’t include the organ figure. A ride on the huge wheel was taken a few years later.

Notes

1. Norman Anderson, *Ferris Wheels; An Illustrated History*, (1992), is an exhaustive and well-researched treatise on the history and development of pleasure wheels in all of their numerous variations.
2. Our discussion of wheel organs is almost exclusively German and Swiss in nature, no treatises on the topic for France, Belgium and Holland examples readily accessible to the author.
3. Max Stoop, *Sensationen-Atraktionen an Fahrmarkt und Chilbi*, (1999), page 63.
4. The Emde wheel identification is secured by an image in Günther Müller, *Der Schöne Alte Oldenburger Kramermarkt*, (1982), page 125. The Emde auto ride is on page 151.
5. Photos, Fritz Peters, *Freimarkt in Bremen*, (1962), page 128, and *Das Mechanische Musikinstrument*, 61, page 39, where it is incorrectly identified as a Model 107 Gebrüder Bruder.
6. The author first saw and heard this instrument at Feuerriegel's premises in 1986. Later that same evening, he accompanied our group to a nighttime viewing of the East German border and its fearsome "shooting zone," illuminated in lights. It added meaning to his discussion of the acquisition and transport of the organ.
7. *Big Eli News*, XLIV, page 117. Also see Tom Parkinson, "Parks' Giant Wheels Ripe for Decorations," *Billboard*, July 6, 1959, page 42.
8. Further information on the instrument can be found in Jan L. M. van Dinteren, "70-toets Wellershaus gerestaureerd," and "Gebr. Wellershaus-Model 43-Klaus Meyer," *Het Pierement*, XLV, 3, pages 166-167 and LIII, 3, page 139.
9. The Steiger Model 37 Ruth, several of the Bruch organs and the Dieter Ernst instrument can be heard on LPs, cassettes and CDs issued by Chor MusicProduction.
10. See "Amusement Devices In Germany," *New York Clipper*, December 28, 1912, page 14, and "German Carnival World," *Billboard*, June 7, 1924, page 49.
11. At least three Bruders in this style are known to exist, with others seen in old photographs. The one displayed by Andrew Leach of England at Waldkirch in 2005 is very similar to the 1931 instrument observed by Miller.
12. *Big Eli News*, XVIII, pages 18 and 85.
13. *Big Eli News*, XIII, page 169, and XVIII, page 18 illustrate the Polack installation. The 1927 RAS installation is illustrated in an undated 1998 Amusement Business piece reproduced in Joe McKennon, *Pictorial History of the American Carnival*, (1971), Vol. II, page 32. The organ can readily be seen between the wheels.
14. Sedlmayr was apparently unaware that a showman named King E. Ziemer had an outfit titled "Royal American Shows" on tour at the turn of the century, before his outdoor show career commenced. It's mentioned in *Billboard*, December 15, 1900, page 20 and elsewhere.
15. Sedlmayr and Royal American Shows documentation is extensive. Bob Goldsack and Fred Heatley's *Royal American Shows*, (1996), is the best general resource. Heatley kindly responded to other inquires about the RAS operation posed by the author. The Velares are covered in Sam Abbott, "Brother Act for 50 Years!," *Billboard*, April 12, 1952, page 102, which was edited and appeared as Ben Beno, "The Velare Brothers," *Circus Review*, Spring 1957, n. p., and reprised in Elmer Velare, "74 Years In the Business," an insert in *Amusement Business*, June 24, 1972. *Amusement Business*, May 9, 1970, page 49, included an obituary for Curtis.
16. *Billboard*, May 5, 1928, page 70.
17. *Billboard*, February 18, 1928, page 80.
18. *Big Eli News*, XVII, page 115; XVIII, page 90.
19. *Big Eli News*, XVIII, pages 92-93.
20. *Billboard*, December 2, 1933, page 38, partially quoted in *Big Eli News*, XVIII, page 91.
21. *Greater Show World*, June 1936, n. p.; *Blue Ribbon, A Social and Pictorial History of the Minnesota State Fair*, (1990), page 125.
22. *Billboard*, July 10, 1937, page 53.
23. The photo was supplied from the Sedlmayr family archives by the late Egle Z. Sedlmayr for a fifty-year anniversary tribute to RAS in *Amusement Business*, December 26, 1970, page RAS-11.
24. Bob Goldsack, "James R. Patterson, A Lifetime of Carnivals and Circuses!," *Midway Journal Illustrated*, October 2000, pages 7-19.
25. *Billboard*, May 9, 1914, page 2; February 6, 1915, page 26; April 17, 1915, page 26; July 1, 1916, page 48; May 12, 1917, page 48. The Gavioli can be seen in the Maids showfront photo in the R. L. Lohmar scrapbook, a James Elliott gift, Circus World Museum.
26. *Billboard*, March 12, 1927, page 77.
27. *Billboard*, June 25, 1927, page 104.
28. *Billboard*, February 14, 1931, page 79.
29. *Billboard*, May 5, 1928, page 70.
30. International Independent Showmens Foundation Museum of the Carnival, courtesy of the late George Sanders.
31. "Royal American Shows Equipment Inventory" dated December 31, 1942, courtesy Michael Sedlmayr.
32. The new wagon is in a view published in early 1955. See *Big Eli News*, XL, page 124.
33. Jim McHugh, "Sell Sales by Animation," *Billboard*, April 8, 1950, pages 62 and 132.
34. The story of the loss was related to the author by C. J. Sedlmayr, Jr. (1920-2001).
35. Charlie Burns, "Wheels Turn 50 Years," *Billboard*, April 9, 1950, pages 70 and 139.
36. Stan Barker, an expert in Chicago amusement history, confirmed Courtney's nickname and also the 1940 Riverview date. Also see *Billboard*, March 8, 1941, page 29; May 10, 1941, page 69; and December 22, 1945, page 45. These reports differ somewhat from the 1983 memoir utilized in Anderson, page 223. Carnival history experts Fred Heatley and Al Stencell also reviewed the Sky Wheel coverage.
37. *Billboard*, November 22, 1952, page 61.
38. *Amusement Business*, August 4, 1962, pages 22-23.

Big Wheels and Band Organs Part II

Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

Copyright 2006 Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

Many traveling shows quickly imitated the initial 1928 Royal American Shows arrangement and assembled similar duplex wheel attractions. Numbered among the immediate followers were Morris & Castle Shows, Sol's Liberty Shows, Conklin's All Canadian Shows, Capt. David Latlip Attractions and Roy Gray's Big State Shows. By 1934 duplex wheels were almost a standard, being found on more than a dozen different midway operations. Following the Velare configuration, Gray also inserted an organ between his double wheels in the fall of 1929. He later stated "I want to say that I am pleased with my double Wheels. We had nothing but compliments on them. I have a band organ between the two Wheels, plenty of lights on them, and they are located in the center of the midway. When people get down where the Wheels are located they forget everything else on the midway. I am more than satisfied with the plan." Gray's statement reflects the fact that different showmen had varying opinions as to the correct placement of their duplex wheels, suggesting that purposeful conditions varied between midways.³⁹



Figure 29. Rubin Gruberg earned an appearance on the cover of the October 1929 issue of the *Big Eli News*. He was highly regarded in the American carnival business.

Photograph by Harry A. Atwell, image courtesy Eli Bridge Company.

The Rubin & Cherry Exposition Gavioli/Wurlitzer

The Rubin & Cherry Exposition was an important railroad carnival from the late 1910s to the early 1940s. It was owned and operated by the colorful and gregarious Rubin Gruberg (1885 - 1942).

Figure 29 The second name in the title ostensibly came from the name of Wilbur S. Cherry (1871-1928), a show staffer who never owned part of the action. It may also have originated from the show phrase "cherry pie," meaning to get paid for doing extra work. Overall it was a way to make people more productive

and thereby the show more incrementally profitable. Gruberg inaugurated his own operation with a partner in 1916 and adopted the Rubin & Cherry title in 1917. The show was on 20 cars by 1919, 35 for 1924, changed over to 30 longer steel cars by 1930, upped to 35 for 1936 and topped out under Gruberg ownership at 40 in 1939. Rubin also had a second railroad carnival, Model Shows, moving on about 25 cars between 1928 and 1935. Never the biggest or the acknowledged industry leader, Rubin & Cherry was nonetheless always a contender for the top dates in the business.⁴⁰

Gruberg spent wisely to have some of the finest looking rides on his midway, paying extra for elaborate decorative paint jobs, special lighting, additional mirrors, costly gilding and elaborate carving work of the first order. For 1934, Gruberg joined the pack and installed duplex wheels and in 1936 four Big Eli wheels were seen on his midway. Spotted in the middle of them was an organ with a Gavioli heritage, but with a different instrument behind the façade. For the few years that it existed, the Rubin & Cherry wheel and organ assembly was the closest to equaling the presentation on Royal American Shows.

