

With Strings Attached: Gavioli's Piano-Quartet and Related Carousel Organs

Fred Dahlinger Jr. © 2009

Introduction

The generic description “carousel organ” covers a variety of mechanical music machines that have supplied an audio atmosphere for merry-go-rounds and related riding devices. Instruments as varied as organettes, hand and band organs, brass horn orchestrions, street pianos, low pressure air calliopes and recorded organ music playback devices have provided suitable melodies for enhancing the delightful, happiness-provoking wooden horse experience.

Another dimension to the carousel organ designation is embodied in combination piano-organ instruments, essentially small piano-based orchestrions, which infrequently accompanied the previously mentioned amusement rides. This article addresses some of the rare carousel applications of such instruments.

Piano Orchestrions

From the early 1800s until the mid-19th century, orchestrions were typically unique, one-of-a-kind virtuoso instruments generally featuring organ pipes and percussion. They were fabricated by creative entrepreneurs for indoor exhibition as musical curiosities, a demonstration of man's ability to control the physical world and make music with it. Their size and audio power reached a zenith in brass horn instruments, designed and manufactured in major factories between the 1850s and circa 1914.

The inclusion of the piano in musical groups was surely the inspiration that suggested the addition of one or more ranks of organ pipes to be played in unison with the strings. The earliest such device is not known, but one example was the “Flute and Viol d' Amour Attachment.” American pipe organ builder Richard M. Ferris (1818-1858) received U. S. Patent 8587 on December 16, 1851 covering the improvement. A plethora of other combination devices based on the ordinary piano can be enumerated. We cite the Ferris invention as proof of the existence of manually-played, piano-organ combination devices in the era when automatic musical instruments were initially receiving serious inventive attention.

By the 1890s, European manufacturers devised and commenced the manufacture of modest-sized orchestrions that utilized a piano as the foundational instrument. They were typically a combination of a keyboard-less piano with organ pipes and percussion. From these modest beginnings, builders conceived ever larger and more musically-capable piano orchestrions. Some mammoth designs featured up to 1500 pipes, accompanied by extensive percussion effects.

Their sophisticated pneumatic controls were far in advance of anything then being utilized for general manufacturing and industrial control systems. Orchestrion development continued through the jazz era and came to a close in the 1920s, as musical tastes changed. Throughout their existence, the piano orchestrions served as an economical alternative to live musicians, providing a musical atmosphere for dance halls, salons, rinks, restaurants and other locations where melodies enhanced the public experience.

The media containing the pre-arranged musical program for piano orchestrions was advanced over time, from pinned cylinders to spooled rolls (made of paper, light Manila cardboard or metal foil), as well as heavier cardboard sheets, folding paper books and even hinged aluminum sheets.



Figure 1. One popular arrangement of piano orchestrion is represented by this 1904 book-playing instrument sold by distributor J. M. Bon of Leipzig, Germany. Author's collection.

Casework was similarly transformed. The early, Empire-styled, open frames with hanging drapes and fabric ornamentation in the virtuoso devices of the early 19th century gave way to large, free-standing housings of carved hardwood. Later cases were sometimes finished with applied figures and other decorative elements, including incandescent light fixtures. Others were housed in painted cabinets that embodied an eclectic selection of motifs and designs, based on Romantic Revival, geographic or contemporary design movements, such as Art Nouveau.

The musical shift towards piano sounds was supported by the changing styles of music then being composed for general use. Martial music was superseded by popular, dance, salon and musical stage compositions that were more “people friendly,” providing melodies and words that were sung, hummed and that served as a basis for dancing. The turn-of-the-century era witnessed the rise of the common man, with lessened work hours, increased leisure time and greater disposable income. A derivative of the improved living conditions was the overwhelming popularity of the piano as a home instrument in America, rocketing from about 72,000 in 1890 to 370,000 by 1910.

German manufacturers were generally the leaders in the advancement of piano-orchestration design and innovation. We can cite one instrument that exemplifies the modest-sized, yet delightful piano orchestrions that came to be built in the first decade of the 20th century (**Figure 1**). An elaborate, endless book-playing pneumatic instrument, the Sächsische Orchester-Musikwerke Model J-14, incorporated a piano, bells, pipework (cello and flute) and percussion (snare and bass drums and cymbal). The retailer was J. M. Bon & Co. of Leipzig, Germany. The upright, hardwood case was embellished with faux brass trumpets and automated figures. It was of the same general concept as the instruments used on a few American carousels and serves as testimony to the fact that multiple manufacturers were trying to compete for the same applications with their own unique creations.

By 1906, as exemplified by the actions of Gebrüder Weber in Waldkirch, piano orchestrions became not only the featured products, but the mainstay of major automatic musical instrument manufacturers. It was a device suited to the times and its music. The piano orchestrion flourished until the onset of World War I, was revived thereafter, but by the end of the 1920s the era was over. Within those three decades some truly magnificent music machines, like Hupfeld’s Helios V, Phillips’ Paganini and Weber’s Elite, had entertained thousands of listeners.

Gavioli & Cie. and Competing Mechanical Piano Products

The *Piano-Quartet* was the last in a series of cylinder and keyed book pianos and piano orchestrions sold by the house of Gavioli. In some instances, the instruments embodied or represented the inventive efforts of other designers.

There is even reason to believe that one or more of the devices may have been constructed by piano manufacturers, with only the pneumatic apparatus furnished by the organ builder. As an example, Gavioli’s circa 1889 *Mandoliphone* appears to have been nothing more than a re-titled Racca *Piano-Melodico*, another item to increase the breadth of the firm’s product line. Further knowledge of Gavioli’s various stringed devices is curtailed by the limited survival of their business records and printed marketing materials; the machines were seldom remarked upon in books and periodicals.

One of Anselme Gavioli’s first known combinations of piano with organ pipes was part of French patent 128,758 received on January 30, 1879. It was suggested as a new style of flute pipe for application to pianos and organs. A second French patent for a mechanical piano was received slightly later, 135,663, dated March 17, 1880.¹ Gavioli was still making cylinder-operated mechanical musical instruments in this time frame.

A circa 1889 Gavioli catalogue included three different cylinder piano models of the street musician style, ranging from 34 to 39 keys. The two smallest units, design numbers 62 and 123, were termed “portable,” despite their considerable weight of 42 kilos. They would have been moved upon a two-wheel cart in the streets. The larger model, design 63, as well as two *Suite des Pianos*, numbers 50 and 51, with 53 and 72 keys respectively, was suitable for salons, the street and traveling panoramas. There were slight variations in each, depending upon the desired service.

Of greater interest in the circa 1889 catalogue are Gavioli’s *Flute-Pianos*. These were eight different cylinder-operated machines that incorporated pianos, flutes and expression. They may have been derived in part from the first patent of 1880. Each included one key for expression control. The devices were as follows (**Table 1**):

Design No.	keys	piano keys	flute keys	wt. (kg)	h x w x d (cm)
52	33	14	18	30	
53	33	"	"	32	90 x 55 x 41
54	45	19	25	36	
55	45	"	"		97 x 73 x 42
101	52	26	25		
102	52	"	"		135 x 122 x 53
69	79	53	25		
70	79	"	"	230	138 x 162 x 90

Table 1. Dimension comparisons of machines illustrated in the Gavioli’s 1889 catalog of *Flute-Pianos*.

Cylinder-operated pianos were an important part of the Gavioli product line, as well as for principal competitor Limonaire Frères. The latter firm first gained recognition for its cylinder pianos and only later proceeded to fabricate

mechanical organs (**Figure 2**). Limonaire's early 1890s catalogue included *Pianos Mécaniques*, street musician style cylinder pianos with design numbers 89 to 92 inclusive, in 30, 40, 50 and 60 string sizes, respectively. The two largest could be augmented, with devices unstated, for service with panoramas.

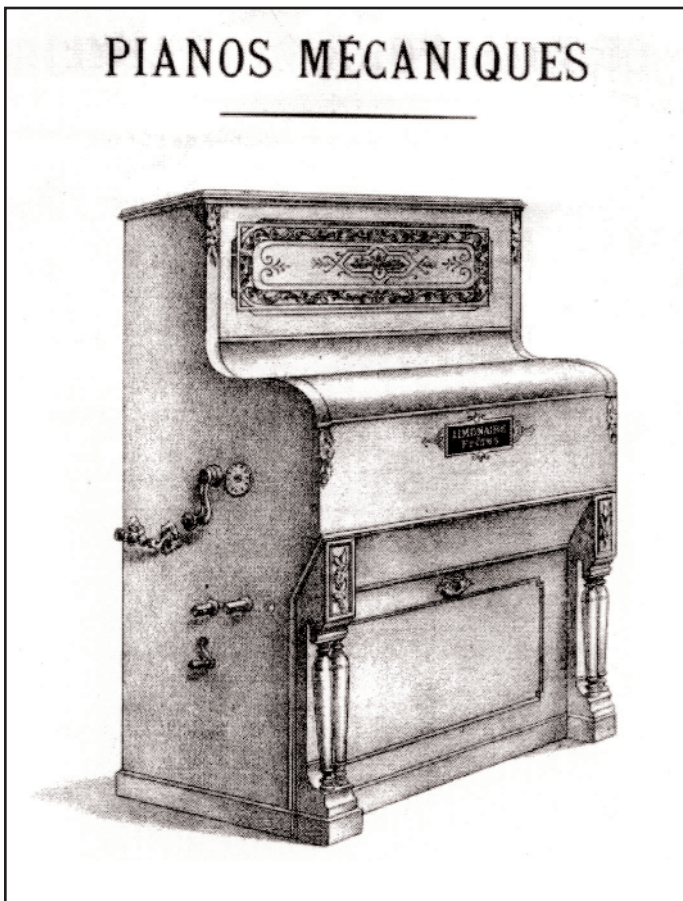


Figure 2. Many manufacturers fabricated and sold cylinder-operated street pianos. This example illustrated Limonaire Frères catalogue about 1890. Werner Baus collection.

