

Organ Illustrations used in Vintage Postcard Advertising

Ron Bopp

Another tangent of the wonderful world of mechanical organs is the enjoyment and appreciation when seeing them in a different form other than on the rally field, the collector's room or even vintage catalogs. Recently, the Internet has allowed more thorough exploration into anything related to hand and street organs. Using Ebay's feature of "saved search" has allowed me to see everything offered relating to these organs. Using the term of "organ grinder postcards" began to bring up a number of items for sale, all of course, featuring some form of organ grinder printed on a postcard. Several months of viewing these interesting, aged artifacts led me to a specific interest: the use of organs in advertising on postcards.

In my continued search I noticed one particular eBay seller seemed to be offering a considerable number of such cards. Upon correspondence I discovered this Chicago-based collector had acquired the postcard collection of the now-deceased and hand organ aficionado, Ralph Heintz. Most, but not all, of the advertising postcards discussed in this article have come from this extensive collection.

Obviously one could advertise anything on a postcard, an item during the first half of the 20th century that was a common media form. Radio was in its infancy and the other current advertising forms (such as television and the Internet) had yet to be discovered. In order to make it easier to discuss I have divided the postcards into six categories: Food-Beverage; Clothing Related; Tobacco; Theater/Shows/Acts; Miscellaneous; and Multi-Use.

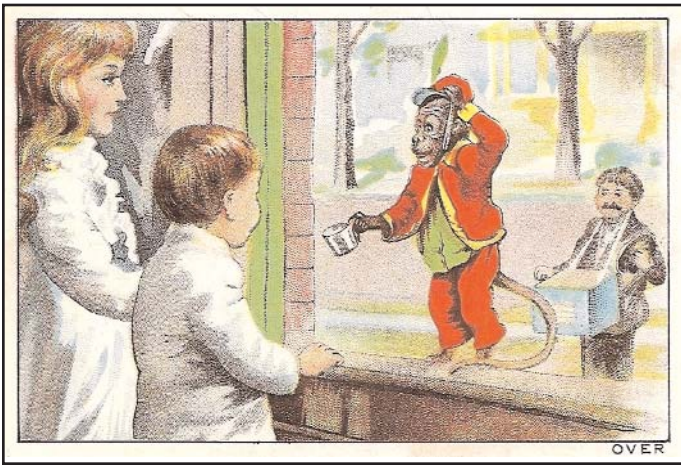


Figure 1. A postcard produced by the Julier Baking Company of Cleveland, Ohio.

Food & Beverages:

Baking

Heading up the list in this delectable category is a card produced by the Julier Baking Company of Cleveland, Ohio (Figure 1). Featuring a colorful monkey on the window sill with two arising children (with grinder in background) the reverse side of the card not only advertises the company known for its "bread, cakes and cookies" but also utilizes the grinder's monkey in a clever advertising jingle:

*This monkey bows good morning
To these little children dear.
I'm sure they are delighted
With his antics queer.*

*It looks as though the children
Just arose from bed.
A breakfast good awaits them
Of "Baby Label Bread."*

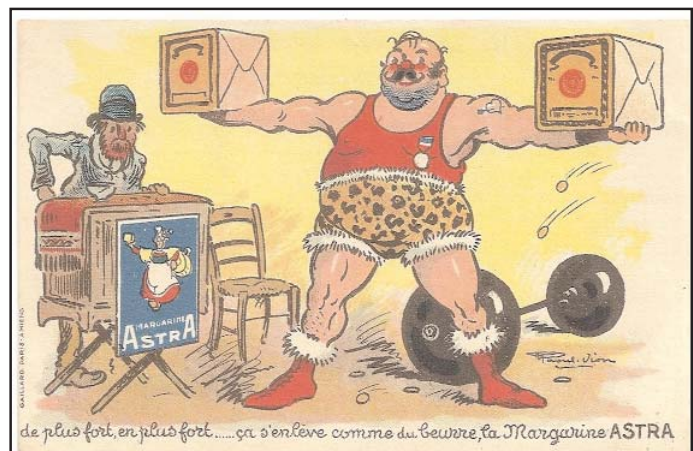


Figure 2. A strong man illustrating the virtues of Astra margarine.

Figure 2 illustrates a French postcard advertising a product, Astra margarine, which was good as butter, a fact that the strong man is illustrating while the organ grinder cranks away with the product sign on the front of the organ.

Figure 3 is a colorful postcard depicting a young grinder (with monkey) entertaining three children. At first it shows no sign of advertising anything but close inspection reveals the girl in the blue dress offering something to the grinder's monkey. It doesn't appear to be a coin but rather, after viewing the reverse side of the postcard, it is

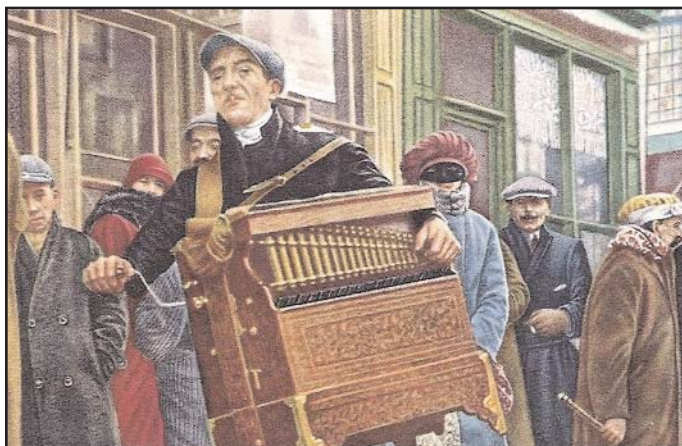


probably a piece of spiced bread that the baking firm of Aug. Brees-Roelants of Anvers (France) is promoting.