The story of the Rubin & Cherry wheel organ starts earlier, with a back end show. It has not been determined when and how the Gavioli was brought to America. Several American carnivals are known to have carried similar Gavioli instruments, but a paucity of photography and business records prevents exact determination of the Gavioli's origin. It may have been one of the many second hand instruments imported by the Berni Organ Company in the 1910s, sold via agents or directly to showmen. One of the Berni customers was carnival and ride builder C. W. Parker of Leavenworth, Kansas. A photograph taken of the Rubin & Cherry wagon housing the organ in 1938 reveals what is thought to be Parker construction, suggesting his possible involvement with the Gavioli.

Ideally, a traveling carnival midway was laid out in a horseshoe shape. Games and concessions lined both straight leg sections, leading to the curved area, or "back end." That is where the tent-enclosed shows of a wide variety were placed, each behind a painted bannerline or a carved show front mounted on one or more wagons. Rides were typically located in the infield area of the horseshoe. Each back end show would stage a ballyhoo to draw a crowd, or "tip." Usually it started with music, sometimes from a roving carnival band that played for many of the shows, or else an air calliope, shaker chimes, a unafon and in some cases, a band organ. Following the musical interlude a talker would announce the attributes of the attraction housed in the tent, with a performer or two coming out onto the bally platform to demonstrate some aspect of the show.

A carnival operator named John T. Francis (1877-1960) had a back end show titled "Wonderland" on the 1914 C. A. Wortham Shows. Centered in the façade was a large organ, perhaps the first document relating to the current subject.⁴¹ C. A.

Wortham and Tom W. Allen revived their partnership for 1915, when no less than three Gaviolis and two calliopes furnished music for their consolidated midway, the same number having been on their previous 1913 combined operation. The Gaviolis may all have come to the operation via C. W. Parker, who had outfitted much of the previous Wortham & Allen operation. The two showmen again went their separate ways after 1915, with Francis and Allen eventually forming a show under the latter's name in 1920. Frank Bergen, later to become a major carnival proprietor, also operated a tent attraction he called "Wonderland" with the Joseph G. Ferari Shows in 1918. It was a consolidation of various elements, with selections from the side show, both real and gaffed, museum and illusion presentations.⁴²



Figure 31. This 1937 photograph is the best one of the Rubin & Cherry wheel organ. Behind the simplified Gavioli façade was a Wurlitzer Caliola instrument. Image courtesy late Albert Conover.

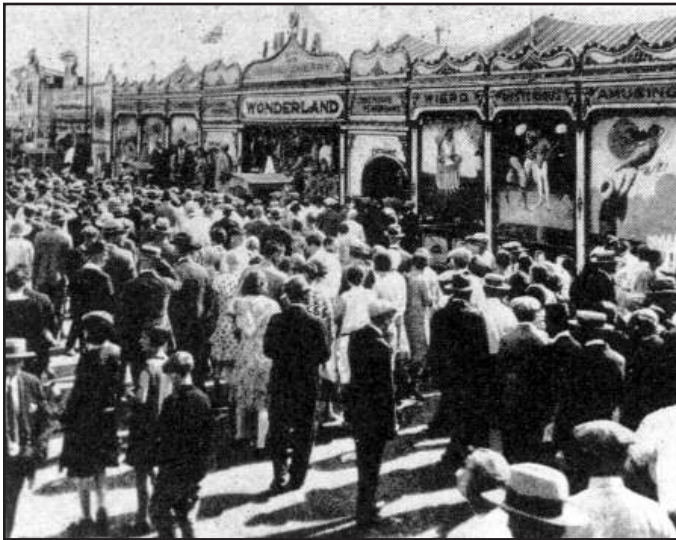


Figure 30. R&C Midway guests learned about the Wonderland program by looking at the painted scenes on the banners, but the ballyhoo was provided by a nice 57-key Gavioli in the center of this 1929 view. Author's collection.

By means unknown, the Wonderland title and perhaps the show front eventually became an asset of the prosperous Rubin & Cherry Exposition. **Figure 30** Wonderland appeared as a back end show as early as 1926 and as late as 1930, managed by Harry Gilman. Presented inside the tent was a stage magic show featuring primarily illusions. A review during the initial season said that it was hallmarked by handsome scenery, lavish effects and a "\$10,000 band organ built on a wagon." The stated worth of the instrument was a substantial amplification of the actual market value.⁴³

Starting about 1934, when Gruberg duplexed his wheel installation, the Wonderland instrument was re-positioned to provide the music accompaniment for the paired Big Eli No. 5 rides. **Figure 31** One of the prized dates in the North American carnival world was the Canadian National Exposition at Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Gruberg succeeded in booking the site in 1936, the year when he equaled the RAS and featured a four-in-line wheel set up. A photograph taken during that event recorded the R&C four-in-line wheels. The twin No. 5 wheels were augmented with duplex No. 12 wheels from the Model Shows. The large organ wagon remained situated in the middle.

A door was located in the middle of the street side of the wagon, providing operator access to the back of the organ case. **Figure 32** The number of wheels dropped to two in 1938 but went back up to four in 1939. The organ was still present in 1938 and more than likely remained intact through 1942.

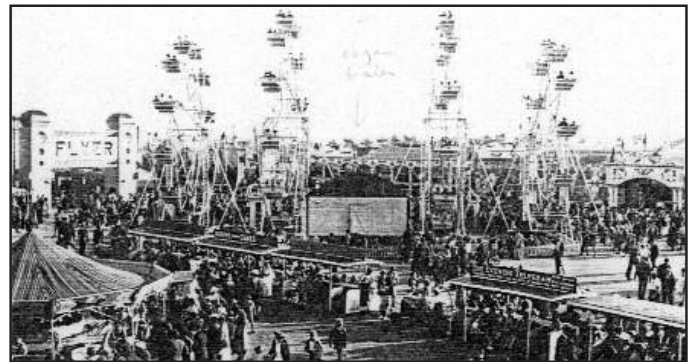


Figure 32. R&C wagon back: An unusual view of the back of the Rubin & Cherry wheels confirms how the Gaviman accessed the roll frame area in 1936, by means of a side door.

Author's collection.

Fortunately there's some insight into the early days of the Rubin & Cherry Gavioli. The same Wonderland/R&C wheel instrument, or an identical duplicate, was photographed after completion in the Paris factory of Gavioli at sometime between about 1900 and 1905. **Figure 33** A shop photograph reveals a truly elegant Louis XV style facade, fitted with a tall, decorated top panel and an attractive trio of figures termed "Les Soeurs Barissans," or "The Barissan Sisters." They presumably represented a popular trio of musical hall soubrettes or dancers, since they're shown with synchronized and lifted right feet.⁴⁴ Flanking them were two pairs of elegant dancers, all likely supplied by the noted carver Demetz in the Tyrol. The factory identified the organ with a designation as style number 624. Measurements inscribed on other organ images taken in the same position infer that the façade measured about ten and one-half feet tall and sixteen and one-half feet wide. It was a 57-key instrument, playing the No. 3 scale of that size. The glockenspiel was likely brought into action by the forte key and played with the piccolo notes.⁴⁵



Figure 33. Taken at Gavioli's Paris factory following completion, this photo illustrates the original configuration of the Rubin & Cherry wheel organ or a twin to it. Image courtesy Marcel van Bostel.

By the time the organ filled the area of the Rubin & Cherry wheels with melodies it had been substantially changed. It was stripped of the items that provided elegance. The façade had been remodeled to a flat front panel configuration, the depth-providing set back of the side wings lost during the rebuilding. Gone were the finely shaped figures. The upper panel had been removed when the organ was placed inside the wagon. It was retained, a 1928 view showing the carved elements from it incorporated into the Wonderland title piece. For 1929 it was replaced with a simpler and easier to erect display panel.⁴⁶ The presence of a Wurlitzer style 153/157 snare drum base and bass drum action strongly suggests that the instrument had been through a rebuild by the well known North Tonawanda firm.

Gruberg aggressively upgraded and expanded for the 1928 tour. He purchased a substantial number of new railroad cars from two builders and thereby the Exposition bearing his name was enlarged. His wife, Annie, bought another entire carnival and it was given the title of Rubin & Cherry Model Shows. Only one Wurlitzer organ, a 153, and one air calliope came with the acquisition.⁴⁷ The new carnival had no band organ with either the carousel or a Spillman Over the Jumps ride.

Gruberg's flush position was good news for one band organ



Figure 34. This unusual 1938 view shows the R&C wheel organ in wagon number 70 sitting amidst the wheel erection work that is underway. Author's collection.

builder. Wurlitzer records document that Rubin Gruberg took delivery in August 1928 on three instruments: a Wurlitzer 157, a Calliola and a Style 103. In combination with an older 153 on his Over the Jumps ride, they were satisfactory to fill a good sized midway with lots of music. The three new organs reached the show by the time the Exposition fulfilled the important engagement at the Canadian National Exhibition. A dearth of Rubin & Cherry photos prevents exact determination of their specific application. The portable, three-abreast Philadelphia Toboggan Company merry-go-round that Gruberg also added in 1928 was apparently outfitted with a 61-key Artizan Factories, Inc. Style "D." It might have come via PTC or direct from the factory to Rubin & Cherry, but it is known only from later, post-Gruberg photographs of the ride. **Figure 34**

Whenever Wurlitzer shipped something out of the ordinary, usually an entry was made concerning the noteworthy exception, deletion, modification or addition. In the case of the 157, 153, and 103, no remarks were entered upon the record. When the Calliola was shipped, it was described as having a long roll frame, a green case and a "special front." The instrument came back to Wurlitzer for a going over in 1929 and when it was returned to Rubin & Cherry it was further described as having a "large front." The instrument came back in for service again in 1930. Gruberg must have been very concerned about proper performance of this particular organ.