In 1899, Eugene de Kleist commenced to make dozens of similar instruments in the U. S. for indoor venues, marketing them through Wurlitzer as the *Tonophone*. They were an extremely successful and profitable item in the de Kleist line up, utilizing a basic format that had already been perfected in Europe. The fact that they were made a decade after similar machines had been popular in Europe is reflective of the lag between the two continents, in terms of mechanical music advances.

Gavioli & Cie. Pneumatic Pianos

In early 1885, Gavioli & Cie. acquired the title to Fourneau's 1883 patent rights for his *Piano-Éxecutant* and thereby laid the foundation for several mechanical-pneumatic pianos as well as the keyed book organ. It was notable for being the first successful pneumatic piano, Gavioli reportedly exhibited the device at one or more 1880s trade fairs and also licensed les fils d'Eugène Thibouville-Lamy to

manufacture them by 1893. We suspect that Gavioli may have subcontracted construction of the basic piano to this firm, or another, furnishing only the pneumatic apparatus. Gavioli also sold a *Pianista Gavioli*, circa 1888, what might be described as a mechanical-pneumatic vorsetzer device that straddled the keyboard. It may have been the outcome of another patent filing and should not be confused with the Fourneau/Thibouville-Lamy *Pianista*.

In 1898, Gavioli included two models of the *Piano-Éxecutant* in their advertising poster. Model No. 1 had a keyboard while Model No. 2 was without one. A circa 1903 example of the No. 1, the more elaborate of the two, survives and has been described in the literature.² Model No. 2 was a more likely choice for public installations. Both *Piano-Éxecutants* also appeared in a 1903 Gavioli poster and 1906 catalogues. The unique survivor may be testimony to the overwhelming popularity of the paper roll, 88-note player piano and the inability to secure new tunes for the *Piano-Éxecutant* following the failure of the Gavioli firm.

Quatuor, Quator and Quartet

The Gavioli *Piano-Quartet* was the lineal, combined descendant of the Gavioli *Piano-Éxecutant* and a series of indoor orchestrions that were generically marketed under the name of *Quatuor*. These indoor orchestrions can be found in a variety of both American and European manufacturers' catalogues.

Why the name was spelled "quatuor," in lieu of the contemporary "quator," meaning quartet, is unknown. When Björn Isebaert, a university-educated linguist, was asked about the spelling, he responded "I guess quatuor is a 'hyper-correction' for quator, as if French people would write 'quatuorze' instead of 'quatorze.' It is—of course—derived from Latin 'quattuor' (the cardinal number '4')." ³ A quick search on Google shows that the spelling *Quatuor* seems more prevalent in older documents, and those items seemingly date from before Gavioli's use of the term. Thus, the firm utilized the word form that was most likely contemporary to their own time.

The earliest *Piano Quatuor* device to come to our attention was an unusual instrument presented at the 1867 Exposition Universelle. It was designed and constructed by H. C. Baudin about 1865. Externally the device looked like an ordinary upright piano, but internally it housed an extraordinary mechanism. The usual hammer actions were absent; in their stead were rotating linen rollers, or drums. The key pulled at a piece of catgut attached to a nodal point, bringing the string into contact with the rotating "bow." The resultant sound was like that of a violin, with the lower pitched strings providing the sound of a violincello. In general, it suggests the action used in the true hurdy-gurdy and that would later bring life to mechanical violin instruments.⁴

In about 1889, Gavioli offered cylinder-operated *Harmoniflutes Quatuor pour Salons*, (*Harmonic Flute Quartets for Salons*) in 38 to 98-key sizes. They included

varying specifications of pipework and were presumably percussion-free orchestrions for indoor usage. Only two of the models, No. 110 in 38-key size and No. 80 with a 48-key specification, were specified as piano format (“forme piano”). The height, width and depth of No. 110 was 4 ft x 2.9 ft x 1.75 ft and the weight was 76 kilos. Data was not supplied for No. 80 and it may have been substantially the same. It also included flute, violin, violin cello and contra-bass pipework. The others were designated “forme orgue,” indicating that they were strictly pipe machines.



Figure 3. Preceding the Gavioli *Piano-Quartet* were a variety of *Quatuors* built in Paris and elsewhere, like this Oriental-styled example by Limonaire. Werner Baus collection.

Limonaire’s early 1890s catalogue included a page of *Quatuors Pour Salons* for sale (Figure 3). The instruments included 38, 48, 61, 85 and 100-key sizes. The 48-key design number 42 was illustrated. It had a carved case with four turned columns in the upper area and a tambourine-

playing figure in the center. The lower case was in something of an exotic Middle Eastern decorative style, justifying the *Quatuor Oriental* name given to it. Voices in the largest model included flute, violin, violin cello, contra-bass, bass, flageolet, clarinets and saxophone, with the only percussion being a triangle.

The Berlin orchestrion builders also had an entry in the quartet market, but theirs was the *Quintett-Orchestrion*. It came in 58, 60, 63 and 86-key cylinder-operated versions. The pipework included flutes, violins, violas and violin cello.

Gavioli also illustrated their *Orchestres Parisiens* in the firm’s circa 1889 catalogue (Figure 4). The devices were offered as design numbers 132 to 137 inclusive, as well as 161, 116 and 119. Key sizes ranged from 62 to 105. Not surprisingly for 1889, they were all cylinder operated, with an array of instrumentation that grew with key size. A number of them contained louder speaking pipework, including brass trumpets and trombones. The smallest contained flageolets, violins, violin cello, clarinets and basses. The largest example stood 8 ft high by 7.4 ft across and 3.6 ft deep, with a richly-sculpted façade embellished with statuary and sconces. The interior apparatus included: contra-bass; harmonie; 1st and 2nd violins; clarinets; flageolets; cornets; piston; trombones; basses; triangle; and piano and forte operation.

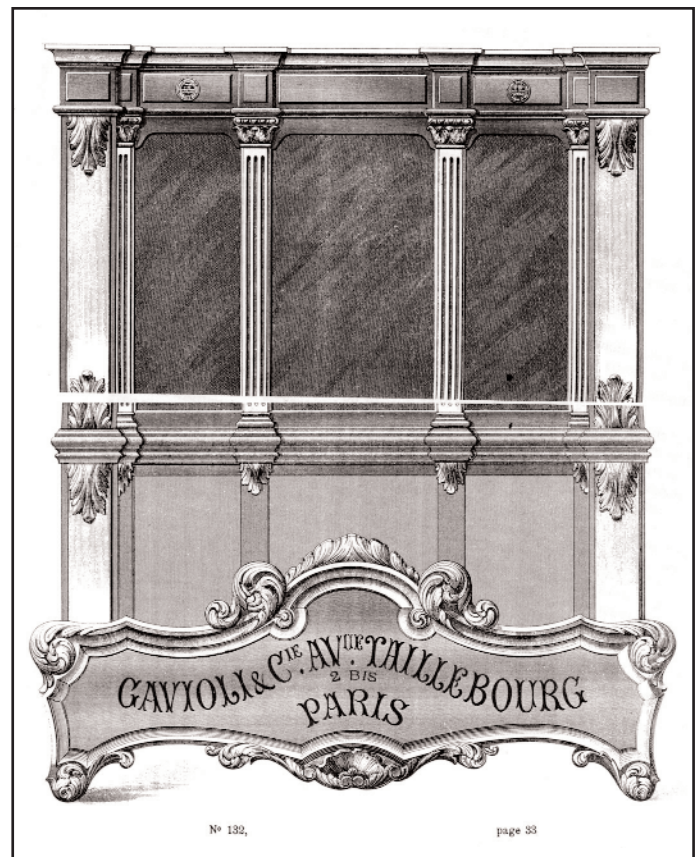


Figure 4. French builders designed and built instruments like Gavioli’s *Orchestres Parisiens* to satisfy a market niche in the 1880s.

Image courtesy University of Maryland Piano Archives.

The pitch to prospective buyers offered a rationale that would lay the foundation for the later *Piano-Quartet*.

**Parisian Orchestras
Instruments for Dance Halls
Especially Created for the French Market**

Your establishment is a place for meetings, relaxation, and amusement-in short; whether you own a café, a restaurant, a dance hall or something similar, it doesn't matter; all that can and should attract customers, interests you.

With this aim we want to propose you the "Parisian orchestra," a crank- and barrel-operated instrument, which anyone can play without being a musician.

This orchestra, of which we are the unique inventors and manufacturers, perfectly attains the object for which it was created. The quadrilles are played completely, without interruption, exactly as they are being danced in France; polkas, mazurkas, schottisches, waltzes and others are played to an extent previously unheard.

Just figure out how much it costs a year to hire an orchestra of five to six musicians; think about the difficulties you have to bring them together, about the impossibility to have them right at the moment when you need them, . . . and you will realize what savings are offered by this faithful servant, who's always ready to play and is called 'Parisian Orchestra.' With this instrument, you don't have just five or six musicians at your disposal, but twelve or even more.

Until now, you only had irregular occasions to organize a dance party in your establishment; but from the moment people know you are offering this type of entertainment, weddings and any kind of reunion will preferably be held at your place-you can be sure of that! We have the experience, and what a gain this will bring you! Later on, in a few years-when the instrument has paid itself multiple times through the savings it has realized and through the business deals it has brought you-you will have an instrument of which you can dispose at a certain price.

We can supply additional barrels without needing the instrument ourselves.

