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AMICA Bulletin

Display and Classified Ads
Articles for Publication
Letters to the Publisher
Chapter News

UPCOMING PUBLICATION DEADLINES
The ads and articles must be received by the Publisher on the 1st of the odd number months:

January July
March September
May November

Bulletins will be mailed on the 1st week of the even months.

Robin Pratt, Publisher
630 East Monroe Street
Sandusky, Ohio 44870-3708
Phone: 419-626-1903
e-mail: pianola@cros.net

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To ensure timely delivery of your BULLETIN, please allow 6-weeks advance notice of address changes.

AMICA Publications reserves the right to accept, reject, or edit any and all submitted articles and advertising.
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President’s Message

Holiday Greetings to everyone. It’s a great time of year to really value our automatic musical instruments and appreciate the role they play in our lives. Thanks to everyone who makes the effort to share our interests and instruments with others so that they can build some automatic music memories and keep our organization vital and ongoing. We’ve had a busy year, with a convention in Australia, a new Treasurer, a new Webmaster, and, I’m happy to announce, a new Secretary. Christie Counterman has agreed to assume the duties and has been approved by the Board. I’m confident that she’ll do a great job and that 2002 will offer many exciting activities for AMICA.

A dues increase this year was approved after considerable discussion. It will allow us to maintain the publications and activities which are vital. When you’re writing your renewal check, consider rounding the $42 to $45 and designate the extra $3 to the Memorial Fund. Membership brochures have been financed by this fund and it’s a great way to honor our former members or others who have been significant to AMICA and its members.

It’s time to start planning for the convention in Springdale, Arkansas this summer. Details will be coming your way and indications suggest it will have many unique attractions. Some years ago, member Richard Howe took on the project of compiling articles from AMICA Bulletins to be republished as a four-volume project: Ampico, Duo-Art, Welte-Mignon, and other player systems including 88 note. Due to other commitments, he won’t be able to continue with the project. We need to find someone to take over the collection of all AMICA Bulletins ever published (two copies of each, actually) and to work on compiling articles into a form to be republished. Terry Smythe has asked for relief of his duty of compiling technical articles. Maybe the two projects could be combined. Contact me or any other AMICA officer if you’d like more information or are interested in the project(s).

As you can see in the photo, MBSI President Myra Karp and I have a great time together and share many collecting interests and senses of humor, much as AMICA and MBSI share a great deal. We also have unique interests and activities like the two organizations, appreciate what we have in common and value the diversity of our individual interests. Many AMICAns are also MBSI members and I encourage those unfamiliar with MBSI to check out their website at MBSI.org, their great publications, and their meetings. Between the two organizations, the entire range of automatic musical instruments is covered.

I hope to see you all in Arkansas in 2002.

Dan Brown

Note from Myra Karp, President M.B.S.I.

Dear AMICA Members,

Thanks, Dan, for giving me this chance to wish all AMICA members a happy, healthy holiday season and a wonderful 2002. I’ve been an AMICA member about as long as I’ve been an MBSI member. Both groups have been important in my life. I’ve made good friends around the world in both groups, and hope I can make many more.

All of us are interested in some aspect of automatic music, and isn’t it fortunate that not all of us are interested in exactly the same things? Better to get what I want and appreciate the happiness of others at getting whatever it is that they like, and share information and enjoyment of all of it. May we all follow parallel paths to fun and success for many years to come.

Myra
AMICA Membership Dues:

AMICA Members should send their membership renewal payments to Bill Chapman, payable to AMICA, Int. Bill now lives in the desert in the Palm Springs area at 53685 Avenida Bermudas, La Quinta, CA 92253-3586, USA.

If you have questions regarding your account, contact Bill at (760) 564-2951 or e-mail: shazam@sonic.net

A number of members have paid ahead one year and are credited for 2002.

Thanks to the many members who pay before Feb. 28. The reminder letters sent to faithful but tardy members is an expensive extra that can be avoided!