No instrument on the Rubin & Cherry midway satisfies the "large front" description other than the Gavioli façade between the Ferris wheels. For all of its size and one-time glamour, it appears that a modest Wurlitzer Calliola was situated behind that French artifact and supplied the music that entertained the wheel riders. The Wurlitzer drum actions associated with the 153 and 157 styles were installed in their typical positions to provide for best audio conditions.

The Rubin & Cherry Exposition was one of the four railroad carnivals that formed the Amusement Corporation of America in 1939. Rubin Gruberg passed away in the spring of 1942 and his outfit was largely acquired by Sam Solomon in 1943. Solomon quickly sold a half interest to Carl J. Sedlmayr, who later bought out Solomon entirely. Via that series of transactions the R&C wheel organ probably became an asset of the reconstituted Royal American Shows in the mid-1940s. If and how it was used on RAS hasn't been determined.

Many years ago, organ owner and repair man Tom Champion obtained a wire recording of the Rubin & Cherry wheel organ. There was a hope that one day whatever sounds were recorded upon it could be salvaged. If nothing remains of the recording, at least there's now some knowledge of what was once on it.

Dodson's World Fair Shows Wurlitzer 153

Dodson's World's Fair Shows obtained a Wurlitzer Style 153 Duplex Orchestral Organ by 1930 and installed it in a 14-foot long wagon with what they termed a twelve-foot extension. It was spotted between two Big Eli wheels.⁴⁸ **Figure 35** The ensemble was the first attraction encountered by anyone visiting the Dodson midway, serving like a lighthouse beacon to



Figure 35. The quintessential carousel organ, the Wurlitzer Style 153, provided the music for the duplex No. 5 Eli wheels on the Dodson's World's Fair Shows in 1930. Image courtesy Eli Bridge Company.

draw local residents to the show. C. Guy Dodson continued his railroad carnival operation through 1944, when it was sold and became the John R. Ward Shows. Nothing further is known about the Wurlitzer band organ. Fortunately, a pair of good photographs clearly defines the make and nature of the Dodson instrument.⁴⁹

World of Mirth Shows Model 33 Ruth

The World of Mirth was a large railroad carnival inaugurated in 1933.⁵⁰ Featured on the WOM midway was a three-

abreast portable Philadelphia Toboggan Company carousel, their #32. It was manufactured in 1914 and owned and operated by WOM treasurer and concessionaire Ralph W. Smith (1875?-1962). **Figure 36** He booked the ride and organ onto the Joseph G. Ferari Shows and later the Bernardi Greater Shows, both of which were railroad carnivals and the predecessor organizations to the World of Mirth.



Figure 36. Long time showman Ralph W. Smith was the original owner of the Model 33 Ruth that was placed with the WOM wheels in 1938.

Author's collection.

Providing music for the PTC ride was a Model 33, 52-key-less Ruth organ, likely one of the twenty that were sold in the United States by the Berni brothers in the 1910s. The instrument may have been one of the two that they imported in 1914. Unlike Europe, where nearly every organ was mounted in a separate wagon for transport, such conveyances were relatively

uncommon in the United States. In some cases small organs were mounted on the carousel center, or "gun" wagon. A few organs were mounted in small, utilitarian wagons that fitted inside the ride center. Most commonly, an organ was manually unloaded from the carousel scenery wagon and wrestled to the open area inside the ride platform by brute force. The handling and atmosphere inside the ride often took a toll on the useful life of the organ.



Figure 37. This 1919 view documents the closed side of Smith's elaborate carousel organ wagon, which housed a Model 33 Ruth instrument.

Author's collection.

The wagon constructed to house Smith's Ruth was the finest carnival organ wagon in North America that we have found. **Figure 37** Based on a four-wheel chassis, the box body wagon was so compact that it barely accommodated the Model 33. It was likely sized so that the four wagons hauling the carousel would not fill more than two of the show's railroad flat cars. The exterior was decorated with six to eight carved and gilded figures, between which were painted scenic panels. The carved figures are twins to those found on a large carved show front that Ferari erected on Surf Avenue following the fire that devastated Dreamland in 1911. It was much larger in its origi-



Figure 38. This Ferari wagon front was originally twice as wide. After being reduced in width, some of the panel figures were transferred to the wagon housing Ralph Smith's Model 33 Ruth organ.

Author's collection.

nal configuration; the reduction in size likely made some of the original carved ornamentation on it surplus, enabling the transfer to the wagon. **Figure 38** The vehicle was parked adjacent to the carousel, with the side facing the ride open for viewing and propagation of the music. The opposite side had a painted screen or cloth panel that permitted a lesser amount of music to flow in the opposite direction. The configuration eliminated the need to manhandle an instrument into the center. A number of carnivals staged street parades in the era before World War I, complete with bandwagons, tableau wagons, cages and music wagons, including calliopes and organ wagons. The exterior ornamentation on this organ wagon would have enabled it to serve as a source of music in any public procession.

The Ruth was repaired at least once, in 1937, by repair man George Messig of Gravesend, New York. He documented the specification of the instrument, which included a total of 149 pipes. His numbers and description are consistent with the Model 33 Ruth. He also carefully noted the stamped information on the valve chest cover board and made up a scale stick for use with the tracker bar. The repairman made notes that reveal how he planned to convert the instrument to Wurlitzer 150 rolls, having rejected other options to enlarge it and utilize readily available 61, 65 and 66-key roll scales. Messig retained a single piece of green cardboard from the instrument. Whether he actually implemented the conversion to rolls is not determinable from the surviving records.⁵¹



Figure 39. The only available view of the Ruth between the WOM wheels is this circa 1938 photograph. Author's collection.

For an unknown period of time the Ruth organ and wagon were placed in an offset position amidst a trio of different-sized wheels on the WOM midway. The placement was documented in a photograph thought to have been taken about 1938. **Figure 39** A Big Eli ticket booth, fencing and the name of the show in lights above the organ wagon completed the installation. Another photograph taken in 1949 serves to confirm the continued presence of the organ wagon beside the three Big Eli No. 12 wheels then with WOM. The elegance was largely gone

and it was painted a light color with simple pin striping. The upper side panel was open, the only indication that an instrument may have continued to play inside.⁵² **Figure 40**



Figure 40. This late 1940s view records the Smith organ wagon towards the end of its years on the World of Mirth. The photo, reportedly taken at Arbor, New Jersey, is from the 1950 WOM program.

Author's collection.

For some time there was a belief that the Smith PTC carousel was fitted with a Model 33 Ruth in the center of the ride. That was especially thought to be true in later years, with two photographs confirming the presence of an organ in that location. Based upon a fresh appraisal of the documentation, it would appear that the wagon-mounted 33 Ruth supplied the ride's musical atmosphere from as early as 1919 until it was shifted to the wheels, circa 1938. Thereafter, a different instrument was obtained and installed in the carousel center. There does not appear to be any subsequent connection between the Ruth and the PTC carousel.

There are very few early photographs of Smith's PTC carousel. Those that are available were taken after the original PTC scenery was destroyed in a 1940 fire that occurred on the WOM train. Whatever organ was with the ride was also damaged, but repaired soon thereafter. A somewhat modern "art deco" style set of rounding boards with neon lighting replaced the original set before the end of the season. Further damage to the carousel, and perhaps the organ, occurred as a result of a second fire during the 1942 season. Close examination of views of the carousel organ in the post-1942 ride arrangement reveal that it bore the top panel and side wings of a deKleist 20A, or the later and more common derivative, the Wurlitzer 150.⁵³ The fact that the outline of the drum wings somewhat resembled one lesser known style of Model 33 Ruth façade caused the mix-up in identifications. It is now realized that the carvings on the remaining side wings are clearly those associated with the American-made instrument. The center panel of the merry-go-round organ was presumably damaged beyond repair in either the 1940 or 1942 fires. By way of independent confirmation, William Gresham, in his account of the WOM, referred to the carousel instrument as being a Wurlitzer.⁵⁴

Organ and outdoor show expert Louis May personally saw the WOM carousel and listened to the organ many years ago. He was certain that it played a Wurlitzer 150 roll. His recollection is on the mark as it was indeed a North Tonawanda-made instrument that played the Wurlitzer 150 roll scale. The unusual sound of the instrument, as knowingly discerned by May, presumably resulted from the loss of the characteristic brass pipework in the fire and its replacement by other pipework of unknown design and specification.⁵⁵

Smith's modified carousel was part of the WOM equipment that was shipped to the Dominican Republic for installation in the Fun Zone of their world's fair. The two-month celebration opened on December 20, 1955. Bergen negotiated the sale of the carousel and other equipment, but whether he or other parties benefited from the transaction is in dispute. A photograph exists that may record the Smith organ wagon being loaded onto the "Dorothy," the steamship that transported the midway to the island. The sale of the antique organ and wagon, in conjunction with the carousel, might explain why no further record of it has been discovered in American documentation.⁵⁶ There is a slight possibility that it may be a Model 33A, with contrabass pipes, in existence in a private collection. That instrument, notably, is missing the top of the façade, as was the WOM organ.



