

THE AMICA



AUTOMATIC MUSICAL INSTRUMENT COLLECTORS' ASSOCIATION

BULLETIN



Founding Chapter

Report by Russell Kriegel and Photos by Rob Thomas

Our Autumn meeting of the Founding Chapter, combined with the Golden Gate chapter of MBSI took place at the El Sobrante home of John Ulrich and Blanche Korfmacher on the afternoon of September 14th. A decent-sized turnout of about 20 members arrived with contributions of appetizers, sweets and libations to compliment the sandwiches and other treats provided by our gracious hosts. Music was provided by John's Violano Virtuoso, which has been outfitted with a digital midi system that allows it access to a vast library of melodies from the teens through near present-day. We also enjoyed a few choice piano rolls played on their 1923 Knabe Ampico-A Grand piano as well as their Haines Bros. Ampico-A upright piano. And of course some wonderful live entertainment was supplied by the talented fingers of pianist Jared DiBartomoleo at the Knabe grand.

Our business meeting focused largely on members sharing their experiences at the recent Chicago AMICA convention, along with a digital slide show of some of the high points, supplied by Rob Thomas. Plans were made for our annual Holiday party and meeting, to be held in conjunction with our sister MBSI chapter.



Some of the usual suspects enjoying the moment



Jared DiBartomoleo inspects the finer details of the Haines Bros. Ampico



Interior of John's Violano Virtuoso with midi interface at lower right

After several years at other locations, the Founding Chapter's annual Christmas party/December meeting was again held at San Jose's Orchestria Palm Court restaurant, this year, in conjunction with the Golden Gate chapter of MBSI. Located in the center of the downtown theater district, Orchestria, owned by Mark Williams and Russ Kriegel, is home to a sizeable collection of orchestrions, coin pianos, reproducing grands, music boxes, juke boxes, and phonographs, along with mechanical and novelty ephemera from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Other features include a reproduction '20s-style soda fountain, which provides a selection of vintage phosphate drinks, and a historic back bar rescued from a turn-of-the-century San Francisco tavern.

Our event took place on the afternoon of Sunday, December 14th. The restaurant provided a buffet offering house-made lasagna and coq au vin, as well as fresh-baked apple strudel, while guests provided an abundance of salads, side dishes and desserts. Throughout the afternoon, we heard a variety of holiday tunes played on some of the coin-op instruments, such as a Coinola X, Seeburg KT and Western Electric Mascot (with xylophone). The restaurant now houses grand pianos representing the 4 major reproducing formats: Welte, Duo-Art, and Ampico A and B, and music was performed on these instruments as well.

A brief meeting was conducted by chapter president John Ulrich. Topics included scheduling meetings for the upcoming new year, and the donation of chapter funds towards the restoration of instruments at the Nevada City Museum & Music Hall. Afterwards, guests lingered well into the afternoon, enjoying music, conversation and the Holiday spirit.



Attendees enjoying lunch alongside a wall of mechanical instruments



Blanche Korfmacher makes a selection at the dessert table



A festive group with the Imhof & Mukle Commandant orchestrion and bar in the background



The usual gang enjoying the afternoon



One of many holiday vignettes decorating the tops of the instruments



Great view of the restaurant

Kansas City Heart of America

Reporter: Dan Davis

On December 13th fourteen members attended the Kansas City Heart of America Christmas party. It was held at the home of Mike and Sandy Schoeppner in Wichita, Kansas. Mike demonstrated many of the instruments in his large collection. We all ate at a local BBQ restaurant Saturday evening followed by a selection of desserts served by Sandy. Later we held the annual gift exchange. Sunday morning Sandy again served a delicious breakfast. We all enjoyed visiting and catching up on everyone's activities. Our next meeting will be at the Mountain View, Arkansas Iris Festival in May of 2026.

Please enjoy the instrument photos and descriptions provided by Mike Schoeppner.