CALANDER OF EVENTS

CHAPTER MEETINGS

Founding Chapter
Founding Chapter will meet Sunday afternoon, December 16th at the home of Richard Reutlinger for the annual Christmas Party.

Heart of America Chapter
June, 2002
September, 2002 - Billie & Bill Pohl will host a Band Organ Rally in Branson, MO
December, 2002 - Barbara and Doug Cusick will host the Christmas meeting. Leawood, KS.

Sierra Nevada Chapter
Sierra Nevada Chapter will have their Christmas meeting on December 8, 2001. For more information contact John or Nadine MottoRos, 209-267-9252, mottoros@volcano.net

Texas Chapter
Our 8th meeting will be on Saturday December 1st at the home of Dr. William Flynt in nearby Garland, Texas. We would be pleased to welcome anyone who might be in either town on either day. Contact Jerry F. Bacon at 214-328-9369 and my e-mail is artempo42@aol.com.

June 26-30, 2002
AMICA Convention, Springdale, Arkansas

AMICA Memorial Fund Donations

Please think of AMICA as a place to remember your friends and family with a donation to the AMICA Memorial Fund.

Send to:
Judith Chisnell
3945 Mission, Box 145
Rosebush, Michigan 48878-9718
517-433-2992
jargc@juno.com

"What do you know besides Chop-sticks?"
Hello!

My name is Jack Shelley and I am looking for old piano rolls made by my mother in the early 1900s. Her performing name was probably Marge (Margaret) Schlesselmann. She made many rolls with Frank Black, who later became Dr. Frank Black - leader of the NBC radio orchestra. She worked in the Remick song shops in Philadelphia and also performed in the Keith Vaudeville Houses in house bands. She also accompanied Sophie Tucker, from time to time. If you can help, contact me at: jrshelley@worldnet.att.com

Thank you!
Jack Shelley

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**AMICA WebMaster Change**

Our AMICA website is now passing through its first change of WebMaster. The site had its origin many years ago as a page off my personal website, eventually enjoying a domain name of its own, which will now stay with it, no matter where it may be physically housed.

As many of you are aware, after some 20+ years in a variety of active roles within AMICA, and 35+ years in this delightful avocation, time has come for me to slip into full retirement.

Accordingly, our Associate Webmaster, Meta Brown, and I have had a role reversal. She is now WebMaster and I have become Associate WebMaster with full intention to migrate myself into the sunset aboard our little RV and smell the roses. Meta may be reached at: MetaBrown@aol.com or mbrown@spss.com

I encourage all Chapters to send her notices of meetings, perhaps photos of chapter events, future Convention activities and events, and perhaps suggestions on how our website may be improved. It has been great fun, thoroughly enjoyed every minute, and I am particularly grateful for all the help extended by so many for so long.

Sincere personal regards to all,
Terry Smythe

---

**President's Award**

I chose Bob Rosencrans for the President's Award this year because of his long history of contribution to the health and growth of AMICA. He was President at the time I joined the association, having assumed the job shortly after being elected vice-president, on the resignation of the current president. He went out of his way to travel across the country for the board meetings which at that time were separate from conventions, and worked hard to reorganize and repair some misunderstandings, rifts, and disorganization which threatened the organization. He reached out to other collector organizations, was a major strength in the former Philadelphia Chapter, brought many honorary members into active performance and convention attendance, and after leaving office has been a regular at conventions and board meetings. AMICA would not be the organization it is today without his many contributions.

Dan

---

Dear President Dan, Board Members and fellow AMICAns,

This is to acknowledge the AMICA President Award recently bestowed upon me. It is greatly appreciated, and I shall always treasure it. The years with the Club are filled with great memories of many Conventions, and the visits to your homes and cities, as well as the growth in memberships, and new chapters formed. The AMICA years have been very special, and I want to thank you for the opportunity to have served as your president.