Figure 41. WOM owner Frank Bergen immortalized his show's band organ by always belting "I don't hear no organ" when it was time to open the midway. Author's collection.

belonged "I don't hear no organ." **Figure 41** The only instruments on the lot were the Ruth and Wurlitzer 150 roll organ on the carousel. It caused ride bosses, talkers, concessionaires, performers, ticket sellers and everyone else working on the midway to spring into action, bringing the traveling wonderland to life. Organ music signaled the start of the evening's amusement.⁵⁷

The Harry A. Illions World's Fair Giant Wheels

Amusement park carousels were frequently outfitted with two band organs. A smaller one provided the music for routine daily service. The larger instrument was placed into operation on heavy riding days, weekends and holidays, as well as for

what might be termed concert service. It may have been an aspect of that practice that inspired a showman to place two organs between three Ferris wheels that he had brought together. As far as we know, this three and two arrangement was only done once and at a very special location. The first and only installation of three-in-line wheels and two organs was assembled by Harry Illions (-1962), the eldest son of the famous carousel carver Marcus C. Illions. **Figure 42** He had a long and truly interesting career as a mechanical thrill ride owner and operator, earning a reputation as one of the top people in that line of the outdoor show business.

It's possible that the Ruth organ was an icon of carnival operation and existence, part of the established daily ritual on the WOM midway. When owner Frank Bergen (1885?-1970) determined that it was the time to open to the assembled crowd, usually about 7:30 PM, he reportedly cupped his hands and bel-



Figure 42. Harry Illions was a recognized expert in the field of thrill ride design and operation in 1940, the year he placed his three Giant Wheels and two band organs at the New York world's fair.

Author's collection.

business.

Following the lead of the Velare installation on RAS, Illions had two No. 16 Big Eli wheels at the 1934 run of the Century of Progress world's fair in Chicago. They were owned and operated by Century Ferris Wheels, Inc., a joint effort with Ralph A. L. Bogan (1896?-1962), the executive vice president and general manager of the Greyhound Corporation's Chicago operation. There had been no wheels on the world's fair midway in 1933 and the absence was noted during an assessment of the poor season's take. Illions filled the gap with two deluxe wheels from the Eli Bridge Company. It earned him another good mark for making a midway successful, opening up other doors for his installations. Illions booked his two Big Eli No. 16 Aristocrat wheels at the State Fair of Texas fairgrounds at Dallas in 1936 and then a booking at San Francisco's Golden Gate International Exposition followed for 1939. In 1940, he added a third wheel and placed them in all in a row on the midway at the New York World's Fair.⁵⁸ **Figure 43**

Between each pair of wheels at New York Illions placed a large band organ. He referred to them as "Carousette Organs that played alternately." Whether the ride adjective identified the prior service of the instruments or simply provided non-sound reproduction device identification is unknown. Their alternate playing may also have been necessary if each had a single roll frame, which necessitated rewinding at the end of the roll. Silence is abhorrent to any good showman, pleasing audio activity a desirable asset to any entertainment. A painted 100-foot long header, resembling an unwrapped set of carousel rounding boards and shields, fronted the ride. The phrase



Figure 43. This view is the best image of the triple wheels and double organs that Harry Illions installed at the 1940 New York world's fair. Image courtesy Eli Bridge Co.

“Giant Wheels,” in large letters, was placed on elevated panels. A unique ticket booth, shaped and painted to resemble a pleasure wheel, provided a place for riders to buy their tickets. The facility was surrounded by 300 feet of picket fencing. Illions

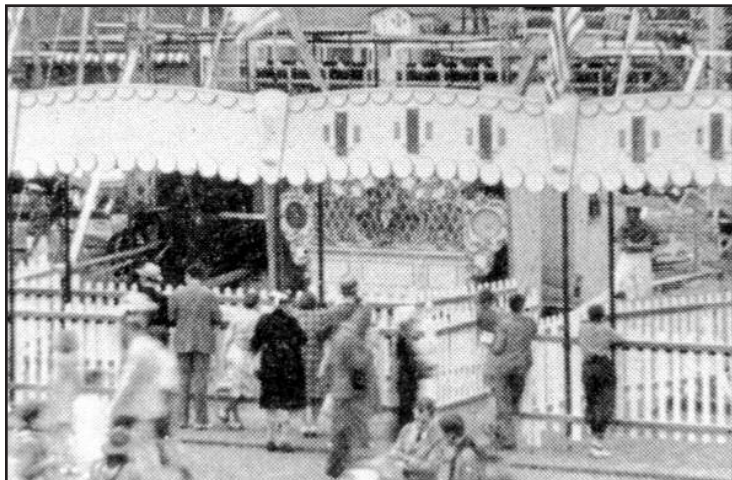


Figure 44. One of the Illions organs has the appearance of being a large North Tonawanda military band organ. Image courtesy Eli Bridge Company.

termed it one of the flashiest layouts he'd ever built.

Unfortunately, the one known photograph of the installation precludes making a positive identification of the two band

organs.⁵⁹ One instrument is totally obscured in the view, save only for a drum wing support extending from the side of the case. The other has the hallmarks of being a large, American-made trumpet organ. A screen over the pipework prevents further analysis. **Figure 44** The case of the visible organ was painted white and side supports were in place to hold the drum actions. The carved panels situated in front of the drum wings, as well as the grill and any other enhancements would conceivably have been additions made by Illions.

Three different American band organs had the trio of panels in the bottom of their furniture-style cases; the 82-key North Tonawanda

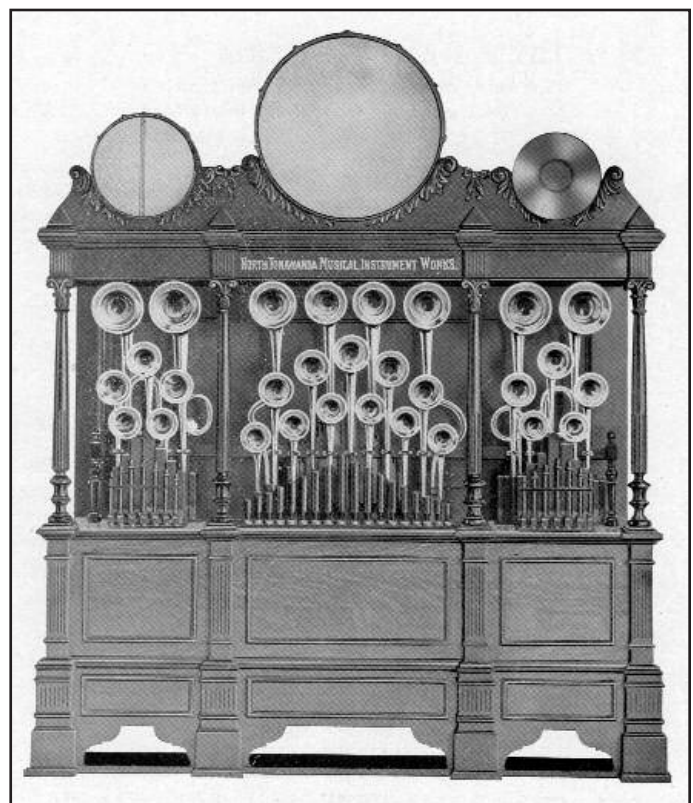


Figure 45. The one organ readily visible in the 1940 triple wheels has most of the characteristics of a North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works Style 1100, with brass pipework. Author's collection.

Musical Instrument Works No. 1100 [also in cylinder format, No. 100]; and the Wurlitzer 164 and 168. A careful measurement of the lengths and heights of these panels and especially the width of the gap between adjacent panels favors the 1100 identification. In further confirmation of the attribution, close examination of the print suggests that there's some type of raised woodwork or molding between adjacent panels. That construction is found only on the 1100. **Figure 45** Only a few NTMIW No. 1100 instruments were ever sold, the quantity known to the author being less than ten examples. Perhaps Illions found one hidden away in a skating rink somewhere and enhanced it for the world's fair installation. It's known that he bought other rink organs for his amusement interests. The 1940 fair installation may well have been the last time that an 1100 with all brass pipework was seen and heard. There has been no mention of the big brass organ being in Illions possession at a later date and all trace of it is lost after 1940.