We advise you that the construction time of the 'Parisian Orchestra' is long enough, so it is up to you to subscribe at the proper time."⁵

In 1898, Gavioli illustrated a similar device, the *Gavioliphone-Quatuor A Cartons*, a book-operated device. The 57-key design, number 259, equaled 15 musicians, while the larger 87-key, design 245, displaced 45 players. These instruments were of an upright orchestrion style configuration, with applied carvings on a painted case outfitted with cloth upper panels. It would be reasonable to assume that they played on the same scales as the firm's state-of-the-art, keyed book organs. Gavioli's *Quatuor* was not included

in the 1903 Gavioli poster or the 1906 catalogue, suggesting that they may have had limited popularity, sales, and manufacturing lives that were largely concluded in the 19th century. It is thought that the new *Piano-Quartet*, as well as the older, yet still viable *Piano-Éxecutant*, would be their replacement in the Gavioli product line.

Surprisingly, Gavioli's *Quatuor* design of 1898 was given a test marketing far away, on the other side of the Atlantic. The Gavioli image, altered to suit the purpose, was utilized to illustrate an American product. American band organ builder Eugene de Kleist offered an identical instrument about 1900. His catalogue, produced shortly before the 1901 Pan American Exposition, described "Quatuors, Orchestrions and Instruments Operated by Perforated Paper," suited for "private houses, billiard rooms, exhibitions, fine art museums, etc." They were designed to match the location, inferring that they were a purpose-built commission for the homes of the wealthy and cultured establishments. The instrument could be sized to the room wherein it was to be situated, and presumably adjusted to the buyer's financial capability.

The depicted instrument, labeled a *Quatuor*, was a vertically oriented instrument, housed in a decorative case. It clearly was the 1898 Gavioli (**Figure 5**). It is unlike any other instrument ever constructed by an American manufac-

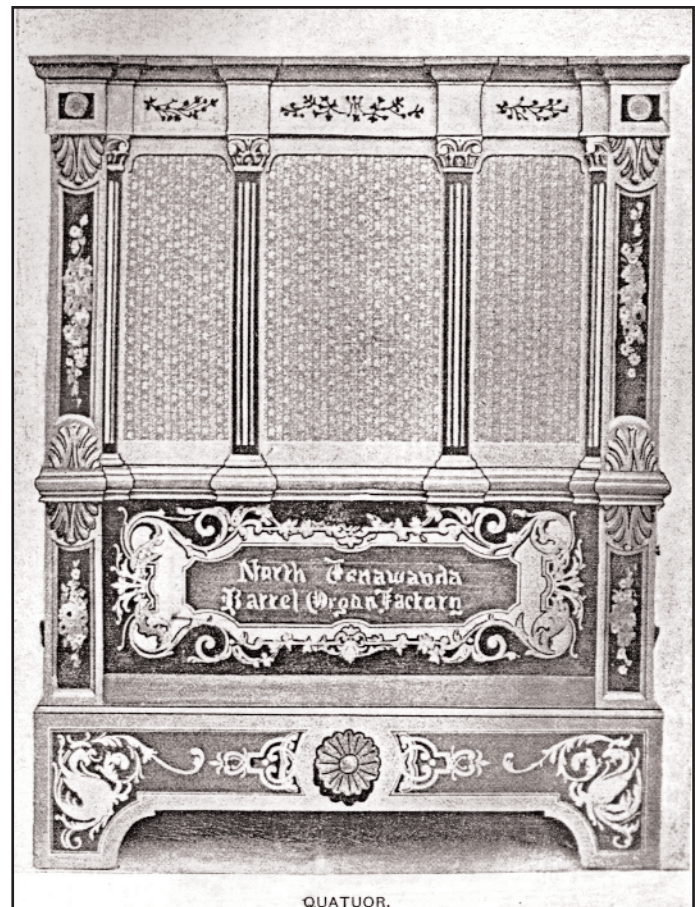


Figure 5. Eugene de Kleist selected a circa 1898 Gavioli image to illustrate the concept of a *Quatuor* to prospective American customers.

Author's collection.

turer. It is unclear if the de Kleist catalogue reference to “perforated paper” meant punched and folded cardboard books or perforated paper rolls. At different times, he made both, but not until a few years later. Welte, Imhof, Bacigalupo and others had made paper or cardboard roll-operated orchestrions long before de Kleist. There is currently no evidence to confirm that he actually made a device of the type depicted in his catalogue. We would conclude that de Kleist was fishing for a customer to whom he could sell one of the Gavioli devices, or a facsimile thereof, to be made in North Tonawanda.

percussion. It was appropriate for dance halls, cinemas, cafes, chateaus, villas and other places where a softer-voiced musical machine was suitable. The example illustrated was similar to others of the style, with something of a cylinder piano bottom and a tall case to enclose pipework. Finials, incandescent lights, cut frosted glass and a carved figure enhanced the richly veneered and ornamented case.

Today, one or more, smaller café pianos exist that were also sold by Marengi. They are similar to the style one would have expected to enjoy in a Belgian café. Several LP albums of their music were produced a couple decades ago.

de Kleist got into the act with a piano-organ combination in his own inimitable style. For 1906, according to Dave Bowers, the North Tonawanda firm offered a *Mandolin Quartette* (Figure 7). It lacked all pipework, the feature that typified the European *Quartet*. The decorative presence of the case was pleasing, but also quite plain by comparison to European models. In 1908 de Kleist offered an expanded machine, first termed the *Mandolin Orchestrion* and later the *Mandolin Sextette*. It included a rank of violin pipes. The confusion in names may have suggested to customers that the de Kleist *Sextette* offered an extension over European *Quartets*, which was not always an accurate conclusion. These machines were all contemporary to the Gavioli and other quartets.⁶



Figure 6. Starting in 1902, Charles Marengi provided the stiffest competition for Gavioli, marketing an equivalent product line, including his *Idéal Orchestre Symphonique Avec Piano*. Image courtesy Jan Kees de Ruijter.

Charles Marengi, Gavioli’s greatest competitor, offered an *Idéal Orchestre Symphonique Avec Piano* in his circa 1908 catalogue (Figure 6). It was very similar to Gavioli’s No. 710 *Piano-Quartet*, as were other examples in additional Marengi literature. The device was available in 54, 60, 62, 68 and 78-key sizes, illustrative of how an instrument would be specialized to a customer’s budget and application needs. The possibility exists that the case and piano may have been manufactured outside of Marengi’s premises, but no proof for this hypothesis exists.

Marengi’s instrument imitated a symphony, offering sounds of a piano, violins, flutes, oboe, cor anglais, violin-cello, mandolin, guitar and accessories, which likely meant

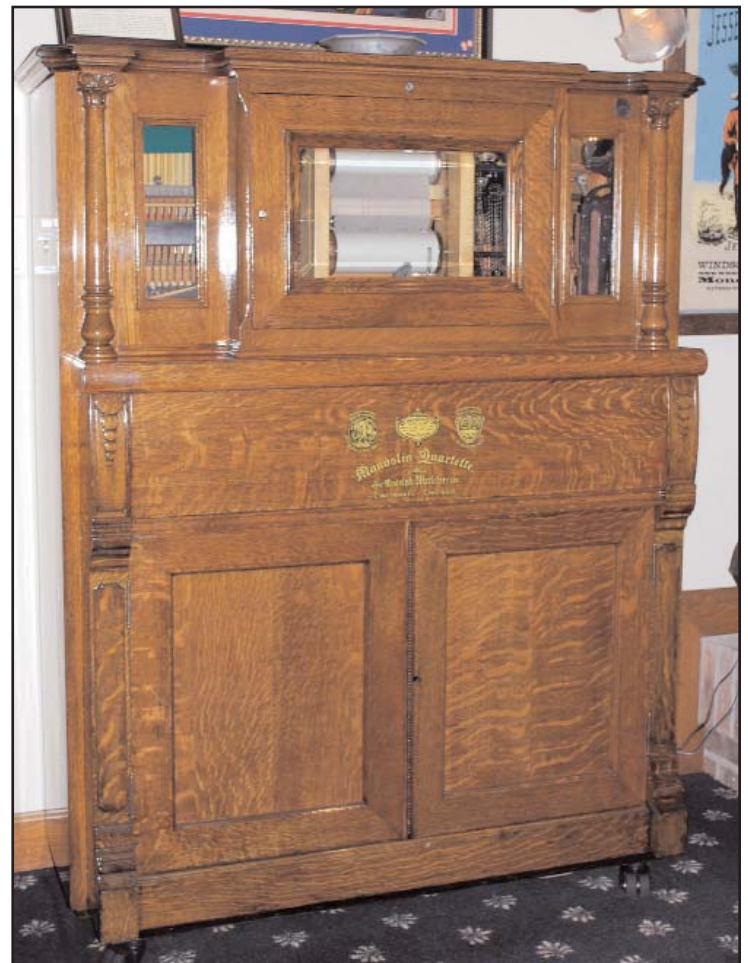


Figure 7. This de Kleist *Mandolin Quartette*, in the Sanfilippo collection, like most American-made orchestrions, was more functional than decorative. Author’s photo.



Figure 8. Gavioli chose to illustrate their elaborate circa 1906 catalog with a coin-operated version of the *Piano-Quartet*. Author's collection.