Bob Rosencrans


**Accuracy in Your Mason & Hamlin Serial Number**

Dear AMICA,

Recently I was trying to verify the manufacture date of a friend’s Mason and Hamlin Ampico “A” and discovered that the information in the piano atlases for Mason and Hamlin, at least during those years, is wrong. Checking back to Bill Koenigsborg’s article that covers the shipping dates of those pianos, information that came from original factory records, the pianos were actually made two years EARLIER than the piano atlases say they were.

For those who would like to know the correct age of their Mason and Hamlin Model “A” Ampico pianos, they should locate the serial number in the Koenigsborg article in the July-August 1991 Bulletin.

I do not know whether there is a problem with the serial numbers from the Model “B” period.

Concerned in Balboa Terrace,

Ken Snowden

---

**When A Couple of Inches Does Make a Difference!**

Dear AMICA,

I really enjoy reading the AMICA Directory listings of the instruments that AMICA members have. There are such interesting and unusual things to be found there.

Occasionally, though, I have wondered about the sizes listed next to instruments and concluded that some people must get confused and innocently represent, say, a fifty-seven inch long grand piano as a five foot seven grand, or a sixty inch piano as a six footer. Or maybe they just eyeball it from wa-a-ay across the drawing room and think “Uh, looks like a 6’5” to me.” That can lead to some tantalizing but false discoveries among the listings, e.g., “Wow! These folks must have found the fabled nine foot concert grand Thebes Recordo formerly thought lost for decades!”

A good idea is to use that tape measure more carefully. A couple of inches CAN make a big difference. Just ask your editor!

Chronically Helpful in Balboa Terrace,

Ken Snowden

---

**Don’t Forget To Renew Your MEMBERSHIP**
The Baltimore Fire left
THE KNABE PIANO
UNSCATHED.

Wm. KNABE & CO.
New York  Baltimore  Washington
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When writing to advertisers please mention Leslie's Magazine.
Brass horns in the center of a 1906 Military Band Organ take a bit of polish from Linda Bird of Kansas City, Mo. She and her husband, Gaylen, brought the machine to the Heart of America Chapter of the Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors Association show at the Crescent Hotel in Eureka Springs this weekend. Four of the huge instruments were on display at the hotel and several smaller, hand-operated portable organs in Basin Park Saturday afternoon. Marty and Elise Roenigk of Eureka displayed two of their band organs. The international organization has approximately 2,400 members. The organs were originally built in Europe for street entertainment.

Crescent Hotel co-owner, Elise Roenigk sits in front of her Frei Dutch Street organ that was on display in the hotel parking lot. Three other huge organs were part of a show organized by Roenigk and husband Marty. A collection of smaller Monkey Organs could be seen and heard in Basin Park over the weekend.
The Symphony of Christmas

Above all other holidays of the year, Christmas is the holiday (Holy Day) of the home.

The wonderful spirit of the Nativity makes it that.

Even those far from the welcome shadows of their own portals find themselves returning in spirit to join with loved ones still here and with those who are precious memories at this gladsome festival of the home.

Christmas is first of all a feast of love in its highest form. It exerts a mystic force on the hearts of men which draws together from all parts of the universe those who love us in spirit.

The tokens of this spirit of love have the form of presents—the frankincense and myrrh—which we unconsciously place on the altar of Christmas.

The joy of giving to make others happy is one of the fundamental principles of Christianity. He who has not learned this first step in the religion of Christ has not gone very far in the spirit of Him who made the supreme sacrifice for the salvation of man.

Naturally and properly, Christmas has become a carnival of giving; and those who get the most from Christmas give the most in proportion to their means.

The symbolism of the present is a beautiful one, only when it embodies the ideals of real giving. Perhaps we all give too little—far too little to those whose lives contact with ours and make our own happiness possible.

Giving at this season, without Christmas joy, is little better than avarice.

Because Christmas is the festival that brings us all together in harmony, there is very good reason why music has become a part of the feast. Whether it be the glad song of the ruddy cheeked carolers, the happy blare of little trumpets, sleigh-bells jingling over the crunching snow, junior’s irrepressible drum, choral of laughter from tiny tots, the roll of majestic organs, or above all, the chimes—the everlasting chimes—it is the Symphony of Christmas, the day which more than all others is the happiest of the year to those who love the great message of the Little Babe of Bethlehem.