Figure 3. Aug Brees-Roelants (Anvers, France) used this grinder illustration for advertising.

Candy

Although I found no English-printed postcards advertising chocolate many were used in European countries. The first (Figures 4a & 4b) is one from Belgium. Björn Isebaert noted that the firm of Côte d'Or was the largest chocolate manufacture in Belgium. They would common-



Collection de 125 Photos-Couleurs différentes offertes pour illustrer le nouveau volume	Verzameling van 125 verschillende Kleurenfoto's aangeboden tot het versieren van het nieuw boekdeel
FOLKLORE BELGE	BELGISCHE FOLKLORE
Deuxième série	Tweede reeks
Édité par Côte d'Or LE BON CHOCOLAT BELGE	Uitgegeven door Côte d'Or DE GOEDE BELGISCHE CHOCOLADE
Seuls Fabricants : Usines Alimentaires Bruxelles (Midi)	Enig-fabrikant : Fabrieken Alimentaire Brussel (Zuid)
	
FOLKLORE CÔTE D'OR n° 203	FOLKLORE CÔTE D'OR n° 203
2 ^e Série	2 ^{de} Reeks
BRUXELLES	BRUSSEL
Le joueur d'orgue ambulanti.	De rondreizende orgelspeler.
Bord supérieur à coller légèrement	Bord supérieur à coller légèrement

Figures 4a & 4b. Chocolate advertising by Côte d'Or.

ly use themed images to advertise. This current illustration is from Belgium folklore and according to Björn, depicts a “traveling organ grinder.”

The Dutch firm of Bensdorp (Amsterdam) (Figure 5) advertised their Cacao with this colorful card depicting children dancing to the music of an organ grinder. The reverse side of the postcard included advertising for the firm as well as promoting the cacao “as the base for a healthy, nutritious, cheap drink for children, baby-sitters, weak, ill or recovering children and even for people in good health.”

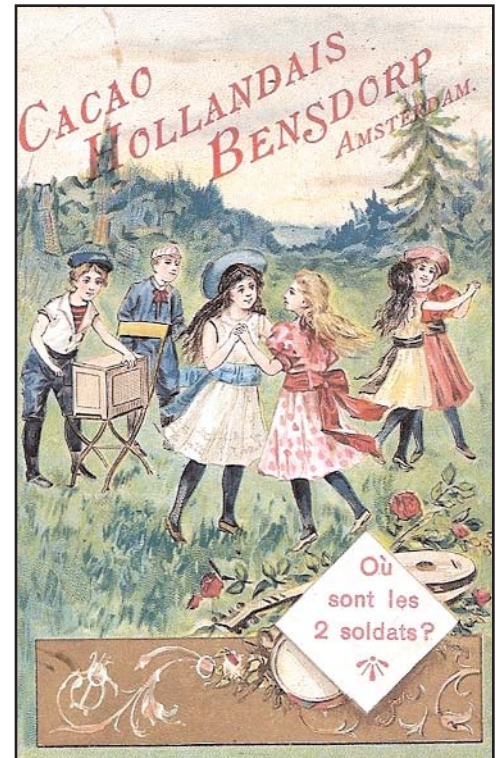


Figure 5. The Cacao from the Bensdorp company in Amsterdam was promoted as “healthy.”

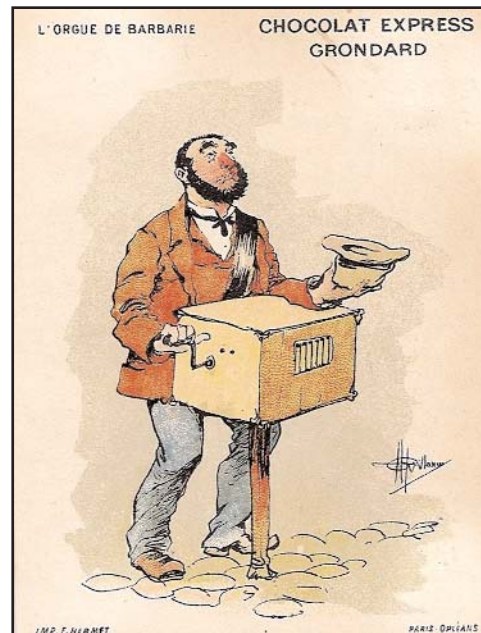


Figure 6. The L'Orgue de Barbarie on the front of this card used by Chocolat Express.