1917 Aeolian DUO-ART reproducing piano



Ken Filardo, Greg Moffitt and Adam Tubbs relaxing



AMICA Christmas Party Attendees



Sandy Schoepner Offers Desserts



Tom McAuley with His Christmas Drawing Prize



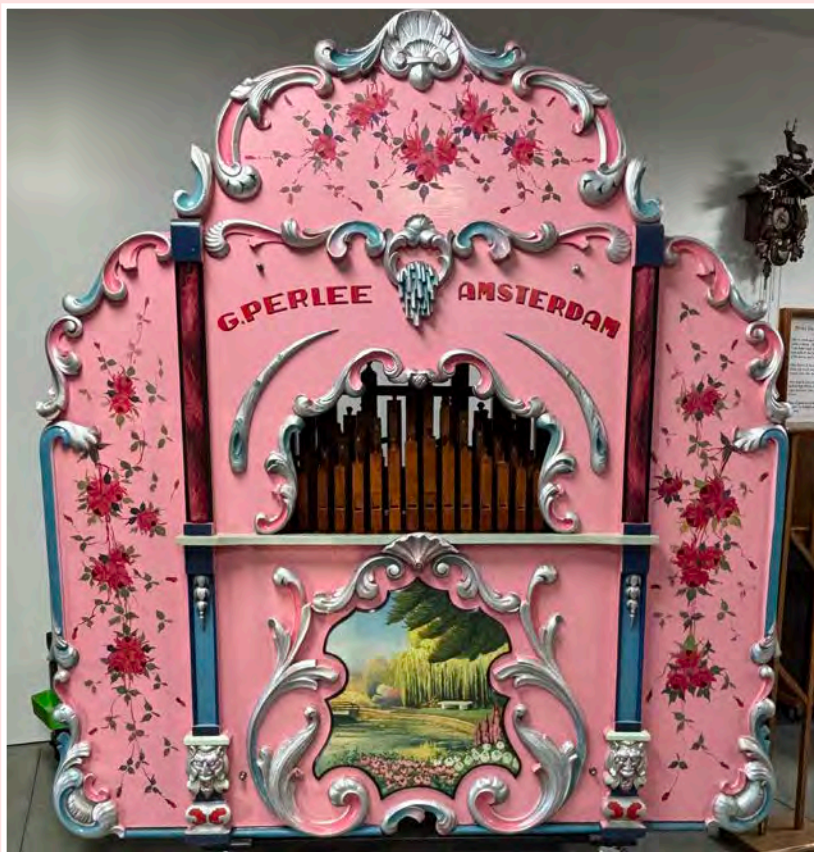
Sandy Schoepner Offers Desserts in Her Workshop



STEENPUT DUTCH STREET ORGAN

This organ was originally built as a concert organ by Alphonse van Steenput in Willebroeck Belgium. The date is estimated to be before 1910, as Steenput moved his factory to Puurs after 1910. Only four Steenput organs are known to exist today. After World War I the organ was converted for street use in the Netherlands by The Stelleman Brothers of Eindhoven. Being somewhat larger than other street organs of the day, it has 58 keys so that the bourdon flutes and melody violins were on separate keys. There are 133 pipes arranged in 10 ranks. Tom Meier of the Het Pierement Journal has uncovered a photo of the organ on the streets of Rotterdam in 1932. About 1940 when street music was banned in Holland, the organ joined a carnival owned by the Dalstra Brothers and toured the country accompanying their carousel. In the early 1960's it fell into disrepair and was exported to the United States with the carousel.

Through a tip from a fellow collector, Mike and Sandy found the organ in a warehouse south of Atlanta, where it had been stored for almost 50 years. They brought it home to Kansas City and began a 4-year restoration. It was in such bad condition that every piece of wood and every screw was repaired. Since 2015 it has been trailered to rallies and has played in Lake Winnepesaukah GA, Rapid City SD, Dayton OH, Milwaukee WI, Boonville MO, Weston MO, LeSeuer MN, Eudora KS and Mountain View AR.



PERLEE DUTCH STREET ORGAN

This organ is very typical of the street organs owned by Gijs Perlee and rented to organ grinders in Amsterdam in the period between World Wars. Like many other European instruments, it was imported into the United States in the early 1960's. After it passed between 3 collectors, Mike and Sandy bought it at auction. They had been watching this organ for many years and were very happy to acquire it in 2022. Over the years it had deteriorated, and suffered shipping damage at the auction. They repaired the damage, fixed the pneumatic parts, and restored the original finish on the façade.

The organ plays 124 pipes in the typical Dutch organ style (alternating between violins and bourdon celeste flutes) with 40 keys.



WURLITZER "KIDDIE ORGAN" REPLICA

Between 1931 and 1936 Wurlitzer built 12 of these very small organs designed for use on small kiddie rides. There were so few built they never appeared in a Wurlitzer catalog, being sold only by salesmen. They are so rare that virtually none are ever for sale, and Mike and Sandy have worked with Dana Johnson and Fred Dahlinger to identify the recent location of every one. Several years ago Mike set out to build an accurate replica of an original organ. With extensive help from Galen Bird, Dana Johnson and Bob Humes, construction has been ongoing for several years. Resin castings were made of original façade carvings, copies of original Wurlitzer pipes were made, a case was constructed to the original configuration, and an original Wurlitzer keyframe from a salvaged nickelodeon has been modified to use style 125 rolls. Early originals played Piano rolls, while later originals played 125 rolls. Mike reports that the chest and valve design are very critical and he would build it differently if not for trying for complete originality. The estimated completion date has been pushed back several times.