The Etude sends its most sincere and heartfelt Christmas Greetings to its friends in all parts of the world.
Gibson Guitar Corporation to buy Baldwin Piano Company

Nashville, Tenn. (AP) - Gibson, prominent brand in the guitar business, will take over a top keyboard manufacturer.

The Gibson Guitar Corp. announced Thursday that it signed a letter of intent to buy the assets of the Baldwin Piano & Organ Co. It will be purchased from GE Capital, a Stamford, Connecticut-based financial services company that had the right to sell the company under a bankruptcy agreement reached last month.

Terms were not disclosed.

“Our acquisition of Baldwin will represent a new exciting chapter in two century-old musical instrument institutions,” said Henry Juszkiewicz, chairman and chief executive of Gibson.

Baldwin, based in Mason, Ohio, has been in business since 1862, and has factories in Conway and Trumann, Arkansas. Senior executives who took over the company in May said it was burdened with excessive inventory, severance agreements and executive compensation commitments, and had problems with internal controls.

Baldwin owed GE Capital nearly $31 million before filing for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy May 31. That process allows a company to continue operating while it develops a plan to put its finances in order and pay creditors.

Under terms of an agreement approved by the bankruptcy court in August, GE Capital retained the right to demand that Baldwin be sold if it had not repaid cash advances GE has made since Baldwin filed in bankruptcy court. Last month, GE Capital bid $17 million for most of Baldwin’s assets, and agreed to sell them by November 15.

At that time, bids by Gibson and Gordon Brothers of Boston, a leading national liquidator, were deemed unacceptable.

Gibson was founded in 1894. Its guitars have been used by many music stars such as Chet Atkins and B.B. King. The company owns other popular musical brands, such as Epiphone, Kramer, Slingerland Drums, Oberheim Keyboards and Maestro Effects.

On the Net:

Baldwin Piano & Organ Company: http://www.baldwinpiano.com/
Xmas 1923
Make this a Musical Christmas

"At Christmas play and make good cheer
For Christmas comes but once a Year"

Thomas Tusser (c. 1537)
A Charizer at St. Paul’s, London

The nobler love of fellowman which marked the advent of our Master,
Jesus Christ, demands the joy and power of music in its loftiest expression.

Music and Christmas have become inseparable. It is the day for the
most festive, the most joyous anthems and carols of the Christian church.
It is the heralding of a new and glorious era—the greatest epoch in the
history of man.

Wonder it is, that most of the great composers have not devoted their
finest efforts to this festal day. Bach with his Christmas Oratorio and Handel
with the Messiah stand out before all others. Nothing of Beethoven,
Schubert, Haydn, Mozart, Schumann, Brahms, Verdi, Tchaikowsky or
Wagner has equaled these master inspirations for the music of Noel.

Christmas music should be joyous, jubilant, triumphant. It should
ring with the wondrous spirit of brotherly love which heralded the coming
of the master.

"BEHOLD I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT
JOY WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE."

"All people"—not to one or two sects; but to all people. Christmas Cheer
and Christmas Spirit must go out to "all people" or we lose the very heart of
the great festival. Christmas music must be for everybody.

Let us have good cheer and lots and lots of the merriest kind of music.
It won’t happen unless we all arrange for it. Every moment we spend in
preparation for a musical Christmas will bring joy to ourselves and all
people around us.

Let Us Make This a Really
Musical Christmas
After a long gestation, our Tel-Electric book is now done. It is a large book about a very small part of player piano history. For those who have not met a Tel-Electric or its rolls, the Tel-Electric is an all electric 65-note piano player that could be installed in any piano, and its rolls were made of thin sheet brass. The Tel-Electric company also produced an 88-note version called the Telektra. We thought people might be interested in how the book came to be, so here is the story.