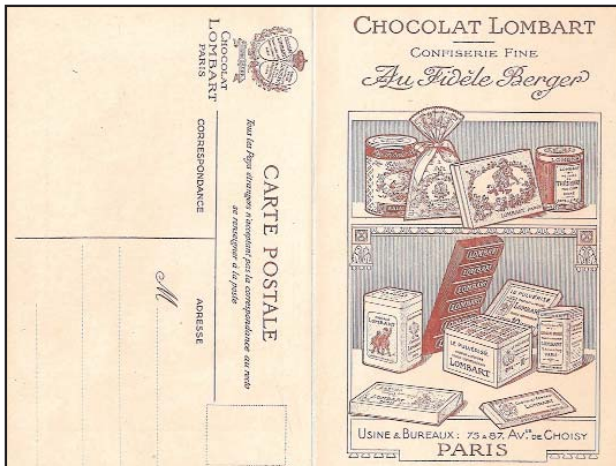
Figures 6 to 8 depict the French advertising of chocolate. Figure 6 illustrates the “L'Orgue de Barbarie” (French: organ grinder) with his crank organ on a stick. The firm using the postcard was Chocolat Express.



Figure 7 shows a blind organ grinder asking for money. This was a card from the Gronard firm of Paris which advertised Cacao that could be made in two minutes.

Figure 7. A blind grinder advertising cacao.

Figures 8a & 8b features the organ grinder playing for a group of women. The reverse side is quite vivid with the types of chocolate offered by the Lombard firm of Paris.



Figures 8a & 8b. The Lombard firm (Paris) used this colorful postcard with detailed advertising on the reverse side.

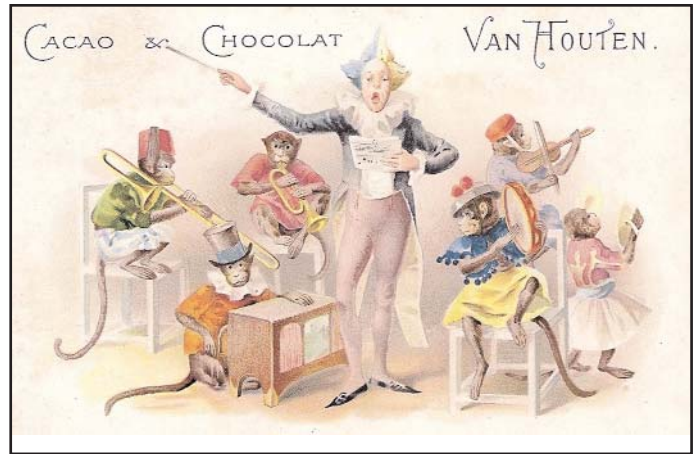


Figure 9. Van Houten's chocolate advertising (French).

Figure 10. The Dutch version of the same card.

Figure 11. The German version.

Last in the lineup of postcards advertising candy were three variations of the same card featuring the use of chocolate (**Figures 9-11**). All were different country versions of the Van Houten's Chocolate firm (Dutch). All three show an orchestra of monkeys with the monkey-grinder at the feet of the conductor. The French version (Figure 9) has no message on the front of the postcard; the Dutch card (Figure 10) says "The most tasty and cheapest one" while The German version (Figure 11) notes "Very tasty, easily digestible." All three discuss the virtues of

the chocolate on the back of their respective card but the Dutch version goes on to include uses for trips, and cyclists.

Coffee and Tea

Several postcards were used in the advertising of coffee and tea, most of them from either America or England. The first to be discussed, however, is from the firm of Duroyon & Ramette, Cambrai, France (Figure 12). The postcard is a four-panel cartoon drawing depicting a street musician playing a clarinet and an organ grinder with stick—the two eventually get into a fight over a tossed



Figure 12. Two street musicians fighting over a coin on the front of a postcard produced by Duroyon & Ramette (France).

coin—the notation at the bottom of the card describing the event: “A story without words: competition.” The item advertised was somewhat unusual, a coffee bean paper (prepackaged coffee in a filter—something Folgers markets to consumers today).



The Union Tea Company (Figure 13) of Willimantic, Connecticut had a roving coffee mill grinder, in scripted on top of the post card “After the fair . . . imitating the Organ-grinder.”

Figure 13. The Union Tea Company used a roving coffee mill grinder instead of an organ grinder.

Another American card was the one by The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (Figure 14) which featured a grinder with a small organ and the ever-present monkey and his cup.



Figure 14. An 18th century organ grinder with his monkey, advertising the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company.

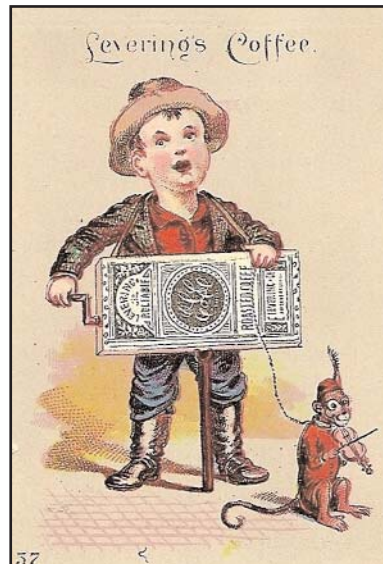


Figure 15. The Levering's Coffee firm used this grinder to illustrate their product on the front of the organ.

Figure 15 is that of the Levering's Coffee, an American firm (established 1842 and continuing into the early 1900s). The image is that of a grinder cranking away on an organ with coffee advertising on the front. The monkey is present again, this time playing a violin. The back of the card noted that the card was one of “Lithographic Designs, engraved specially for us at heavy expense.” The cards were available

with each purchase of coffee and they also noted “Use our Coffee regularly and you will soon secure the entire Set (60 Designs) for your Scrap Book . . . If one were to order 200 pounds of coffee, they would receive the full set free.”