The Gavioli *Piano-Quartet*

Gavioli's *Piano-Éxecutant*, *Quatuor* and *Parisian Orchestra* designs were steps toward the development of the *Piano-Quatuor*, or *Piano-Quartet* as it was named in the American edition of the Gavioli catalogue. The *Éxecutant* name was applied on the facade of the *Piano-Quatuor* as part of the labeling, suggesting the utilization of its salient features, and perhaps some reliance on the reputation the device had earned in indoor service. The same was true of the *Quatuor*, or *Quartet*, with the word being incorporated into the title of the new instrument. Dutch authority Johannes "Hans" Brink has written that the name "quatuor" was derived from the four elements of a quartet. In the case of the Gavioli *Piano-Quartet*, it was piano, cello, alto violin and violin, and a flute voice. He judged the instrument to be an orchestrion.⁷

The primary basis of the *Piano-Quartet* was the *Piano-Éxecutant*, augmented with selected pipework and percussion instruments. It provided a ready means for Gavioli to introduce a new instrument with re-cycled technology, much in the manner that Detroit automakers use a chassis "platform" for different vehicles. The same 54-note piano was utilized in both machines. The new instrument was intended for sale to indoor houses of public entertainment, and thereby to compete with the devices being introduced in the marketplace by their competitors. Unfortunately, Gavioli's promising new star would prove to be a far cry from the increasingly sophisticated piano orchestrions coming out of the German factories.

In their circa 1906 catalogues, Gavioli offered two designs. Both models were presented in the subsequent American version of the Gavioli catalogue, labeled as *Piano-Quartet*. One was the design No. 396, which was transposed to No. 693 in the American edition of the publication (Figure 8). It had a rectangular case with a detachable, carved hardwood façade, the same two-piece configuration as employed with band organs beginning about 1894. The keyframe was placed to the side of the case, the tracker bar at a 90-degree angle to the housing. In several ways, the catalogue quartet façade strongly resembled the 46-key Gavioli band organ design, number 719, which is also illustrated in the same publication. It differed in that the band organ front was decorated in painted and leafed wood, while the *Quatuor* façade was done in varnished hardwood, a much more difficult and less forgiving carving proposition. The piano was placed in the front of the case, requiring the pipework to speak through and around it. The pipe fronts face to the back, indicative of a desire to have a softer sound projected into the room.

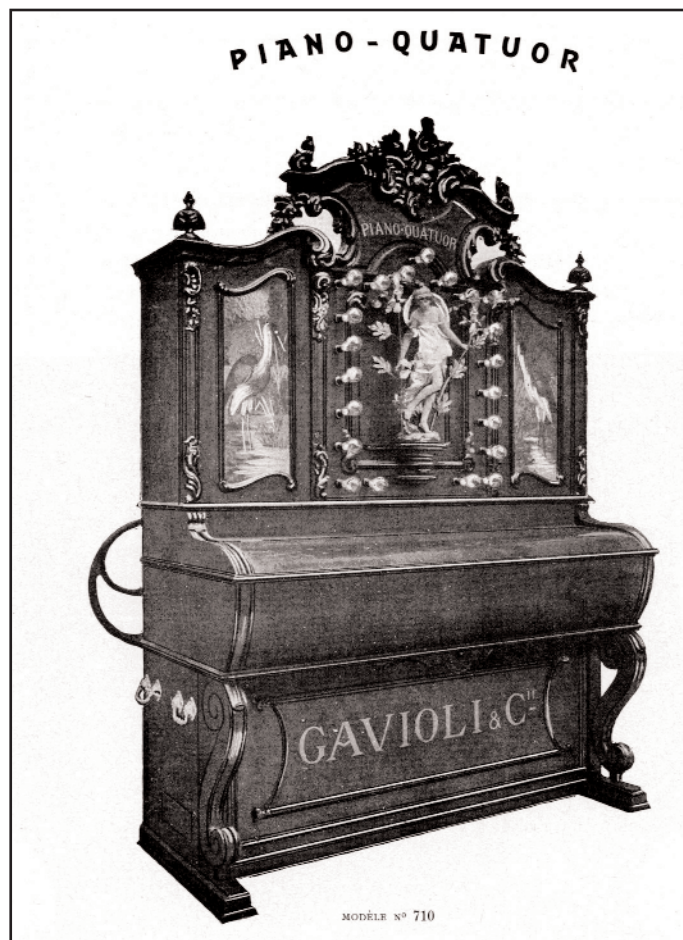


Figure 9. Gavioli's Model 710 *Piano-Quartet* had a presentation shared in common with many other piano orchestrions, yet it was one of the few constructed by an organ builder. Author's collection.

The other *Piano-Quartet* instrument was the Model 710, also designated as a *Piano-Quatuor* (Figure 9). It looked like

a conventional keyboard-style piano orchestrion, with the book-playing apparatus enclosed in the area where a set of keys would normally have been positioned. The design facilitated placement against a wall. It featured a figure on the front, surrounded by incandescent bulbs. At 4700 Francs, it cost more than the 396/693, which was 4200 Francs. No examples of it have been identified in the literature.

The *Piano-Quartet* was not, as one source has stated, Gavioli's "first orchestrion for indoor use." Indeed, it was the firm's last offering of the type. Not recognized as such when promoted, it must have been considered a special achievement for the firm, for which they anticipated great demand. Gavioli's leadership must have sensed a contemporary demand by cafes and other public enterprises and thereby gave it a very high profile in their catalogue. Perhaps someone in a leadership role at the firm was particularly smitten with the device and secured excellent promotion for it. Anselme Gavioli had passed away in 1902 and Ludovic II was now the principal family member, in partnership with the investors. It could be a case that the managers were already sensing a slowdown in large instrument orders and as a result were seeking to supply unique and novel machines to new markets in their attempt to re-position the product line and secure the future of Société des Anciens Établissements Gavioli & Cie.

There's no known documentation for Gavioli's *Piano-Quartet* prior to the elaborate 1906 catalogue (Figure 10). The inaugural offering was highlighted by two entire pages of commentary, along with a full page for each of the two models. It rated more coverage than any of their show piece, monster-sized fair organs, including the newly issued 110-key devices.



Figure 10. The extremely elaborate circa 1906 Gavioli catalog devoted two entire pages to extolling the advantages to the purchase of a *Piano-Quartet*.
Author's collection.

The instrument must have been a novel and economical machine designed to furnish quality salon music. Unfortunately, it never realized the broad popularity originally envisioned for it.

Information below details the description in the 1906 Gavioli catalogue, which embodied management's philosophy for the machine:

A note about the PIANO-QUATUOR

For some time now, the public in bars and cafés demands musical performances. The owners of these establishments - balking at the high costs and various difficulties involved in hiring an orchestra with trained musicians - have been looking to replace these musicians with an automatically playing instrument. Our firm owed it to its tradition to develop an instrument combining all the necessary qualities to this end.

We have concentrated our efforts mainly on the musicality of the registers used, its harmony, diversity and euphony, in order to obtain automatically the illusion of a charming orchestra of skilled musicians.

We believe to have reached the aim we wanted to achieve.

The piano is enlarged with the following, perfectly playing registers: solo, a bass counter melody, cello, violins, flutes, etc., and just in a word: a complete orchestral accompaniment of several good performers. The unit produces the effects of a real Quatuor.

Being asked from several sides to create such a model - which was still absent in our French product arrange - we believe to have once again justified the confidence which we have always enjoyed.

The Piano-Quatuor offers a double advantage: not only does it economize on the expensive training of the musicians it replaces; it also automatically returns to the owner his initial investments for the acquisition of the instrument.

Indeed, it can be operated by inserting a coin into a special mechanism, which stops the instrument at the end of a tune.

When a new coin is inserted, a new tune is immediately be heard, and so, the fascinated public never gets tired of listening to the varied repertoire of tunes en vogue.

The rate at which it contributes to its own success and the substantial incomes earned in this way, demonstrate more than any reasoning the superiority of our new creation and the urgency to use it.

When buying this instrument, you don't spend your money, you invest it.⁸

Beyond the quality of the machine construction, the firm was obviously highlighting the revenue potential of the instrument. If one looks carefully at the catalogue image of the Style 396/693, it will be seen that it was equipped with a coin slot on the right side. The French inscription near it means "Insert a piece of 10 centimes." Thus, in effect, like many other coin-operated pianos and music machines, the

Piano-Quartet was essentially an early “jukebox.” The Gavioli story might have turned out somewhat different if the device had caught on and sold as broadly as later record-playing devices. Inevitably, sound reproduction devices with controlled amplification capability replaced nearly all forms of acoustic organs. At nearly the same time as the *Piano-Quartet* was being introduced, cylinder recording instruments such as the *Multiphone* were already in the marketplace. Their descendants, playing flat records, would capture the market.

An instrument test book bearing a Berni Organ Company label has been identified; one that was made for application to a Gavioli *Piano-Quartet* (Figure 11). It is labeled with an inked inscription on the cover plate, “Scale of 80 Keys Piano.” That simple description concealed the significance of the machine that it served, until more information was made available about an existing example preserved in the Sanfilippo collection. It was thought to be for an even more obscure pneumatic piano and was thus not given much thought until the 2004 debut of the Sanfilippo device. The Gavioli *Piano-Quartet* was generally thought to be of 65-key size. It was specified as such in Arthur Reblitz and Q. David Bowers, *Treasures of Mechanical Music*, (1981, page 514, note on bottom of right column). It wasn’t until the surviving instrument was restored and presented publicly that the correct 80-key scale for it became more widely known and the scale book’s identity was finally realized. The scale had already been published (*Treasures*, page 601), but no identification connected it with Gavioli’s *Piano-Quartet*.⁹

The test book came into the author’s possession via the late carousel and folk art authority, Fred Fried. He’d obtained a portion of the William F. Mangels library directly from the family, and also acquired other documents from the Mangels collection that had been sold to the Horn brothers, and in turn to Walt Bellm. Given the rarity of the Gavioli instrument and the provenance of both it and the test book, it might be reasonable to assume that both were together in the Mangels museum. That does not appear to have been the case. The differences between the test book and the existing example cast doubt on the possibility. There are no extra, unused valves in the chassis to provide for the control of additional functions.