Our introduction to Tel-Electric was about 30 years ago when we bought an 88-note Telektra console (roll reader) because it was such an unusual mechanism. There was no stack (note magnet bank), just the console, but it did have some brass rolls. I traced out the circuit and determined that it was a split-stack full reproducing system, with expression capability that was the equal of AMPICO, DuoArt, Welte, etc. But without the stack it wasn’t much use to us, so we eventually sold it. I kept the schematic as one of those oddities we all accumulate from time to time.

Years later we were driving back from the AMICA convention in New Orleans, and decided to go north through New Mexico before turning west for home. Just at the border between New Mexico and Colorado is the little town of Chama, which is the home of a museum for a narrow gauge railroad. The old trains still operate on a short run to Silverton, Colorado. I decided to visit the museum and poke around the trains. Ginny wasn’t interested in trains, so she wandered around town looking for antiques or other interesting stuff.

She of course found the only piano rolls for sale in town, and got the name and address of the person who provided them. He was a bit reserved at first, but he became very friendly after he found out we were the people who had edited the AMICA Bulletin for years. He repaired player pianos, among other things, and had for sale an unusual piano he demonstrated for us. You guessed it – it was a Tel-Electric piano. It was a sad case, once a very nice Knabe, but it had some case damage from a flood. It sparked and smoked and eventually blew a fuse in his shop. It did work however, it was complete, and there was a roll collection that went with it. The price was right, so we bought it, and some months later it showed up at our door.

When I looked it over carefully it became apparent that it was not the same type of mechanism I had traced out years before. It was a 65-note system, not 88, and the expression system was quite primitive. It played, after a fashion, but it clearly needed LOTS of work. So the Knabe Tel-Electric became one of those “someday” projects. Not long after that we heard of a local Tel-Electric piano for sale, so we went to check it out. It was in unrestored operating condition, and it included a modest roll collection. By this time we were getting intrigued with the Tel-Electric system, so we bought the piano.

Now that we had an operating Tel-Electric piano we began to look for rolls for it. We found a few rolls here and there, and occasionally a larger group. The rolls have no label, just a number stamped on the brass leader. The full label information is on the boxes, many of which had deteriorated or were missing, so Ginny started a database on the rolls and began research to fill in the blanks. This led to the next step – generating as complete a catalog as possible of the rolls produced. She contacted everyone who might have any catalogs, bulletins, collections, etc. No-one had much, but even Nethercutt’s museum, but gradually the blanks began to fill. As the project progressed it became apparent that there were two
distinct series of rolls, the 65-note Tel-Electric and the 88-note Telektra. So we began accumulating Telektra rolls as we found them, though we had no idea how we might play them. Eventually we acquired a Telektra console, but not a stack.

As we gathered catalog information, trade magazine articles, bulletins, and so on, we began to form a fuzzy picture of the company. The earliest dates on the rolls were 1907, which put some sort of bounds on the start of roll sales. Then we got a copy of a speech by the founder of the Tel-Electric company, which gave a brief history of electric player development, beginning as early as 1865 in Switzerland. It was clear from this speech that practical development of the electric expression piano was done about the same time that Welte worked on their systems in Germany. The first Tel-Electric system was produced in 1905 from a design patented in the 1890s and first sold around 1900, predating the American expression systems by at least a decade. This really got our interest up, as Tel-Electric seemed to be one of those unsung predecessors of the reproducing piano.

Art Sanders provided us with a lot of information on the company, accumulated when he had a Telektra system in his museum. He even had letters from a son of the company founder, along with patents and newspaper articles. We did not find much more information about the company, outside of its own catalogs and advertisements, and a few trade magazine articles.