LIMONAIRE FAIRGROUND ORGAN

This 49-key Limonaire Fairground Organ was purchased from a local collector who had restored it as close to original as possible. In addition he built the 4-wheel wagon so that it could be pulled in parades. In the 1990's, it appeared frequently in Wichita and Topeka KS. Since buying it in 2014, Sandy and Mike have trailed it to rallies in several locations including the Illinois Railroad Museum in Union, Como Park in St Paul MN. The Children's Farmstead in Overland Park KS, and even some church picnics.



EDISON CYLINDER PHONOGRAPH

Thomas Edison introduced his first commercially successful cylinder phonograph, the Edison "Standard" in 1898. It sold for \$20. The first version played 2-minute cylinders made of hard wax. Mike and Sandy paid too much for this one at a farm auction in 1991--\$161. It had been stored in a barn for many years, and so needed a lot of work. The restoration included refinishing the cabinet, cleaning the mechanism, refinishing many metal parts, applying all new decals. The reproducer was in surprisingly good condition. A reproduction horn was added. As with most of the instruments they restore, they try for a look that is "100 years old but well cared-for."



STELLA DISK MUSIC BOX

This is Mike & Sandy's first instrument, purchased from an elderly couple, in 1970. It is what started them on their journey as mechanical music enthusiasts. It was manufactured between 1897 and 1906 by the firm Mermod Freres of St. Croix Switzerland. Most Mermod machines were shipped to the United States without cases, and the mahogany case was added by Jacot & Son, importers in New York. Unlike most disk music boxes, the Stella has disks with rectangular holes instead of projections. The mechanism on this one was restored in 1980, and the case is original.



MERMOD CYLINDER MUSIC BOX

This is one of those instruments you find when you aren't particularly looking. When attending an auction in a small Ozarks town, this 8-aire box with an 11-inch cylinder was offered. There was not much interest, and it was purchased for a very reasonable price. It plays well and the case is completely original as shown in the photo. The estimated age is 125 years.



WURLITZER PIANINO

Wurlitzer built Pianinos in their Cincinnati factory from 1908 to 1928, as a 44-note coin-operated piano, a forerunner of the electric jukebox.

The most advanced models were built during 1927 and 1928, which incorporated piano, mandolin rail, xylophone, two ranks of organ pipes and drum. Five of this model were built, and all survive today.

This is serial number 106117, the last of this model to leave the Wurlitzer factory in 1928, and was shipped to an unnamed buyer in Alabama. From there it made its way to Atoka, Oklahoma, where it performed for many years in the Chuck Wagon Café. Next it was moved to Al Svoboda's Nickelodeon Tavern in South Chicago. Svoboda's was known worldwide for its extensive collection of mechanical music machines. Upon the closing of Svoboda's, it was fully restored by Dave Ramey Sr. and Bill Kavouris and moved to a collection in Florida. After searching for an available Pianino for over ten years, Mike and Sandy were able to add it to their collection.



POLYPHON UPRIGHT DISK MUSIC BOX

This music box was made between 1870 and 1913 by Polyphon Musikwerke in Leipzig, Germany. Polyphons were shipped all over the world, with music supplied in English, French and German. Almost all instruments shipped to the U.S. had the nameplate "Polyphon," though this one was originally for France with a nameplate that translates to "Music Automaton."

It plays a changeable 15½ inch perforated disk on 78 tuned metal teeth. It was designed to operate with large copper cents, pfennigs or centimes. With a small adjustment, 5¢ coins work well. The mechanism was rebuilt and restored in 2016, and the cabinet is in nearly original condition.



PIPE BUILDING

One of Mike's current projects is building several ranks of pipes for an entirely new organ. Shown here are five partially complete bass bourdons. He says he has been slowly improving his pipe making skills, and says the most stressful step is forming the upper lip and windway.

Also shown are the cut pieces for a rank of stopped accompaniment flutes and a rank of accompaniment cellos. All of the wood is 128 years old and came from pipes in a Möller church organ that were left over when the old organ was rebuilt by someone else. In the center are two completed violin pipes that were made as replacements for the Perlee Dutch Organ.