Illions dispersed the Big Eli wheels to other locations after 1940. Two were placed at Seaside Park, Virginia Beach, in 1941 and by 1944 were at Fairgrounds Park in Nashville, Tennessee. The third eventually went to Celeron Park, Jamestown, New York, which Illions had purchased in 1943. It is uncertain if any of the organs served in these locations as they had at the world's fair. An older but very large Phoenix wheel, perhaps the largest then operating in the United States, was a landmark at Jamestown. It was originally erected at the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia and after relocation by Illions to Pomona, California, served there until demolished in 1981.⁶⁰

The James H. Drew Exposition Shows Band Organ

The largest of the wheel organs that survives intact in America today is the big German instrument that remains a great feature of the James H. Drew Shows traveling midway. It is the finest band organ presentation on tour today with a traveling show, a piece of family heritage and personal pride for show owner James H. Drew, Jr. A very substantial amount of money has been invested in the restoration of the organ and in the construction of the semi-trailer that houses and conveys it to Drew engagements.

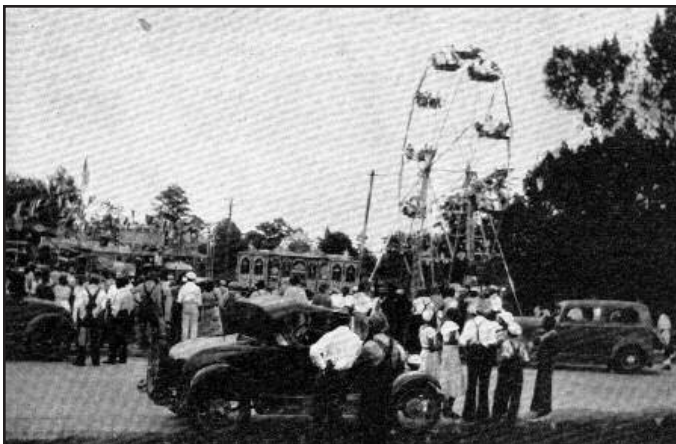


Figure 46. The earliest known image of the Drew organ is this 1935 photograph documenting it with Louis J. Nieberle's Florida Amusement Company. Image courtesy Eli Bridge Company.

The earliest visual knowledge of the ride organ is a photograph published in 1935 that placed it beside the Big Eli No. 5 wheel owned and operated by Louis J. Nieberle's Florida Amusement Company. **Figure 46** Nieberle also had one of Sellner Manufacturing Company's Tilt-a-Whirl devices; a mechanical thriller that has still not lost its appeal to riders some eighty years after it was first introduced.⁶¹

There's a good bit of information available about organ owner Louis J. Nieberle. He was born in 1879, reportedly in Austria, although a ship manifest confirming his return from Cuba in 1924 gave his nationality as "Hungarian (Mag[y]ar)." An obituary stated that he "was a mechanic by choice and experience." Perhaps inspired by the giant Riesenrad in Vienna's Prater, Nieberle claimed to have built his own 27-foot tall wooden riding wheel in his Austrian homeland in 1902. It was actually a pair of wheels, supported by three towers, erected at his home for local amusement. The wheels were crude, with four spokes for each rim, the ride seats being boats, one of eight passenger capacity on each wheel. They were turned by means of hand cranks. Nieberle immigrated to the United States in 1906, likely arriving at New York City, where he found employment as a ride builder. He later fabricated what was known as a horseshoe striker, presumably a specific form of the familiar "ring the bell" device. For an indeterminate period of time that concluded at St. Louis in 1915, Nieberle was in partnership with Herman J. Willert, a showman known as the owner and operator of Mangels portable carousels. He presumably led the typical life of an itinerant showman, starting as a ride man, accumulating capital until such time as when he could purchase his own rides for placement on a collective midway organized by another showman. He booked attractions with Smith Greater Shows, Krause Greater Shows and the leading railroad carnival of the 1920s, the Johnny J. Jones Exposition.

One of Nieberle's purchases was a seven-car Tilt-A-Whirl, the first of which was made in 1926. It was still in his possession in the spring of 1934, when he bought a No. 5 Big Eli wheel from the Eli Bridge Company. At the time he was characterized as a "very conservative and capable gentleman . . . an up-to-date ride man although with years of experience in this business he is considerate, careful and mechanically minded." In time, Nieberle organized his own operation. The new wheel and the older Tilt were to be accompanied by a "fine German made band organ, beautifully carved and transported on its own wagon." He personally took delivery of the ride at the Jacksonville, Illinois factory on June 14 and then returned to his base of operations in the state of Florida. The pleasant climate enabled him to operate on a year-round basis, when financially necessary or desirable. Nieberle's Florida Amusement Company was a motorized carnival that wintered in Ruskin, Florida in the 1930s and into the 1940s. He also booked his rides on Tom's Amusement Company (1939) and John B. Davis's Southern State Shows (toured in 1930, 1942-1948), when not operating independently. Nieberle died on December 31, 1945, at Tampa, Florida. At the time of his passing, He was remembered as a park ride builder and carnival owner.⁶²

The obituary mention of Nieberle's affiliation with Smith Greater Shows may prove important in the story of the organ, as



Figure 47. When the organ first appeared on the Drew Shows, it was largely in the same open configuration shown here, except for the tractor and side and skirt panels. Image courtesy James H. Drew III.

later discussion will suggest. Similarly, in 1936, Nieberle and his rides were caught in the midst of a freak windstorm or tornado that clobbered Miami, Florida in March, 1936. It caused \$35,000 damage in the five minutes that it passed through the Krause Greater Shows. Nieberle's wheel withstood substantial damage but he felt that it could be repaired after receiving replacement parts. His Tilt suffered just \$100 damage. Other showmen found their tents shredded, their props scattered beyond comprehension and their income potential gone with the wind. A block away Mrs. James (Mable K.) Reid and her son, Earl, owners of Reid's Playland Shows, avoided most of the wind's force but lost some of their concession stands. The proximity of the operations suggests that the Reids knew about Nieberle's loss; knowing the traveling fraternity, they were likely friends.⁶³ The Reids would also play a role in the history of Nieberle's band organ.

The Miami incident was the second time in two years that Florida weather had threatened the band organ. During an engagement at Perry, Florida, rains limited the show profits on Labor Day 1935 and all during the next day, with a hurricane making landfall on Wednesday, September 3. For hours Nieberle and his crew labored to stave off the toppling of the Big Eli wheel, which stood next to a gas station. Battling the wind and rain with ropes, block and tackle, the men and women of the show were able to endure the storm. Concerning the organ, Nieberle wrote "The wind tore the whole canvas top off the organ trailer. We covered the top of the organ up as best we could, but when we opened up Friday night the organ would hardly play. I am working on it now." Presumably Nieberle's mechanical talents paid off in getting the organ back into some suitable working order. His only other recourse was to bring in

a local "straight" or church and theater organ repair man, or to await the arrival of one of the itinerant band organ repairmen, such as Erwin Heller.⁶⁴ **Figure 47**

The rebuilt and altered status of the existing instrument makes resolution of the original make of the Nieberle organ an interesting and not totally resolvable challenge. Though the imported status and German origin is not in doubt, several extensive rebuilds have totally obliterated any residual stamps and markings on the instrument chassis and interior components. Even the interior of the pump was devoid of any inscriptions when last opened

for repair.⁶⁵ None of the possible identifications has proven to be comprehensively authoritative, in terms of totally excluding other possibilities. What follows is the best explanation that can be derived from remaining data and available knowledge.

The 1920s was a time when it was getting harder to get books for European-made instruments. The Berni brothers had sold their business to others and only a couple American firms continued making books to special order. Book-playing instruments were something of an albatross for traveling showmen, operators who favored the simpler and cheaper ten-tune or endless rolls that contained the latest popular tunes. Constantly on the move to practice their trade, few of the itinerant organ repair men had the knowledge to repair the pressure-style keyless systems that were found in German machines. They were more comfortable with the vacuum systems found on Wurlitzers and North Tonawanda organs.

Nieberle attempted to sell a 65-key cardboard book organ in the early fall of 1922. It was described as having an attractive carved front, newly painted, and had been used as the music source with his Tango Swings. Nieberle had booked his ride on the Johnny J. Jones Exposition, a leading railroad carnival, which appeared in Aurora, Illinois between September 18 and 26. The one item not understood in the sales offering were the "two rolls" that went with the instrument. Knowing that it was book-operated could suggest that it was arcane terminology for two "troughs" of endless books. The phrase may also suggest that the cylinders that formerly activated the instrument mechanism remained intact with it.⁶⁶ Nieberle might have decided to sell the organ because it needed repair work, or to provide him with capital to purchase a new roll-operated American-made instrument.



Figure 48. The duplex 165 roll frame arrangement installed in the Nieberle organ by Wurlitzer in 1922 was completely rebuilt by Mike Kitner in the 1990s. Author's photo.