The Berni identification provides a date of scale book manufacture falling somewhat later than the date of instrument construction, as would be expected. The firm was organized about 1911 and flourished under the Berni brothers until the late 1910s. Knowing that the house of Gavioli ceased to exist circa 1912 and that the war interrupted most European factory work by 1915 suggests an early shipment to the United States. The “& Cie.” form of the title assures that the device first served on the European continent. If an organ was commissioned for sale to English-speaking lands the form used was normally “& Co.” An machine may have



Figure 11. A rare surviving test book from the Berni Organ Company of the 1910s provided an exact knowledge of the Gavioli *Piano-Quartet* scale. Author’s collection.

arrived in the US minus a test book, or it was perhaps found necessary to fabricate one when the instrument was serviced by the Berni organization. Differences between the existing example and the book layout would seemingly support the hypothetical existence of a second instrument with a few additional features.

Not all of the percussion devices provided for in the *Piano-Quartet* scale are found within the Sanfilippo instrument. Scale designers often provided for extra actions and future expansion capability that was not utilized unless a customer was willing to pay extra for them. It does not appear that the buyer of the Sanfilippo *Quatuor* invested in the additional percussion devices. The situation might be akin to the Mills *Violano* percussion attachment. Few were sold because the sound did not pleasingly augment the instrument’s basic character.

In the test book, the keys were spaced on about 3.5mm centers, as measured from the respective edges of one slot to another. This is nominally the same as Gavioli organ book key spacing; the exact measurement is given as 3.486mm. If one assumes that the book moved conventionally, left to right, the holes were initiated at the inside edge. The center of the first marked note punch, “D,” is 13mm from the inside edge.

The book has 83 punched key holes, the first three of which are not indicated to have any function other than future expansion. A comparison of it and the *Piano-Quartet* in the Sanfilippo collection, as restored, is seen in Table 2.

Comparison of <i>Piano-Quartet</i> Scales		
Key Hole	Berni Test Book	Mangels/Sanfilippo
1 to 3	Blank	Unused
4 to 57	D to G	Same
58	Declanchement Register	Declame
59	Flute	Sustain
60	Tambour	Blank
61	Piano per il piano	Soft
62	Castagnettes	Blank
63	Violon	Violin
64	Forte per il Piano	Flute
65	Triangle	Triangle
66 to 80	E to F#	Same
81	Castagnettes	Blank
82	Declanchement organ	Stop
83	Tambour	Key Frame

Table 2. A comparison of two *Piano-Quartet* scales.

Acknowledging the unused three-key offset at the beginning, the test book scale is the same as represented by the “80-key Unknown Scale” in Reblitz and Bowers (*Treasures*, page 601). Fortunately, the markings in the body of the test book contain further information relative to the layout of the instrument itself.

There are several dividing lines scribed across the diagonal line of punched holes, as follows (the lines are not numbered in the book):

- line 1, between holes 32 [F] and 33 [G]
- line 2, between holes 57 [G] and 58 [Declanchement]
- line 3, between 65 [Triangle] and 66 [E]
- line 4, between 80 [F#] and 81 [Castagnettes]

Between the lines, and above and below the holes are several inscriptions, as follows:

- below, hole 1 to line 2, “Piano--Forte” [providing the 54-note piano]
- above, line 1 to line 2, “Violon and Flute” [providing the 25 pipe notes]
- below, line 3 to line 4, “Violoncello” [providing 15 pipe notes]

These markings conform with and confirm the analysis presented in the Persky and Reblitz article. It would appear that the current instrument is lacking the castanets and small drum provided for in the scale.

There are no other inscriptions or marks on the front or reverse side of the book, other than some additional pencil notations beside several key identifications. These include:

- “55” to the left of Declanchement Register [58]
- “61” to the left of Flute [59]
- “63” to the left of Piano per il piano [61]
- “60” to the left of Violon [63]
- “62” to left of Forte per il Piano [64]

Perhaps there was some uncertainty as to tubing connections, or possibly some modifications were suggested at one time.



Figure 12. Gavioli’s circa 1906 catalogue included this view of a *Piano-Quartet* chassis, which appears to be different from both the 396/693 and the 710. Author’s collection.

Among the rare photographs published in the circa 1906 Gavioli catalogue is a view of an interior workshop. The space was filled with two 89-key organs and the belly assembly of an 84-key instrument, positioned so as to be seen from the back. That is an extremely rare orientation, unique to the best of the author’s knowledge, suggesting a special posing arranged for the cameraman (**Figure 12**). Of interest here is the device on the far right, a machine that appears at first glance to be a different style of 80-key *Piano-Quartet*. Clearly seen is the 25 note center melody section, denoted by the 25 countable violins, and the fifteen violincellos, split with about half to either side.

The illustrated machine differs from other examples, indicating that the fertile minds of Gavioli’s designers created several different styles playing the same scale, each an attempt at further musical or mechanical perfection. To some who have examined the picture, it appears that the position occupied by the piano in the *Piano-Quartet* has been superseded by a harmonium in the factory photograph. Similar devices had been utilized on a few band organs. Comparison to the unrestored *Piano-Quartet* would seem to assure that it was indeed a piano action that was present. The arrangement appears to be complete, suggesting that it may have been a special order, or a new design devised to address some envisioned opportunity for improvement.

A comparison of the catalogue instrument photographs with the surviving example yields the conclusion that they are not one and the same device. On the façade, there are numerous differences in the manner in which the carved scrolls were executed. The existing device has scrollwork in place of the raised panels to either side of the center and the bottom edges flow outward rather than inward. Further, the one in the catalogue was a coin-operated machine whereas the Sanfilippo *Piano-Quartet* has no coin mechanism. The violoncello pipework appears to be different between the two.

The Sanfilippo Gavioli *Piano-Quartet*

Accurate dates for Gavioli organs from the 1903 to 1909 era are generally difficult to ascertain. No shop ledgers survive and many instruments from that era have been destroyed or modified and thereby their original identification lost. The shop number of the Sanfilippo *Piano-Quartet*, 9493, is the highest known Gavioli assignment for an existing machine. In lieu of the previously published date of 1903, the date of manufacture is at least several years later (**Figure 13**). Gavioli #9181 is known to be 1907, as the date is inscribed in the surviving instrument, and the *Piano-Quartet* is 312 shop orders later. That likely translates into three to four years of production, making the device one of the last instruments to be manufactured by the legendary builder. The possibility even exists that it was completed by others after the failure of the firm and the dispersal of inventory and assets (**Figure 14**).

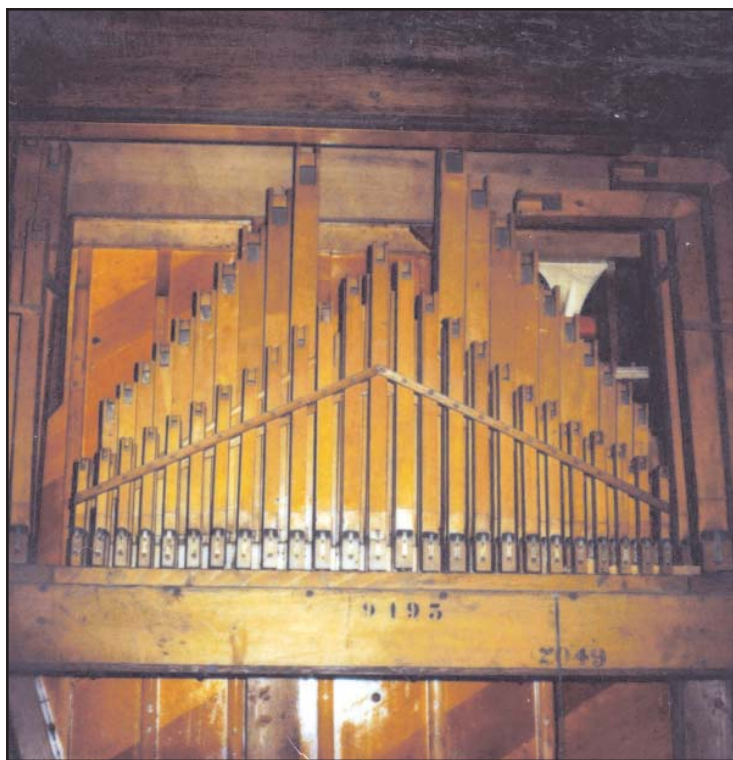


Figure 13. The two numbers assigned to the Gavioli *Piano-Quartet*, 9493 and 2049, can be seen in this photograph taken by Herb Brabandt.

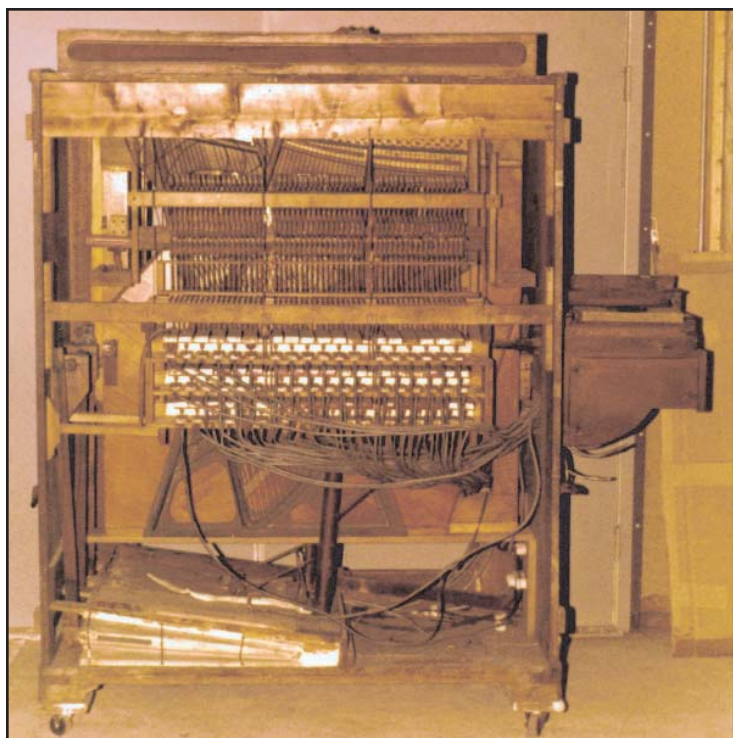


Figure 14. This is the front of the *Piano-Quartet*, with the decorative façade removed. Herb Brabandt made this important documentary image long before restoration commenced.