Wines & Beer

I found two interesting postcards advertising spirits. The first, Figure 16, is that from Corbett & Roche (an English firm), purveyors of fine wines, liquors and cigars. Copyrighted in 1882 this 118 year old card details the use of an organ grinder in conjunction with a small ensemble featuring six other instruments (this will be the subject of a future article detailing the use of hand organs with other instruments).



Figure 16. A 118 year-old postcard advertising wines and liquors for the Corbett & Roche dealer.

Figure 17 is a postcard from the Doffin firm of Notre Dame, France promoting red and white wines. While the front of the card has little to do with the product it again (similar to that seen in Figure 12) shows two street musicians, a grinder and a violinist, fighting for the dropped money. At the bottom of the card it notes “La musique adoucit les moeurs” (roughly translated as “music soothes the soul”). The reverse side notes prices for both red and white wines. They apparently sold chocolate as well as “Chocolat-Louit” was printed on both the front and back.

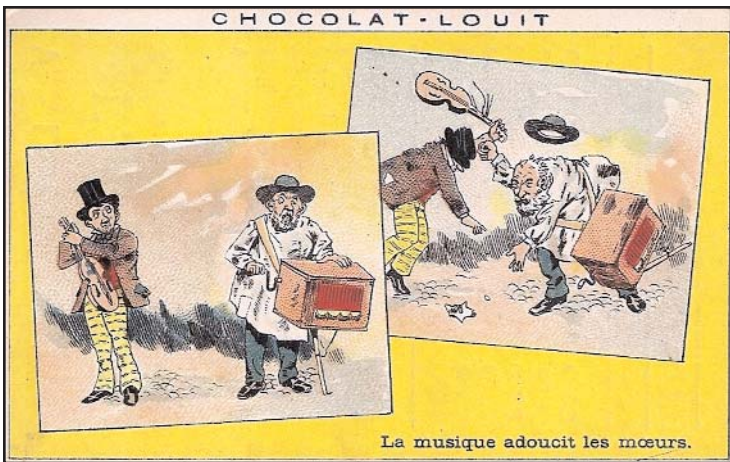


Figure 17. The Duffin firm of France used two fighting street musicians to illustrate the front of thier advertising postcard.



Figure 18. An organ grinder (and family) outside the Au Printemps Department store in Paris.

Clothing

Several of the postcards I have reviewed advertise clothing firms. Figure 18 illustrates a postcard from the Au Printemps department store in Paris. This caricature shows figures with enlarged heads, the center playing a hand organ outside the Au Printemps store. The reverse advertises the sale of silks, lingerie, and other women’s and infant’s clothing. The store exists in Paris.

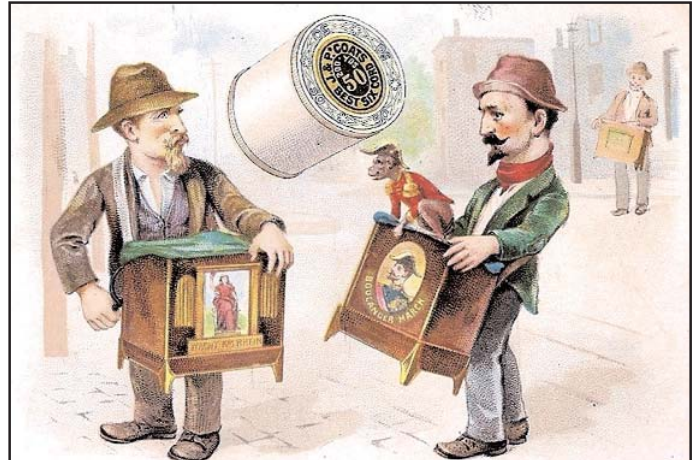


Figure 19. A gathering of three grinders advertised the J&P Coats thread company.

A most interesting postcard is that used by the J & P Coats thread company (Figure 19). Three grinders are illustrated, the center figure having somewhat of an aggressive-looking monkey and an organ that has *Boulangier March* inscribed on the front of the organ. [The *Boulangier March* was composed by Henry Duprato in 1887.] The reverse of this card was simply an 1890 calendar. The same postcard was used by the Square Dealing Clothing House (Dayton, Ohio) but without the drawing of the Coats spool of thread. The reverse of their card was advertising men’s and boy’s clothing.



Figure 20a & 20b. Advertising the firm of Ronnet Lebailly, the organ grinder’s monkey removes a hat from a passerby. To the right is the reverse side.

A clever French card is one produced by Roinet Lebailly (**Figures 20a & 20b**), manufactures of hats and caps. The card is interesting in that the grinder's monkey is lifting the hat of a passerby. The signage at the bottom states "organ player."

Figure 21 is of a particularly interesting postcard by an another French department store (La Samaritaine of Paris), this one selling clothing and shoes for cyclists. Research on the Internet found that the store (founded in 1869) grew to immense proportions and is now considered a historical monument. Translation of the front of the card notes: "A musician, whose talent can be heard in the streets, would like to perform his repertoire for those wanting to experience musical pleasures."