There were no takers for his offer. Nieberle proceeded to contract with the leading North Tonawanda, New York organ firm to alter the instrument into a more readily maintained roll-operated device. An entry in Wurlitzer records reveals that the firm shipped #4481 on July 2, 1923 to Nieberle, who was then connected somehow to Lynbrook, Long Island, New York, perhaps via a ride booking. The instrument was characterized in Wurlitzer factory documentation as a "165 organ rebuilt Gebr.," It was outfitted with a duplex roll frame, the case finished in mahogany. Given the paucity of known instruments and the Nieberle connection, more than likely it was the wheel organ in the 1935 photograph. **Figure 48**

It should be borne in mind that the person making the Wurlitzer ledger entries knew little about European organs. Their designations should be accepted with a grain of salt. There are other cases where the identifications are known to be absolutely incorrect. A Ruth organ was once identified in the Wurlitzer documentation as a "Gebr.," The word "Gebrüder" means "brothers," as in the phrase "Gebrüder Ringling." It is meaningless insofar as a specific make of organ is concerned. It appears as part of the title of more than half a dozen German organ building firms, including such familiar ones as Gebrüder Bruder, Gebrüder Riemer and Gebrüder Wellershaus.

Two Waldkirch builders, A. Ruth & Son and Gebrüder Bruder, have generally been cited as the original maker of the Nieberle instrument, with Gebrüder Wellershaus of Mülheim, Germany as

another possibility. The identification of this organ as a Ruth originated with the late Mike Kitner. He rebuilt the Drew organ immediately after having restored his own Model 104, 80-keyless Gebrüder Bruder and a very original 1912 Model 38 Ruth for Dan and Marilyn Slack. In his opinion, the same workmanship and style of construction was contained in the Drew and Slack instruments. Mike thought that it was about equivalent to a Model 36 Ruth, a 76-keyless machine. When questioned about Waldkirch organ similarities, the late Wilhelm Voigt, whose father acquired the assets of the Ruth operation in the 1930s, responded that there was no strong difference between Ruth and Bruder organs in the 1890s. The sharing of craftsmanship and skills between various Waldkirch firms might explain a similarity of components between builders. There's no other observation or data supporting the Ruth identity.

There is further evidence supporting the Gebrüder Bruder identification. At least two organs exist today that share a common façade component with the Drew organ. A rebuilt Gebrüder Bruder cylinder organ shares the same reclining harpist façade carving as on the Nieberle organ. It bears shop number 4640, a relatively late number for new barrel organ construction when considering that the lowest known Bruder book organ is 4774, which likely dates to circa 1903. **Figure 49** The Dutch-owned instrument has a very similar façade arrangement to the Nieberle organ, including spiral-turned columns that may have originally revolved. Side wings to house drum actions were likely retrofitted to both machines after their original manufacture.⁶⁷

The reclining harpist carving can also be seen on a 58-key organ in the DeBence collection in Franklin, Pennsylvania. This instrument was conveyed to the U. S. circa 1973 and turned up in a Rochester, Pennsylvania antique shop in the mid-1970s, one that specialized in the wholesale selling of recently



Figure 49. P. and W. Kuindersma of Joure, Holland, own a Gebrüder Bruder instrument, now converted to the Ruth Model 36 scale. The façade features a reclining harpist that is identical to that on the Nieberle organ. Author's photograph.



Figure 50. This organ, bearing the name of Gebrüder Wellershaus, also has a reclining harpist on the front. It may be a rebuild of a Gebrüder Bruder. Image courtesy Dirk Feenstra.

imported merchandise.⁶⁸ **Figure 50** The name on the façade and the current scale are both Gebrüder Wellershaus. Inscribed on the front below the title is the legend “Saarn a/d Ruhr,” which translates to “Saarn on the Ruhr River,” a community annexed by Mülheim on January 1, 1904. The instrument was converted from cylinder to keyed operation by the well-known Dutch organ man Louis Ch. van Deventer (1907-2001) in 1934. This one served on a swing ride in Holland, a photograph provided by Dirk Feenstra documenting it there. Holland heartily embraced Wellershaus organs like no other country and perhaps four dozen are found there today. Wellershaus cylinder organs that remain unchanged to keyed or keyless systems and which have not been retrofitted with decorative façades are relatively uncommon. The front panel design of the DeBence machine is unlike any other Wellershaus known to us, but it does follow the general lines of a number of Gebrüder Bruder cylinder organs, which are quite numerous. Thus, we would hypothesize that the DeBence instrument had a different origin than the Wellershaus name that has been inscribed upon it. Perhaps the instrument was initially converted by Wellershaus during a rebuild undertaken before 1904, and then changed again later by van

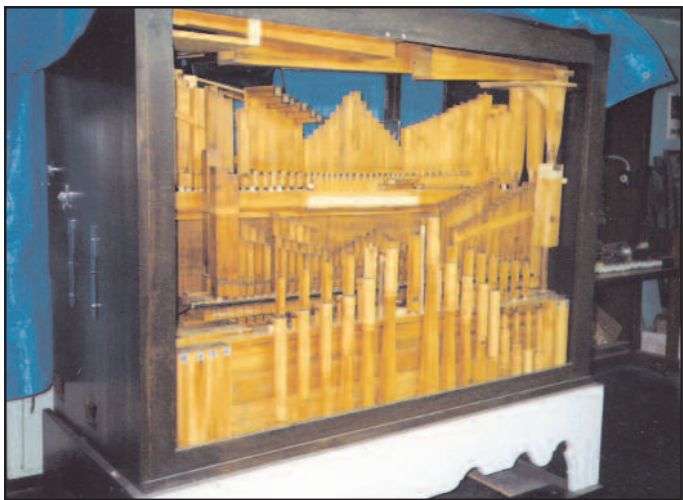


Figure 51. The altered pipe layout of the Drew organ can be seen in this view. The trumpets would originally have been in an asymmetrical arrangement, the lowest note on the far right and not in the center. Holes feeding the display pipes are covered with tape.

Mike Kitner photograph.

Deventer? The base of the organ case has been changed and thus provides no evidence of provenance.⁶⁹

An external element of organ identification that can generally be relied upon, unless the case has been rebuilt or changed, is the curve of the base “feet.” The contours on the sides of the Nieberle organ are an exact match for those found on Gebrüder Bruder number 4864, a late cylinder organ now in the US. They also match other Bruders but are substantially different from the feet found on Ruth casework.⁷⁰ Internal elements of Bruder identification are the trumpet boots and stopped flute trumpet helpers. The boots in the Nieberle organ are like those in other Bruders (smaller diameter, and of different lengths, whereas Ruth are fatter and the same length), as are the trumpet helpers, which are positioned adjacent to the trumpet feed tubes and supplied with wind by an internal channel. **Figure 51** It should also be noted that the bottom pipes on the Nieberle organ differ from those under large Ruth book organs. They are also totally unlike those under the large converted Ruth cylinder organ with the Loeff carousel at Santa Cruz, California. **Figure 52**



Figure 52. The arrangement of the bottom pipework of the Drew organ is shown here before restoration in a photograph taken by Mike Kitner.

There is reason to believe that some of the numbers noted in Wurlitzer records are not among those that they assigned. Work progressed through the shop under an “order number.” The numbers found in foreign instruments may have been those noted in the repair documents. If that’s the case, 4481 would likely be a Gebrüder Bruder number, not Ruth, Wilhelm Bruder or another make. It would date to the 1890s.

Gebrüder Bruder was Waldkirch’s most prolific builder and exporter of show organs. Their catalog included cylinder-operated carousel, panorama and swing organs, housed within cabinets, in 50, 54, 57, 63, 66, 70, 75, 86 and larger key sizes. They featured a rank of pan flutes on display in the front. In their newer line of cylinder-operated concert organs, the firm replaced the flutes with violins as part of the specification for instruments with 56, 60, 65, 72 and 86 or more keys. Gavioli’s patent coverage for string pipes utilizing their frein harmonique expired in the mid-1890s, thereby freeing other manufacturers to commence the use of the important device. The same circa

1902 Bruder catalog also introduced Bruder's first book organs, Models 100 to 105. Three of them, the 101, 102 and 103, were of 62-key size, with the 104 at 76-keyless. All of these organs were initially furnished without attached percussion devices. When drums, a cymbal and automated figures became part of the basic design each scale was augmented with additional keys, the 103 with five and the 104 with four. They are largely identifiable by looking at the expanded scales, the additions appearing at each end.

There are no melody pan flutes in the Drew instrument, only violins. Whether original pan flutes might have been replaced by violins at a later date to provide a more modern tonality is unknown. Changes to the sides of the case preclude any determination as to whether it was originally built as a cylinder or book organ.