An unusual twist in the history of the *Piano-Quartet* was Herb Brabandt's discovery of the name "John Bacigalupi" inside the machine, as well as the date of July 10, 1914.

With the name ending in "i," rather than "o," it suggests that he may not have been a member of the Berlin, Germany family of organ builders, one of whom had relocated to the U. S. (Figure 15) What is known is that in 1914, Luigi Bacigalupo was conducting an organ shop at 244 Ainslie Street in Brooklyn, New York. It was in that location where servicing of the *Piano-Quartet* originated in 1914. A man named John Bacigalupi, born sometime circa 1875-1880, worked there as the "boss." His age made him just a few years younger than Louis, eliminating the possibility that he was his son. If he was related, it would have been as a brother, a cousin; or he may have been an unrelated individual whose exact identity remains to be resolved. Antonio L. "Tony" Crescio, who shared a Berlin organ heritage with the Bacigalupos, also had his name inscribed inside the instrument in 1914.



Figure 15. A close up of the piano installation provides a comparative view for other Gavioli devices, such as the *Piano-Éxecutant*.

Photograph courtesy Herb Brabandt.

The pipe chest of the *Piano-Quartet* was also paint marked with the number 2049, which was presumably applied during a subsequent shop repair (Figure 16). Two sources have the number as 2949, which is not correct, and identified it as a Marengi assignment, but that would appear to be questionable.¹⁰ Knowing that Marengi started to number instruments at about 2000, 2049 would have been assigned in 1902 or 1903. That date is before the *Piano-Quartet* was constructed. Thus, at the present time, 2049 remains unexplained unless it was assigned by the Bacigalupi shop.



Figure 16. This view of the back shows the unusual drive configuration and the back-facing pipework of the *Piano-Quartet*.

Photograph courtesy Herb Brabandt.

The Sanfilippo example first comes to specific notice when presented as an artifact at the American Museum of Public Recreation on Coney Island (Figure 17). The institution is better known as the “Mangels museum.” It honored the pioneering outdoor amusement historian who was the leading force in the establishment of the facility in 1929, William Frederick Mangels. He was the prominent ride inventor, builder and operator, and agent for Gebrüder Bruder band organs, who assembled and placed the collection before the public. It was opened to visitors in 1930 and remains to this day the only general museum about popular outdoor amusements ever conceived and realized.¹¹

The *Piano Quartet* may have come from almost anywhere and at any time following the initiation of Mangels’ collecting. In early

museum documentation the instrument was erroneously identified as “Gavioli Orchestrion, first to play by perforated paper, 1870.”¹² One must recall that what are known as book organs today were originally termed “paper organs” and the dates for artifacts often wildly exaggerated before serious study took place. No other mechanical musical instrument known to be present in the Mangels presentation quite fits the description of the Gavioli *Piano-Quartet*. The 1870 date can be dismissed directly as inaccurate. Photography taken by the late 1930s is the earliest visual testimony to the actual exhibition of the *Piano-Quartet* in the museum.

In the chronicles of American band organs, only one end user reference has been discovered for a machine that is in all probability a Gavioli *Piano-Quartet*. Following the death of carousel builder and amusement park operator Fred Dolle, his estate offered a number of assets for sale in 1914. These pieces included an “81 key piano organ.” That phrase is a unique identification, not found anywhere else following decades of research.¹³ Exactly where Dolle may have utilized a *Piano-Quartet* is unknown. He had several carousel installations and photographs of them are exceedingly rare; none of those available record the presence of such an instrument. A few months later, the instrument, still unsold, was listed as an “81 key Grand Orchestrion.”¹⁴ The device generated little interest, likely because it was superseded by other machines for indoor applications. It was too softly voiced for outdoor work; it was something of a Jonah in that regard. It remained unsold, despite being listed for sale again in 1918 and 1919, described simply as a “piano organ.”¹⁵

Whether the instrument may have endured another decade in the possession of Dolle’s widow, or an associate, and then donated to Mangels’ effort is unknown.

There’s at least one other possible source of the Mangels museum *Piano-Quartet*. One unidentified organ in the museum holdings arrived from the Tilyou family’s Steeplechase



Figure 17. The earliest known photograph of the existing Gavioli *Piano-Quartet* is this view recording it in the Mangels museum in the early 1930s.

Author’s collection.



Figure 18. The New York identity on the belly may have been part of the reason the *Piano-Quartet* was credited to the B. A. B. Organ Company.

Image from Bellm 1976 auction catalog.

Park, Coney Island, on November 2, 1935. Confirming the transfer, park manager James J. Onorato inscribed in his daily diary “Shipped organ and few other antiques to museum.”¹⁶ Given that organs and such were still useful to showmen in 1935, one suspects that the machine was either exemplary or just the opposite—undesirable or unnecessary—and thus disposable as a charitable gift to the nascent institution. At that time the thought of tax advantage for non-monetary giving was unknown; charity was for charity’s sake, in this instance to support the fledgling museum. Whether Onorato’s inscription applied to a Wurlitzer 125 or an Imhof & Mukle cylinder orchestrion with John G. Fuch’s name on it, instruments in the Mangels museum that could also be considered organs, is unknown.¹⁷

Enduring success was not enjoyed by the Mangels museum effort and the collections were liquidated. Most of the artifacts were sold to the Horn brothers of Sarasota, Florida, in 1952. Their holdings were subsequently acquired by Walt Bellm and others. In the inventory conveying the Horn collection to Bellm, the listing that appears to apply to the *Piano Quartet* is the largely non-descriptive “Organ and piano, New York, large fancy front.”¹⁸ In a constant process of refinement and liquidation, Bellm placed the *Piano-Quartet* up at auction on November 21, 1976, identifying it as lot no. 227, the “B.A.B. Organ with Piano” (Figure 18). The rationale for providing the B. A. B. Organ Company identification is

unknown and is likely to be unresolved.¹⁹ It is thought that collector Don Mudd bought the *Piano-Quartet* at the Bellm sale. Herb Brabandt purchased the instrument at a sale of Mudd’s holdings in 1978 and held it until selling it to Jasper Sanfilippo. Substantial funds were invested to bring this unusual and unique document of another era and time back to life. The instrument retained the 89-key keyframe that had been with it through this series of sales.²⁰

John Hovancak restored the *Piano-Quartet*, with technical consultation furnished by Art Reblitz (Figure 19). The stack presented substantial rebuilding difficulty, yet yielded a prompt action with fast repeatability. It was found necessary to replace the crankshaft during the course of the work. Lest any one be critical of the scale utilized in the restored instrument, they should be aware that all of the tubing was disconnected from the pipe chest before it passed into the possession of Herb Brabandt. Not a single book of music was available, nor a test book. The scale was unidentified, though it existed. Further complicating the status of the machine was the original Gavioli key frame attached to the case. It was of 89-key width, but with just 80-keys present, with an original Gavioli eight-register box inside. One assumes that available components were pressed into service for the construction of the machine at a very late date in Gavioli existence.²¹



Figure 19. The finely restored Gavioli *Piano-Quartet* is one of the unique elements in the world’s most representative collection of Gavioli organs, presented by Jasper and Marian Sanfilippo.

Author’s photo.



Figure 20. Frati & Co. of Berlin was an important builder of piano orchestrions, many of which were sold into the United States via an agent, August Pollman. Author's collection.

Frati & Co.'s Band Orchestrion

Among the earliest identifiable and dateable piano-organ combination machines were those illustrated and described in the 1890s catalogues issued by Cocchi, Bacigalupo & Graffigna and Frati & Co., two related firms located in Berlin, Germany. A Cocchi, Bacigalupo & Graffigna catalogue prepared for distribution in North America in about 1893-1894 included a *Piano-Organ*. It was described as having 13 hammers, 14 flutes and 14 brass clarinets, playing a cylinder marked with eight tunes and may have been among the first of the type offered for sale in North America.²²

New York musical instrument dealer August Pollmann represented Frati & Co.'s line of machines by 1894. One of the first instruments he featured was the firm's *Band Orchestrion*, also presented as the *Band Piano Orchestrion* in later literature. Frati's Germanic catalogues termed them *Orchester-Pianos* (Figure 20). The engraving illustrating it included the year 1893, which may date the origin of the design. It must have gained popularity quite quickly, as lesser firms cloned the design for their own product lines. Already by 1895, Peters & Co. of Leipzig, Germany, as well as another unidentified firm sold similar devices.²³ The *Band Orchestrion* was a cylinder piano suited to indoor application. The suggested uses included everywhere music might accompany human entertainment: "dancing rooms, skating and bicycle rinks, concert halls, merry-go-rounds, club houses, ice cream saloons, summer and winter gardens and all places of amusement."