Figure 21. An organ grinder advertising the French department store, La Samaritaine.

Tobacco

The J. Wix and Sons firm of London, England promoted their tobacco by using the cartoon character, Henry (**Figures 22a & 22b**). This colorful card shows Henry carefully passing a lit cigarette to the grinder's monkey (holding tongs, no less) while the grinder was cranking away. The reverse of the card is interesting as well as the company wants to impress the customer that their prod-

uct, the Kensitas ("... a Plain-Tip cigarette that will not affect, irritate or hurt your throat"), will give throat protection against irritation and cough. Also of note is the smaller print at the top and bottom indicating this postcard is one of the 2nd series of 50 such cards.

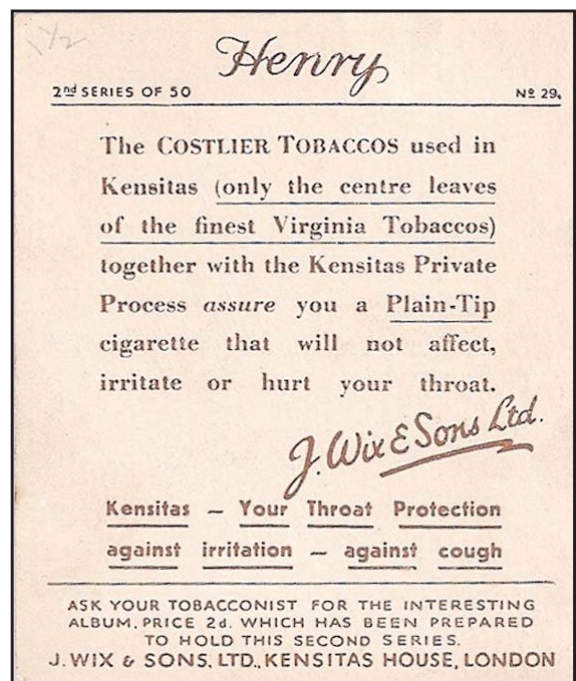
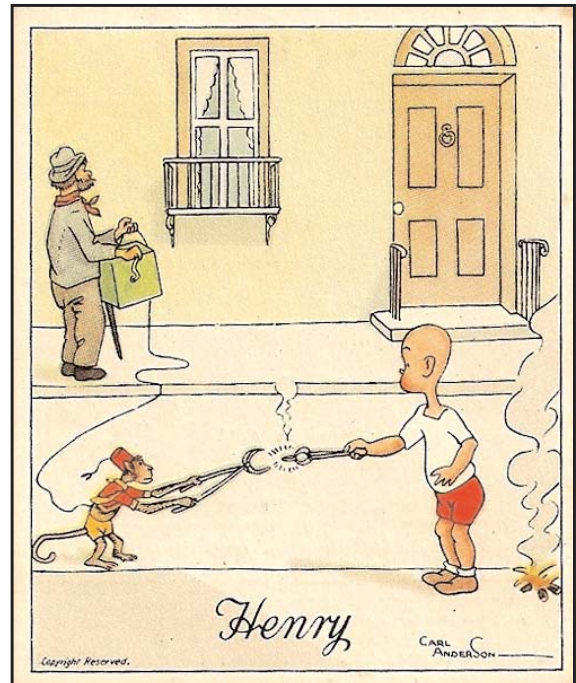
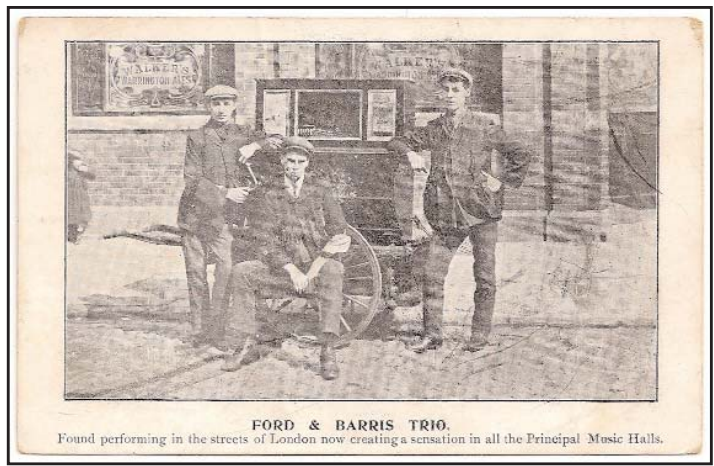


Figure 22a & 22b. Henry was used to advertise cigarettes by the J. Wix & Sons of London.



Figures 23 - 25. The Ford and Barris act of London with their street piano. Note the postcard on the right which features a third member of the act.

Theater, Shows & Acts

The Fort and Barris act of London (circa 1929) produced three postcards (Figures 23-25). Incorporated into the act was a barrel piano, appearing to be the same in all three photos. Each card was imprinted with the same comment: “Found performing in the streets of London now creating a sensation in all of the Principal Music Halls.” Apparently Ford and Barras added a third partner as the last card was advertised as the Ford & Barris Trio.