With the evidence currently available, we can only conclude that the Nieberle organ was a medium-sized machine probably of 76-keys or less in size. It was likely built by Gebrüder Bruder in Waldkirch, Germany between circa 1895 and the early 1900s. It may have been in service in the United States for as long as two decades before we can first associate it with Nieberle. **Figure 53**

Exactly when Louis Nieberle withdrew from field operations and sold his rides has not been determined. The buyers of the Tilt and wheel are unknown, but the big imported band organ went to Mabel "Mom" Reid (1896?-1970). After enduring the rituals of the road for many years she decided to retire from traveling in the mid-1950s in order to concentrate on a permanent amusement facility located at Jacksonville Beach, Florida. In early 1955, unnamed parties in Gibsonton, Florida offered to sell an Eli No. 12 wheel (owned by 1934), three abreast merry-go-round and a beautiful German organ built on a wagon. They were then in operation at 22nd Street Causeway and 59th Street in Tampa.⁷¹ A second advertisement in the spring of 1956 identified the seller as Mabel Reid of Gibsonton. The wheel was not listed, but the carousel was a 36-foot diameter Allan Herschell. The big German band organ, built on a wagon, was in A-1 condition, ready to turn on. An unknown person, perhaps Erwin Heller, had repaired it in December 1954 and it had seen just three months use in the interim. The carousel, priced at \$7500, and organ, at \$5000, had been stored since March 1955. Both could be had for a bargain price of \$10,000, which was termed a "steal." Given the prices that instruments were bringing from collectors in the first years of the preservation movement, the organ price was quite high. It should be remembered that there were few such instruments in working order readily available to traveling showmen.

James H. Drew, Jr. eventually bought the Reid organ in December 1957. **Figure 54 (& Back Cover)** It wasn't the first instrument acquired by the family, another having been bought in the Washington, D. C. area before the 1957 season. Drew and his wife, Eula Whitworth Drew, went on to gather an extensive collection of amusement documentation and organs, one being a Wurlitzer with a special 153 style façade. There was a brass-pipe Calliola on the Drew midway and a Wurlitzer 105 was on the merry-go-round. A new Cozatt air calliopo was also bought and installed in a light truck to publicize the presence of the Drew Shows.⁷² Erwin Heller (1917-1990), whose father



Figure 53. When the center section of the Drew façade is isolated from the side wings and top panel the cylinder organ heritage is more evident. Author's photograph.

had worked at the Berni Organ Company before becoming an itinerant organ repair man, came down from Columbus, Ohio to get the Reid organ ready for the 1958 tour. Eventually he became the Drew organ man, keeping the collection in repair.

James "Georgia Boy" Drew (1913-1984) was one of nine children born to James Drew, Sr. (1884?-1958), a railroad section foreman in 1910 and a farmer in 1920. All of his children followed him onto the rails except for Jimmy and another son, who became a concessionaire. The family moved next door to the fairgrounds and the activities there caused Jimmy to literally run away with the carnival. After bringing him home twice, having reached the age of 17 by the third time his father let him pursue it as an occupation. He worked his way through the full variety of carnival jobs, spent ten years with the Gooding Amusement Company and also had independent operations at Michigan fairs. The money that he saved from operating from six to fifteen joints enabled him to launch his own motorized carnival in 1949. Bad weather and poor business nearly finished him off, but creditors stuck with the hard working man and he put six rides out in 1950. By 1959 the James H. Drew World's Fair Shows fielded a midway of eighteen rides, nine shows and innumerable food joints and games. In 1961 Drew operated two entirely independent carnivals and a smaller ride unit.⁷³ The Drew Shows are also part of Ferris wheel history. The Velare brothers added another first to their wheel credit by



Figure 54. The Drew Shows enhanced the presentation of the organ with a painted apron and side panels that interpreted the heritage of the organ to show guests. Image courtesy James H. Drew III.

producing a truly graceful looking 110-foot tall special Ferris wheel for the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. Two were made; the original went to the Royal American Shows and the other to the Drew Shows in 1965. It became a signature ride on the Drew Exposition.⁷⁴



Figure 55 This circa 1962 photo of the Drew family, from the show press book, reinforced the family image of the Drew Exposition. Jimmy, on the left, manages the show today.

Drew respected his help and expected that they in turn interact with all midway guests as they would like to be treated. He established a substantial winter quarters in Augusta, Georgia. His solid reputation enabled him to build a route of dates and fairs that went unchanged for many years. **Figure 55** Drew was characterized as “Proud of his family . . . proud of his show” and that he “fishes once in a while, but show and family are his real interest plus band organs and calliopes, and owns seven of the latter.” The only showman with more mechanical music instruments was Floyd Gooding, who had a fleet of them, one for each of his carousels. Undoubtedly, the decade spent with the Gooding operation had an influence on Georgia Boy. With his late 1958 purchase of the Reid organ, Drew had one bigger than any of those owned by his mentor.⁷⁵ His wife, Eula, who shared his passion for outdoor show heritage, later said “Jimmy’s a sucker for organs.” More than likely it made her happy that their interests were musically aligned.⁷⁶

Drew kept in contact with *Billboard* columnist Thomas P. Parkinson, an astute amusement industry observer and reporter with an abiding interest in outdoor show history and heritage. It was a good means to keep the show name before the business, in the event that opportunity of any type knocked. Revealing the nascent state of organ historical knowledge, Drew wrote Parkinson on his James H. Drew Shows, Inc. letterhead as follows on March 5, 1958.

Regarding the old band organ that we have, the following is for your information which I got from Erwin Heller, organ repair man who learned his trade from his parents. His father [Max] did work on this organ years ago. They are German. The father is dead.

The organ was made in 1897 by the Bueller Buecher organ works, Baden, Germany. Note: Bueller Buecher [Gebrüder Bruder?] is German and this might not be the correct way of spelling same. The organ was a pin

cylinder organ when it came to this country and was changed over to play roll music by the Wurlitzer Company in 1900 [1922 roll conversion]. Same was mounted on a wagon to be moved on railroad show flat car and we have mounted same on a semi trailer.

The organ was on the old Smith Greater Shows (Railroad) for a while. When it first came to this country it was first moved by railroad from town to town for different entertainments and concerts in city parks. This was before the Smith railroad show had it.

In later years, Mrs. Mable Reid had the organ on a beach in Fla. and same has been in storage for the past several years at Mrs. Reid’s home in Florida. However, she played same once a week while it was in storage in order to keep the working parts in order. I bought the organ from Mrs. Reid last December.

This winter we have had the organ completely gone over and painted and it is in perfect working condition and beautiful . . . The original carved figures and decorations are still on the organ . . . Some of same move and strike bells and drums in rhythm with the music. There is also [a] life like harp player.⁷⁷

Parkinson distilled the information and inserted a photo with an extended caption in the April 4, 1958 issue of the *Billboard* (page 57). Therein he noted that there were just three others equal to it in the United States. They were cited as being at: Myrtle Beach, South Carolina [Harry Beach’s Model 38 Ruth]; one operating out of Terre Haute, Indiana [Tom Champion’s Wurlitzer 180]; and with Royal American Shows [the Sedlmayr family’s 89-key Gavioli]. It was the last named instrument that had sparked a revival in carnival band organs in 1956 and 1957 and likely inspired Drew to buy the big organ from Mabel Reid.⁷⁸ Confirmation of the external influence is found in the color postcard that Drew offered as a souvenir on his midway. It had the same flavor and press agent hyperbole that had characterized the Royal American Shows organ postcard. Even the same company was hired to print the cards. The Drew instrument, typically described as the “big German concert organ,” and the Drew circus calliope attracted special attention in local press coverage.⁷⁹

Erwin Heller’s statement that the Nieberle organ had previously been on the Smith Greater Shows, intelligence that he likely gained from his father, opens up an entirely new line of investigation. The Smith outfit was one of the most progressive field shows from the origin in 1905 until it was sold to Rubin Gruberg in 1924. Chris “Pop” Smith (1853-1933) was the driving force initially, later supported by his sons, Ed K. and Chris M. (1879?-1949). It never reached much more than 20-car size, but always ran under “Sunday school” principles. The Smiths were innovative technically and their show made a great appearance on the lot. Smith bought a 65-key Gavioli organ to compliment his carousel in the 1910s. In 1914 it served as a trade-in to the Berni Organ Company for what was characterized as the second biggest Bruder in the Band Organ King’s extensive inventory. There’s a strong possibility that one of Berni’s agents had exported the organ from a European show-

man to the U. S. for re-sale.⁸⁰ The next year the Smith show train was involved in a wreck, with Mrs. Smith being characterized as “particularly upset” over the damage done to the new organ.⁸¹

No illustration has been found of Smith’s prized Bruder. A show handbill utilized in 1917 included an illustration of an extremely fine Model 82 or 83 Wilhelm Bruder Sons instrument (70 and 82-keyless, respectively), of which perhaps one example once existed in the U. S. A similar image appeared in the 1913 Berni catalog, the illustration used as the “The Excelsior,” with a bogus 96-keyless specification. The façade configuration is not one that was amenable to wagon transport, whereas the Nieberle instrument, with a shallow rectangular profile, would have been an ideal railroad carnival load. After turning over his show to his sons in 1920, Smith returned from retirement and in late 1921 liquidated about ten cars of the property. While some details were provided, there’s no mention of any organ being sold. If Nieberle acquired the Smith Bruder, this would likely have been the time of the transaction.⁸² The association of the Drew organ with the Smith Greater Shows remains to be authoritatively confirmed with additional photography.