The shape of the machine was akin to that of the commonly-known cylinder-operated street piano. The back area of the case was a rectangular box, housing the piano frame and action. Cantilevered from the front, in place of the typical keyboard, was another rectangular box with a curved lower edge. It contained the cylinder and key action. Frati's *Band Orchestrion* was a 67-key device that included a 6-1/2 octave iron-frame piano, four octaves of violin pipes and two octaves of chiming bells, all inside the case. Three percussion devices with dual, exposed beaters, a 24" bass drum, a 13" snare drum and a 13" cymbal, were mounted at the top, enclosed within a carved, ornamental frame. It had an ebonized hardwood case, trimmed in gilt, with floral-painted satin relief panels. The case measured 6' 8" high by 6' 6" long by 2' 1" deep. The eight-tune cylinder measured nearly 5' 9" long. The machine weighed in at 700 pounds and carried a list price of \$1,000, with extra cylinders costing \$175 each.



Figure 21. The Frati *Band Orchestrion* seems lost inside the center of the immense switchback fabricated by William F. Mangels in his Coney Island shop. Author's collection.

An examination of a multitude of catalogues and references leads to the conclusion that famed Coney Island ride manufacturer William F. Mangels placed a Frati *Band Orchestrion* in the center of a very unique switchback (Figure 21). Given that Mangels routinely sold Gebrüder Bruder band organs, almost exclusively, the presence of the Berlin interloper suggests either a trial application or a designation by the ride buyer. One cannot help but wonder how such a small and relatively softly voiced device could have masked the noise coming from the ride machinery and the multiple cars as they noisily circled the undulating track.

The only known photograph of the Mangels ride conceals the lower portion of the Frati, preventing discernment of the type of playing mechanism. This is significant because shortly after the introduction of the *Band Orchestrion*, Frati & Co. designed and implemented a key frame using perforated cardboard sheets for use in mechanical music instruments. The firm simply substituted the

newer technology for the old, leaving the basic outline of the instruments unchanged. The No. 5292 cylinder-operated *Band Orchestrion* served as the basis for the No. 5293 *Band Orchestrion* operated by the new method. The new playing system added a \$250 premium to the base price. The cardboard sheet concept was also utilized in four subsequent Frati instruments: Style G *Auditorium Orchestrion*; Style K *Concert Orchestrion*; Style M *String Band Orchestrion*; and Style N *Regimental Band Orchestrion*; each with a slightly different appearance and specification.



Figure 22. Frati's Style G *Auditorium Orchestrion* was one of several models fitted with a key frame to play perforated sheet music.

Author's collection.

The one of interest to us was the Style G, a 65-key instrument rated as representing ten musicians (Figure 22). The specification provided: a hammer-struck, four-octave piano; two octaves of violin pipes; one and a quarter octaves of bells; a 13-inch cymbal; a 13-inch snare drum; and a two-foot diameter bass drum. It stood about eight feet tall and six and one-half feet wide, weighing in at 750 pounds. The case was ebonized with gilt highlights and satin fabric panels embellished with floral embroidery. Faux pipework filled three of the openings in the upper case front. It seems that Frati modified the original *Band Orchestrion* specification and then housed everything internally in a taller, more impressive case, all operated by the new cardboard sheet system. The orchestrion, outfitted with 25 tunes, was priced at \$850.000, about five percent more than a cylinder-operated 59-key military band organ from deKleist.²⁴



Figure 23. Two piano orchestrions, one being a Frati *Auditorium Orchestrion*, provided the music for a Loeff carousel installed at Savin Rock, Connecticut. Author's collection.

A Charles Loeff three-abreast, all-stander carousel was in service at Savin Rock, Connecticut from about 1907 to 1909 (Figure 23). The owner's name is unknown, but the style of the carousel house enclosing it has been associated with Tim Murphy, a man with multiple merry-go-round installations in the eastern United States. Visible in the center of the ride are two piano orchestrion style machines. The one in front was a Frati's Style G *Auditorium Orchestrion*. Only the profile of the second Savin Rock machine, on the far side of the circle, can be seen. It had a narrow, tall case and could have been any number of different makes or styles. Another of the unusual tall-case Frati G machines was placed in the center of a carousel that Fred Dolle installed and operated at Olympic Park in Hilton, New Jersey.

Other Piano and Combination Piano Organ Carousel Applications

Modest-sized carousels of the type that were used in small parks and contained within less expansive carousel houses did not need a large organ to supply music. The limited interior volume of such structures enabled smaller instruments, including mechanical pianos, to be utilized. The softer music also preempted any complaints that customers may have had concerning music that was too loud.

An ordinary street piano of the style made by many foreign and domestic manufacturers was in service on the Loeff carousel that was operated at Roger Williams Park at Providence, Rhode Island (Figure 24). It was a three-abreast, all stander device with menagerie figures. The style was typical of the 1890s. Shortly after the turn of the century such rides were superseded by those with jumping horse action. At one time the owner or operator was J. H. Walker of East Providence. A postcard of the merry-go-round used between 1907 and 1910 shows the distinctive three-window configuration at the top of a street piano in the ride center, as well as the back of a second instrument to the right, believed to be a larger band organ.

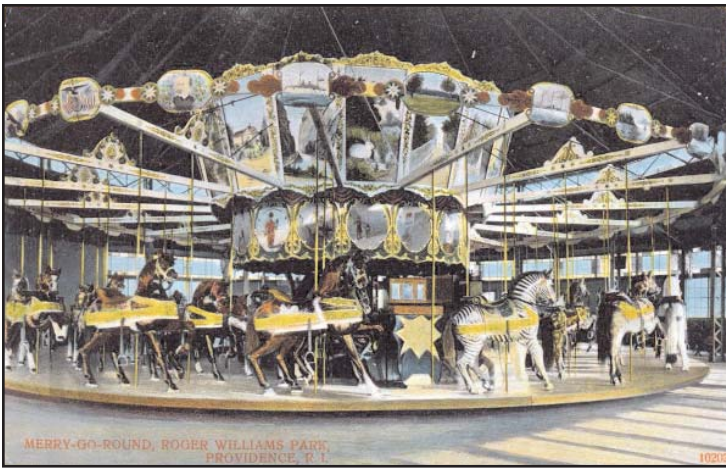


Figure 24. The Loeff carousel at Providence, Rhode Island was also outfitted with a pair of piano orchestrions, the one readily visible being an ordinary street piano. Author's collection.

The McElwee Bros. are best known for their operation of an attractive four-abreast Loeff carousel at Grand Rapids, Michigan, which featured three large band organs known today as *Big Bertha*, *Madam Laura* and *Sadie Mae*. They also had another carousel operation at nearby Reed's Lake. At the end of the 1916 season, the McElwees offered to sell that carousel, which was outfitted with a Wurlitzer 150 and a Regal 44-note electric piano. The Regal was one of many similar makes of upright cabinet style pianos that enlivened saloons, restaurants and other places of public entertainment.²⁵

Paul M. Tardif operated a fine, four-abreast Loeff menagerie carousel under the title of Paul's Hippodrome at Salem Willows, Massachusetts as early as 1929. Later it was known as the Salem Willows Kiddieland.²⁶ The riding device, decorated with portraits of eighteen U. S. presidents on the shields, dated back to at least the early 1900s. It had been owned and operated by George Kremer at North Beach, Queens, New York, who sold it after the area was acquired for the installation of what is now LaGuardia Airport. The ride was sold again in 1976 and broken up and sold piecemeal by 1980. While in Tardif's possession, the ride was accompanied by a band organ with cylinder piano facade (Figure 25). A surviving photograph confirms the placement inside the center of the platform. It featured a carved butterfly below a central opening, with two curved-bill birds flanking a central hole above the case.



Figure 25. Roy Goff took this photograph of the Salem Willows Loeff carousel in the mid-1970s, providing confirmation of an elaborate street piano façade on the organ.

Recent communication with long-time mechanical music enthusiast, Joe Lavacchia, has revealed the story behind the Salem Willows façade. Many years ago a pipe organ repairman, Tolbert Cheek (-1969) of Gloucester, Massachusetts, known for his work on the huge instrument in the Hammond Castle, learned of Joe's interest.²⁷ During a visit to Cheek's shop, Joe acquired a number of mechanical music machines including a 43-key book-operated instrument. The grand sum of \$15 was paid for the then unremarkable and non-playing device. It was identified as having been behind the unusual façade at Salem Willows.

A telltale keyhole arrangement in the side of the case confirmed that the instrument was originally cylinder operated. Drum actions were also added during the conversion to books, the work likely undertaken in the B. A. B. Organ Company shop. Via communication with Ozzie Wurdemann, Joe learned that it played on the 43-keyless Gebrüder Bruder scale. The determination did not necessarily identify the original make of the machine, only providing an identity for the scale to which it had been modified. According to Herbert Jüttemann (*Waldkirch Street and Fairground Organs*, 2002, page 198), the Model 111, 43-key scale originated after World War I and was presented in a roll-playing format using suction. B. A. B. presumably took the scale and in lieu of supplying arrangements in rolls went with a book-playing format that utilized their keyless, pressure style action.

Through a cooperative arrangement, the organ continued in service at Salem Willows until Joe reclaimed his property. Some 25 to 30 years later, the subsequent owner of the façade contacted Joe with the intent to reunite the pieces. A deal was never consummated and the instrument remains in Joe's hands, separate from the carved front. A desire remains to reunite the two.

The Salem Willows façade was offered for sale by a dealer in 1992, wherein it was identified it as a generic "Bruder" band organ façade. It measured 65" tall by 67" wide²⁸ (Figure 26). It was Joe's studied opinion that the façade did not fit the instrument case and that it had likely been fitted by B. A. B. when the instrument was supplied to the carousel. Given the instrument's cylinder organ heritage, when originally constructed it was probably in a furniture case style housing lacking carved ornamentation.²⁹



Figure 26. The abundant carvings on the Maserati “carnival front” made a nice show for whatever instrument it concealed.

Image from Americana Antiques brochure.