Figure 26a & 26b are postcards advertising the Jules Murry’s Own Company in the production of the 1901

four-act stage play, “The Mummy and the Humming Bird.” Written by Isaac Henderson this play is about “The Mummy,” a self-adsorbed scientist, and “The Humming Bird,” his neglected wife. Their relationship

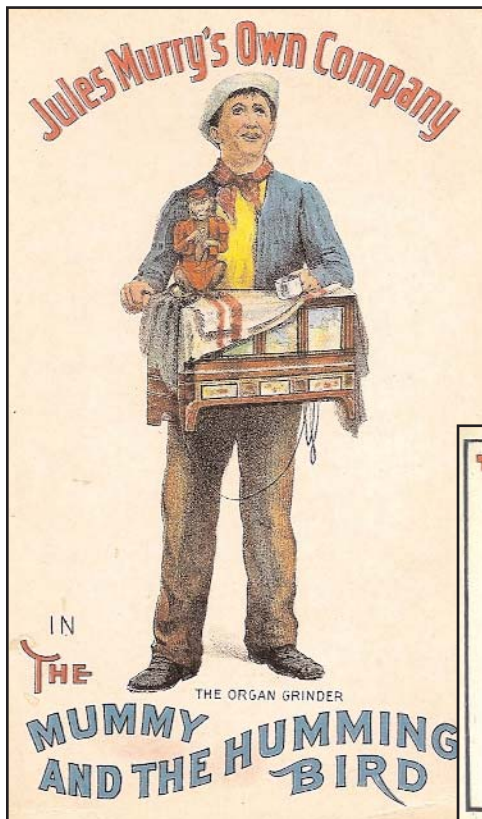


Figure 26a & 26b. Illustrated here are two different grinders and organs advertising the play, “The Mummy and the Humming Bird.”



is strained when she begins keeping company with a mysterious Italian (the organ grinder). Needless to say, the postcard in Figure 26a is quite vivid, detailing the grinder, organ, and of course, the monkey. A second card (Figure 26b) is less striking and seems to depict a different organ.

In a sepia-toned postcard (Figure 27) the “Men’s Club” Supper Second Congregational Church (November 18, 1908) advertised their event with a photo of what was apparently their act including an actor dressed as a bear, a hand-covering-mouth lady with a tambourine and a grinder with a hand-cranked organ (what appears to pos-



sibly be a 18-key Hicks organ). Interestingly the advertisement noted:

“Our \$10000.00 Organ.”

Perhaps this was the name of the play?

Figure 27. A “\$10000” organ advertised in a play by the Second Congregational Church.

Another sepia-tone postcard advertised a play “The Blue Bird” at Jushny’s Russian Theater (Figure 28). The organ is questionably authentic and is joined by a beggar and a less-than-enthusiastic actor outfitted with a drum and triangle. “Barrel-Organ” is also noted at the bottom of the card.

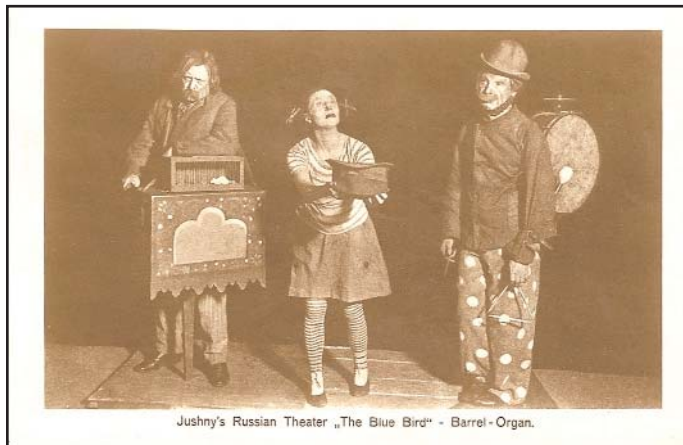


Figure 28. What is described as a “Barrel Organ” was used in the play, “The Blue Bird” at Jushny’s Russian Theater.

“The Red Mill” was a 1906 musical comedy by Henry Blossom and Victor Herbert (Figure 29). Playing tambourine and hand organ, David Montgomery and Fred Stone starred in this play. This postcard was an advertising piece promoting the play. It was later made into a 1927 movie, directed by Fatty Arbuckle. The organ used was a 23-key Molinari, a very popular organ at the time.



Figure 29. A 23-key Molinari was used in the production of “The Red Mill,” a musical comedy.



Figure 30 (above) and 31 (below). Both postcards exhibit humorous tones. The top is a German act, “Pat & Patachon.” The bottom was an acting group, “Truppe Wolsky.” The bottom organ is fake.

Two postcards (**Figure 30 & Figure 31**) are included in this discussion because of their humorous presentation. Figure 30 is apparently a German act, “Pat & Patachon.” The hand organ looks well used. No other information available for this card. Figure 31 is of a sepia-colored card that is an acting group named “Truppe Wolsky.” In this case, the hand organ is obviously fake.

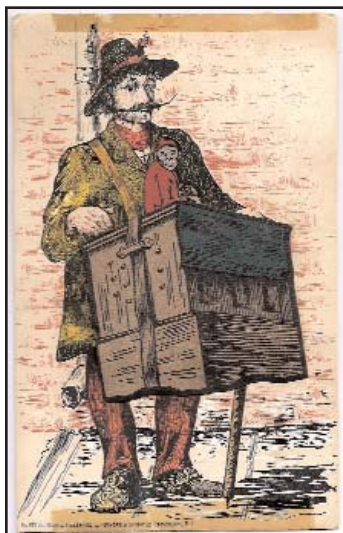


Figure 32. An illustration of a organ grinder used to advertise paints from the Eagle Paint Works.