Figure 56. Through skillful use of paint and leaf, fairground art restorer Rosa Ragan brought out the inherent beauty of the Drew organ façade. Author’s photograph.

During Drew ownership, the organ trailer was involved in a road mishap that caused it to roll over and fall into a Kentucky creek. Drew’s organ man, Erwin Heller, was charged with putting it back into operational condition and did so. The late Mike Kitner was contracted to rebuild the Drew organ during 1993 and 1994, his work realizing the full potential in the roll playing format. He corrected what he termed were a few minor “deficiencies” and also added an ocarina register, having done the same with his Model 104 Bruder. Anti-friction bearings were installed on the main crankshaft to minimize the repairs on the hard working instrument. Fairground art conservator and restorer Rosa Ragan re-decorated the organ façade, bringing forth the beauty that had been hidden for some time behind what might be termed “carnival paint.” **Figure 56** The Drew organ came back out on tour in 1997, many thousands of dollars having been spent on a feature that brought no revenue, but which served as testimony to the show’s commitment to family enjoyment and heritage. Show owner and manager James H. “Jimmy” Drew III (1945-) expressed great interest throughout the entire restoration process.



Figure 57. The Drew organ was installed in this conventional, enclosed semi-trailer about 1962, replacing the older Nieberle and Reid arrangement. Photo courtesy Ron Hamm.

It’s likely that the Nieberle housing was re-used by Reid in the 1940s and 1950s and by Drew in 1957. During the fifty years that the organ has subsequently been presented by the Drews, no less than two additional conveyances have been assembled to house and transport it. The largely open trailer was replaced by an enclosed vehicle, more typical of highway trailer construction, in 1962.⁸³ **Figure 57** In turn, in the mid-1990s, when the organ was rebuilt, a ne plus ultra organ trailer was outfitted by Century. It was complete with air ride suspension, centralized wiring control, an air conditioned office space with a slide out compartment, storage compartments, built-in cabinets, hydraulic lift door and other features. **Figure 58** Four jacks were provided to assure that the organ sat level. In recent years long time Drew Shows employee Billy Solomon has been entrusted with the driving and presentation of the great organ at various Drew engagements. **Figure 59** (next page) The furthest afield that Drew has sent the organ is to the Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 2000, and to the MBSI Mid-Am Chapter Rally in Wabash, Indiana.⁸⁴



Figure 58. The “grandest organ trailer ever built” would be a suitable description of the truly impressive rig that Jimmy Drew had constructed in the mid-1990s to haul the big band organ. Author’s photograph.



Figure 59. Billy Solomon (right) and Dick Lokemoen shared some interesting times at the Milwaukee lakefront in 2000, discussing the finer aspects of organ operations. Author's photograph.

Fred is currently researching the largest, American-made military band organs (81/82/87 and 100-key North Tonawanda, deKleist 100, 119 and 122-key Wurlitzer Monster and Mammoth, etc.) He would appreciate hearing from anyone having any documentation on such devices.

Notes

39. *Big Eli News*, XVI, pages 10-11. Gray's duplex wheels are illustrated in *Big Eli News*, XV, page 18, and XIX, page 69, but none of his organs are visible therein.
40. *McKennon*, II, has biographies of Rubin and Cherry. Further show history is detailed in Chris Audibert, *Rubin & Cherry*, (1989).
41. Photo in *Billboard*, July 4, 1914, page 18. A biography of Francis is in *McKennon*, II, page 51.
42. William Lindsay Gresham, *Monster Midway*, (1948), pages 24-25. The Gresham volume captures the feel of the traditional carnival midway.
43. *Billboard*, April 17, 1926, page 94; May 12, 1928, page 71.
44. There is some evidence that Gavioli positioned available or essentially "stock" sets of figures on various organs before taking the factory photographs. Another set of three figures can be seen located on several different instruments in factory photos.
45. Music from 57-key Gavioli organs can be heard on two CDs, Marion Roehl recording MRR 1033 "Fair Organ Follies" and Henk Veeningen's JB 069072, "Van Gavioli 57 Tot Gavioli 89." Three additional 57-key Gaviolis, in the Don Neilson, Bill Nunn and Ted Waflart collections, are approaching or awaiting completion.
46. *McKennon*, II, page 115, has a 1928 view documenting the original upper panel carvings.
47. This 153 was rebuilt by Wurlitzer in the winter of 1928 to 1929.
48. *Billboard*, March 29, 1930, page 147.
49. Fred D. Pfening, Jr. collection, reproduced in *Carnival Midway*, VI, 4, cover, and *Big Eli News*, XV, page 67.
50. Bob Goldsack, *World of Mirth Shows, a Remembrance*, (1984), is a comprehensive history of this once prominent carnival.
51. George Messig papers, author's collection.
52. *Big Eli News*, XXXIV, page 166.
53. Photo in *Midway Journal Illustrated*, October 1997, page 11.
54. Gresham, pages 28-29.
55. During the course of his 1937 work, Messig noted that the WOM had what he identified as a Wurlitzer 125 in a kiddie ride. The author has seen a single example of a deKleist Style 18 or a Wurlitzer 125 with a 150 style façade. Although no other WOM organ photos are available, it is unlikely that the carousel and kiddie ride are one and the same instrument.
56. Goldsack, pages 100-102, bottom photo on page 101.
57. Gresham, page 20; Gresham, *Life*, September 13, 1948.
58. *Billboard*, December 10, 1938, page 44; *Big Eli News*, XIX, pages 39 and 60; May-June 1940, page 36; July-August 1940, page 52; March-April 1962, page 26; *Billboard*, July 13, 1940, page 36; *Greater Show World*, November 1953, page 9.
59. *Big Eli News*, XXV, page 52, also in *Billboard*, July 13, 1940, page 36 (or 86?). Another view of lesser quality but taken from a different angle is in *Greater Show World*, November 1953, page 9.
60. Anderson, pages 90-94.
61. *Big Eli News*, XX, page 7.
62. Nieberle was preceded in death by his wife, Eva (born c.1879), who passed away on September 23, 1944 at Ruskin, Florida. Nieberle was survived by two daughters, Mrs. Mary Stephens and Martha J. Nieberle, and a son, Lee J. Nieberle. He was interred at Myrtle Hill Cemetery, Tampa, Florida. See *Big Eli News*, XIX, pages 41 and 47; XX, pages 7 and 23; XXIX, page 87; XXXI, page 8; *Billboard*, January 19, 1946, page 38.
63. *Billboard*, March 21, 1936, page 49.
64. *Big Eli News*, XX, page 78.
65. Confirmed in an e-mail from Durward Center, August 9, 2006, concerning his April 1987 rebuild of the pump.
66. *Billboard*, September 23, 1922, page 62.
67. P. and W. Kuindersma, "De Gebrüder Bruder No. 4640," *Het Pierement*, XLVI, 3, pages 134-139. The authors assign a circa 1893-1895 date to their instrument, suggesting that the 4640 number relates to later modifications in the Bruder shop shortly after the turn of the century. The book conversion, to Model 36 Ruth music, appears to have been done by Fritz Wrede about 1917.
68. After the author encountered the Wellershaus during a routine antique hunt and told Jake DeBence about it, he hurried down and secured it.
69. See Scotty Greene, "The DeBence Wellershaus Fairground Organ," COAA *Carousel Organ*, 18 (January 2004), pages 9-12.
70. The front base board on the Nieberle organ has been modified or replaced.
71. *Big Eli News*, XIX, page 35; *Billboard*, January 22, 1955, page 64.
72. *Billboard*, March 9, 1957, page 74; *Amusement Business*, December 11, 1965, page 27.
73. Drew biographical material includes Charlie Byrnes, "Proud of His Show, Family Reputation," *Billboard*, September 7, 1959, page 60, and Tom Powell, "The James H. Drew Exposition: a History," *Carousel*, February 1999, pages 14-15.
74. Anderson, pages 132-133.
75. *Billboard*, May 18, 1959, page 62 and September 7, 1959, page 60. Floyd Gooding did not obtain his 96-keyless Ruth/Voigt organ until about five years later.
76. *Amusement Business*, December 11, 1965, page 27.
77. Thomas P. Parkinson Papers, Circus World Museum. Slight spelling and grammatical changes were made that do not affect the meaning of the letter.
78. See the author's "From British Bioscope to American Carnival Icon," COAA *Carousel Organ*, 14 (January 2003), pages 23-26.
79. *Billboard*, May 18, 1959, page 62.
80. *New York Clipper*, June 13, 1914, page 10.
81. *Billboard*, May 15, 1915, page 57.
82. *Billboard*, December 10, 1921, page 22.
83. *Amusement Business*, February 17, 1962, page 25; photo, October 24, 1964, page 30.
84. Unfortunately, shortly before he expired, a usually creditable historian somehow rationalized a near totally erroneous history of the instrument that has become institutionalized by inscription on the trailer and in print. See "Musical Showpiece for Drew," *Carousel*, July 1997, page 7.