In searching for an identification of the small organ facade, a similar design was found applied with the street pianos fabricated by Ceasar Maserati & Co. of New York City in the mid-1910s (Figure 27). Maserati offered two instruments with decorative facades, which he termed “carnival fronts.” The one of interest is his number 10 machine, a mandolin cylinder piano with a zitherphone attachment. Behind the three circular openings in the façade were bass and snare drums and a cymbal. In lieu of the usual hand crank that extended from the front of the case, a small electric motor powered



Figure 27. The Maserati style of street piano facades is established by this image, taken from one of his catalogs. Author's collection.

the piano by means of a belt drive. The taller back of the case became the front, where the carved façade was affixed. The list price for the No. 10 is unknown, but without the façade one cost about \$250 to \$300. Street pianos with wooden piano frames are a challenge to keep in tune. Given heavy, outdoor use, one can understand why only the façade may have survived from such a machine.

There are a couple “sisters” to the Maserati façades, all sharing similar applied carved elements or a general arrangement. One is known from a photograph taken inside the B. A. B. Organ Company factory at an indeterminate date, when it still occupied the 340 Water Street address in Manhattan (Figure 28). Whether the front came from a Maserati piano, or was simply supplied by the same carver for a small organ is unknown. The instrument survives and is now part of the Bovey collection in Montana. It is a small organ with exposed piccolo pipes in front. Senator Bovey described the instrument as being on the third floor of the B. A. B. factory. It was a 43-keyless organ built by B. A. B. before about 1930, with some cryptic and perhaps erroneous description reading “designed from at Frati Paris.”³⁰ It should be remembered that one of the principals of the B. A. B. Organ Company, Andrew Antoniazzi, started his career with Maserati. It's possible that the organ firm later acquired some inventory from the piano maker's shop when it passed out of existence.

The second Maserati-related façade is one that can be identified with Philadelphia Toboggan Company carousel number 41 of 1917. It was originally erected at Ross Grove Park, in a northern Pittsburgh suburb, and was then acquired for 1918 by Edward E. Rhoads, a ride concessionaire and amusement park operator, who installed it on the boardwalk at Wildwood, New Jersey. The street piano façade can barely be discerned in the center of the ride in a photograph taken after installation at Ross Farms. The instrument that it served is unidentified. The utilization of the front continues to be murky because a variety of instruments are associated with the site.

The Wurlitzer factory shipped a rebuilt cardboard book organ to Rhoads at Wildwood on June 16, 1923. It had been converted to play duplex 125 rolls. It was identified by shop order number 6510. Later commentary identified it as a Wilhelm Bruder Sons Model 79, 48-key-less instrument. Rhoads took previous delivery of another unidentified instrument that played Wurlitzer 165 rolls via a duplex roll frame. Bearing shop number 1144, it was shipped on May 1, 1922 to his Wildwood location. In the early 1940s, a later owner, the Cedar-



Figure 28. Another façade that may have been created by Maserati, or inspired by his work, was applied to an organ that spent some years inside the B. A. B. Organ Company. Author's collection.

Schellenger Corporation, bought a Wurlitzer 150 roll operated organ to accompany the ride. The source of the instrument was unknown and not recorded. This one was identified to carousel enthusiast Dick Bowker as being a Limonaire.³¹

The street piano façade remained on location, pictured in an article about the ride printed in a July 1976 issue of the Wildwood *Leader*. PTC #41 was sold in 1977, removed and auctioned piecemeal by Guernsey's in 1983. The organ, to which the street piano façade was attached, was removed from Wildwood and

stored with Bill Kromer for a number of years. The organ was then sold and placed in service on PTC carousel #49, a 1919-installed riding device at Clementon Lake Park in Clementon, New Jersey.³²

The original street-piano front, described as "European Carousel Band Organ Façade, most likely from Belgium," sold at a Sotheby's auction on May 24, 1990, lot number 48 (Figure 29). The buyer remains unidentified. The facade was reproduced in fiberglass by the late Marvin Sylvor (1933-2008), the former proprietor of Fabricon Carousel Company, a New York carousel builder and restorer. A copy can be seen in his advertisement in *Carousel Shopper*, Winter 1990/1991

PTC #49 was sold in 1990 and the accompanying band organ, identified as a Wilhelm Bruder Sons machine, was sold to Knoebels Grove in Pennsylvania. A Fabricon-made fiberglass copy of the street piano façade is with this instrument.

Credits

Special appreciation is due Herb Brabandt, who kindly made available his notes and photographs on the Gavioli *Piano-Quartet*, all of which added greatly to knowledge of the device. John Hovancak and Art Reblitz readily shared their experiences of the restoration of the instrument with the author. A special thank you is extended to Jasper and Marian Sanfilippo, who returned the rare machine to near original playing condition and have joyously presented it for thousands of their guests to enjoy.



Figure 29. Another Maserati-style façade was installed on Philadelphia Toboggan Company carousel #41 in 1917. It survives in unknown hands today. Image from 1990 Sotheby's catalog.

Notes

1. Hans Brink patent list in *Het Pierement*, XLV, 2, page 57.
2. Andrew Pilmer, "The Piano-Executant—an unusual Gavioli product," *Key Frame*, Spring 1985, pages 12-16, translated by Jan L. M. van Dinteren, "De 'Piano-Exécutant'-een ongewoon Gavioli-produkt," *Het Pierement*, XXXIV, 1, pages 12-15.
3. Björn Isebaert, personal communication, September 2005.
4. *Music Lovers' Cyclopedia*, Rupert Hughes, ed., (1912), page 238; *Reports on the Paris Universal Exhibition 1867*, (1868), page 198.
5. Translation courtesy of Björn Isebaert.
6. See Q. David Bowers, *Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments*, (1972), page 665.
7. See photos and caption, *Het Pierement*, XLVI, 3, page 120.
8. The translation was kindly provided by Björn Isebaert.
9. The article that made known the true nature of the *Piano-Quartet* was Marty Persky and Arthur Reblitz, "Lake Michigan Featured Instruments," *MBSI News Bulletin* of September-October 2005, pages 12-13.
10. Brink, op. cit. and Tom Meijer on MMD, May 23, 1999.
11. See "Coney Island's Museum," *Scientific American*, June 1930, pages 442-443; and Richard W. Flint, "William F. Mangels and America's First Amusement Museum," *National Carousel Association Merry-go-Roundup*, V, 4 (October 1978), pages 3-6.
12. [William F. Mangels?], *Progress of the American Museum of Public Recreation*, 1929, and original print, author's collection.
13. *Billboard*, March 7, 1914, page 29.
14. *Billboard*, May 16, 1914, page 25.
15. *Billboard*, February 23, 1918, page 56 and March 1, 1919, page 75.
16. Michael P. Onorato, transcriber and editor, *Steeplechase Park, Coney Island, 1928-1964, The Diary of James J. Onorato*, (1997), Vol. I, page 180.
17. The Imhof went to the Horn brothers, then Bellm's museum and at auction to Freddie Künzle in Switzerland, where it remains today (2009).
18. Horn inventory, Bill Endlein collection, copy courtesy Art Reblitz.
19. Catalogue, author's collection.
20. Transaction information courtesy Herb Brabandt, e-mail, February 7, 2006.
21. Letter from Herb Brabandt to Art Reblitz dated December 26, 1982.
22. *Het Pierement*, LIII, 1, page 27.
23. Bowers, *Encyclopedia*, pages 362 and 363.
24. The author is unaware of any Style G Frati surviving today. A Style K was in the Henri Triquet collection, with a mirrored variant in the Siegfried Wendel collection. A Style M with exposed clarinet pipes in the center is in the Lightner Museum in St. Augustine, Florida. A set of upright, curved brass trumpets identifies the Style N, an example of which was offered for sale by a Swiss dealer during 2008.
25. *Billboard*, September 16, 1916, page 41.
26. Ozzie and Tom Wurdeman's listing of B. A. B. 66-key roll buyers included Bill Stamos of 191 Fort Ave., Salem, MA. Bill Luca (e-mail August 29, 2007) indicated that the Stamos family owned Kiddieland at 191 Fort Avenue.
27. Cheek was previously affiliated with: Auto-Pneumatic Action Co., 1909-1920; Welte & Sons, Poughkeepsie, NY, 1920-1927; and Aeolian Company, Garwood, NJ, 1927-1931. See David H. Fox, *A Guide to North American Organbuilders*, (1991), page 71.
28. Americana Antiques brochure, Spring 1992, author's collection.
29. Author's conversation with Joe Lavacchia, October 10, 2007.
30. Bovey notebook description, courtesy Art Reblitz.
31. Cedar-Schellenger Corporation letter to Dick Bowker dated June 21, 1949, copy provided by Bowker to the author. The photograph is reproduced in David W. Francis et al, *Wildwood by the Sea*, "1998," page 89, top. Bowker wrote the author on May 20, 2005.
32. Photo, *NAPHA News*, XXIX, 1, page 5.

Fred Dahlinger believes that a broad and deep knowledge of band organ history is necessary to make critical decisions in the management of historic organs. They are indeed artifacts, the stories of which are contained not only within their existence, but also the historical record of paper and visual documentation, as well as other remnants of the era. Utilizing a dossier of information, modern day caretakers can make educated choices to assure that future generations will enjoy this fragile, century-old heritage

First COAA Rally of 2009 Returns to Lake "Winnie"

It's been another long cold winter, so make your plans now to head to the Sunny South for the first COAA Rally of 2009. The venue is Lake Winnepesaukah Amusement Park in Rossville, Georgia, a delightful family-oriented Park, located just south of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The dates are Saturday, May 23 - Monday, May 25, Memorial Day weekend. 2009 marks the fifth straight year that the COAA has rallied at Lake Winnie, so you know that there are good things happening down South!

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