Miscellaneous

The Eagle Paint Works of Cincinnati, Ohio produced an interesting postcard (**Figure 32**) to advertise their product. The reverse side of the card noted:

The Organ Grinder reminds us that summer is at hand, and also of a number of little changes we desire to make in and about our homes. Why not buy the best: Screen Paints, Floor Paints, Varnishes and Stains.

A unique German postcard (**Figure 33**) is one produced by Julius Dorst of the Dorst firm in Leipzig. Showing a photo of several cutouts, including an organ grinder, this card reminds the recipient that the firm manufactures wooden toys.



Figure 34. This grinder and his monkey sing a song of profits for the Conco Corporation of Illinois.

The Conco Corporation produced this colorful postcard in the 1950s (**Figure 34**). “Sing a Song of Profits” was proclaimed by the grinder and his monkey. The Conco Corporation is still in business today manufacturing heat exchanger components.

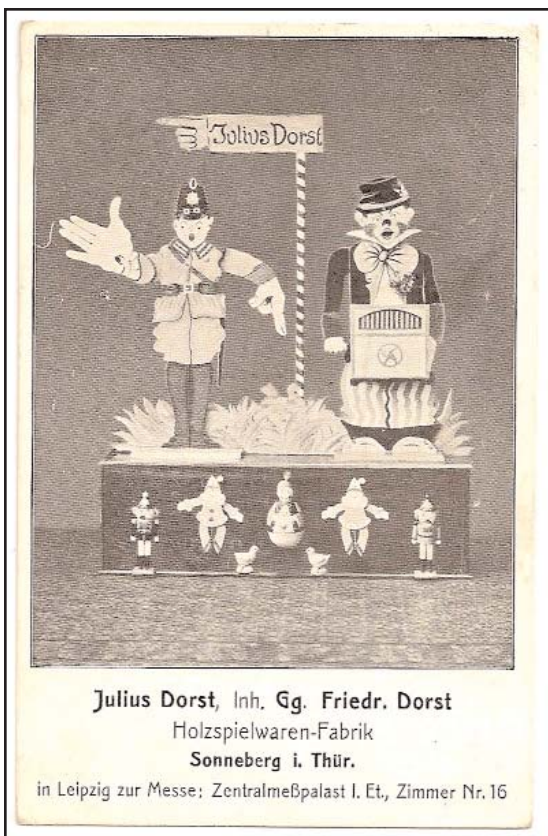


Figure 33. A wooden organ grinder is one of many produced by the Julius Dorst firm of Germany.

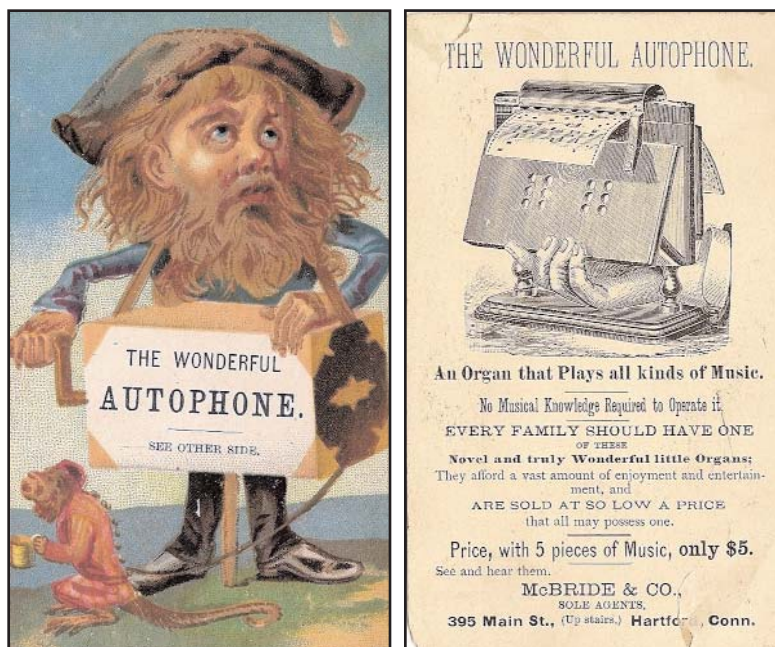


Figure 35a & 35b. The hairy-faced grinder woefully advertises “The Wonderful Autophone” while the reverse side of the postcard contains very interesting copy of this collectable device.

Several firms utilized stock postcards that allowed insertion of the company's name into a blank space. This resulted in the discovery of many postcards that were the same except for the insertion. One such card is seen in **Figure 35a & 35b**. Advertising the product of the

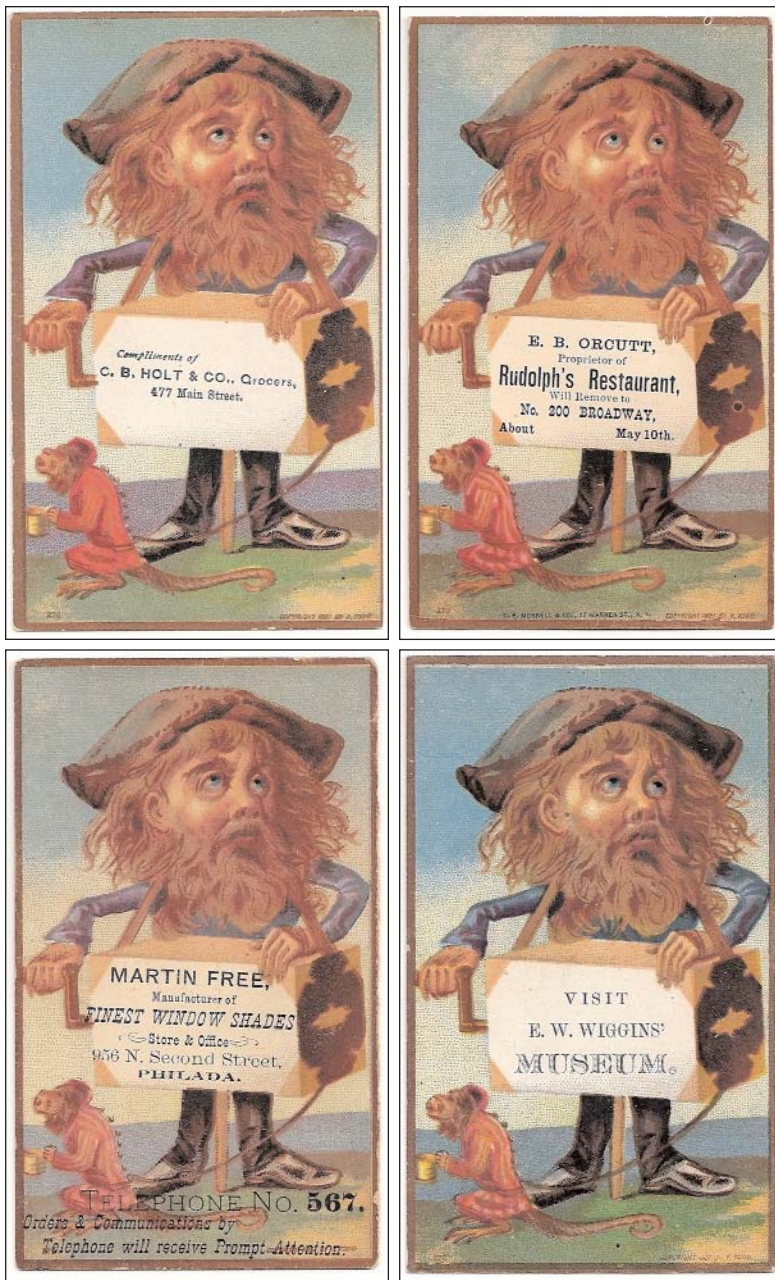


Figure 36 show illustrates four different advertisements using the same hairy-faced grinder as seen in Figure 35. They represent (clockwise from top left) Holt Grocers, Rudolph's Resturant, the E. W. Wiggin's Museum and Martin Free's window shades.

Back cover photo captions (left to right):

1st row: The Hamlet firm of New York used a mouse (? rat) grinder to advertise their coffee.

A card with a street scene of a cart mounted organ "La Joueuse d'Orgue" translates to "The woman organ player."

2nd row: "Au Roule" or "To Roll" is the title of this card which has a three-month calender on the reverse.

"A La Benne Pinte" is a card with an organ grinder and monkey on a stand. The reverse advertises French beer.

The top card is Adam Forepaugh's "Musical Band of Elephants." The grinding elephant is on the left.

Below is a French postcard which on the reverse is advertisng white goods, shirts and linens.

3rd row: This card depicts a girl dancing with a doll while her friend cranks a small organ. The reverse advertises cut meat.

The L. Clavel firm used a stock card where they could stamp their name. It was a stationery and book store.

Another stock card used by the Thompson Plow Company had a clever jingle printed on the organ front:

*Columbia the gem of the ocean, The home of the brave and the free;
The place of the Diamond Plow's Invention; A world offers homage to thee.
May the country united not sever, But unto its colors prove true.
The Gorham Cultivator forever; Three cheers for the red, white and blue.*

Autophone (another mechanical musical instrument present in members' collections) was this bearded grinder cranking away while looking into space. The reverse of this card is of immense interest to the current reader as it details specific advertising for this hand-powered organ. **Figure 36** show four other firms using the same card for their use.

Conclusion

The above is a review of some of the more interesting organ grinder advertising postcards that I have reviewed. Many more are seen in the **Back Cover** (captions below). Using the organ grinder was an attempt to attract the attention of the buying public as, at that time, the grinder was a popular figure. His (her) use today for advertising purposes would be of little advantage as most of the buying public is unaware of the importance of street music.

I wish to thank Gina Rulli, Philippe Rouille and especially Björn Isebaert for help in translation of the various foreign written postcards. Help with identification of actual organs came from Craig Smith and Fred Dahlinger. I also wish to thank James Huffer for sharing the images used for most of what is illustrated in this article.

Ron Bopp is interested in all types of outdoor mechanical musical instruments. He is currently Editor/Publisher of the *Carousel Organ* and lives with his wife, Mary Jo, in coastal, central Florida.