On our way back from the 1998 AMICA convention in Niagara, we decided to go through Pittsfield, Massachusetts, which had been the location of the Tel-Electric factories. (On the way, by previous arrangement, we bought another Telektra console, this time including the stack.) To our surprise, we found both the original 1905 factory building and the one the company moved to in 1911. We duly took lots of pictures and felt we had really hit paydirt. Until we walked into their 1911 building and found pictures of the old Tel-Electric factory hanging on the office wall. That we were delighted is an understatement. We met the current owner of the building, who told us he had found a dozen glass plate negatives of the outside of the factory when he bought the building. He had a son print some of them to hang on the wall, and those are the ones we saw. He agreed to have another son scan all the negatives and send the files to us. Those pictures are truly remarkable in their detail and clarity. We thought we’d died and gone to heaven. We also checked the local library and historical society, but with little good results.

After we got back home I got to thinking – maybe there is more information in the woodwork in Pittsfield. So I called the local newspaper and asked for the morgue. They had nothing we hadn’t already found, but suggested I contact the editor, since he was interested in historical things and wrote a weekly column on local history. I emailed him a request for information, which he published almost verbatim in his column. We got several responses to his column, two of which were quite productive. One was from a person who knew a couple who had bought some photos from the estate of a Tel-Electric company employee, the other was from the widow of a grandson of the founder of the company. The photos included pictures of master roll editing machines, a production perforator for 65-note rolls, the machine shop, and various other significant things. The widow had an incredible collection of material her husband and his father (the one who wrote to Art Sanders!) had gathered over the years about the Tel-Electric company, as well as several Tel-Electric and Telektra pianos and a large collection of rolls. It appeared they kept just about everything, including old bank statements and the deed to the original factory building.

It didn’t take us long to decide to go to Pittsfield and visit these sources. Once there we found the people cooperative, though understandably reluctant to let such historic material out of their hands. The couple that had the photos agreed to let us borrow them to scan at high resolution, but the widow would only photocopy material for us, except for some catalogs she let us borrow. Months later the couple found two diaries from the estate of the Tel-Electric employee, which they kindly sent us to copy. These diaries covered in sometimes excruciatingly boring detail the man’s daily activities, occasionally shedding some light on company history.

The pieces slowly fell together to tell the story of the Tel-Electric company and some of the people behind it. From the company’s founding in 1905 until World War 1 it apparently did well. The company converted to war production in 1917 and turned in its brass supplies for the war effort. Scrap drives for both WW1 and WW2 melted down many of the rolls that had been sold, so there aren’t many around today. Around 1916 the company tried a paper roll that ran on a different reader, but that wasn’t very successful. After WW1 the company never got back into the player business, and was liquidated in 1921.

The story of Tel-Electric intrigued us, so we followed all the leads we could find, recording one of the forgotten parts of player piano history. This is how we came to produce Volume 6 of our Rollography, which also contains over 6,000 titles in the catalog section. The catalog is an interesting snapshot of the music enjoyed by the wealthy in the first two decades of the 20th century, and the technical section includes pictures and schematic diagrams of the mechanisms.

We hope our efforts will help identify and preserve Tel-Electric and Telektra systems, much as we did for the Recordo system.
In the July/August issue of the AMICA Bulletin, I said that I expected that the factory used a jig or fixture to adjust the movement of the accordions. For some time I have thought of building such a jig and have now done so. Here are photos of the jig and also the indicator arm and the scale. The arm is drilled for the fulcrum, exactly 2 1/2" from the point that the accordion hook is inserted, and the arm extends out from there 5" exactly to the tip of the pointer. This then gives movement of the tip of the pointer 3 times that of the accordion. This accomplishes two things. First it places the tip of the indicator out where the scale can be easily read, and second, increases the sensitivity of the jig. The scale is made from the reverse side of a business card. The accordion is made to open completely by use of a small spring from the bottom of the arm at the accordion hook down to the bottom board. I drew an arc through which the tip of the indicator travels from wide-open accordion to that of power 8. I marked a zero where the accordions are wide open and then I marked on this arc, the #1, #2, #4, and #8 positions. I used needlepoint adjustable dividers from a mechanical drawing set to mark these points. I used a steel scale to set the divider to exactly 3/16" for #1, 3/8" for #2, 3/4" for #4, and 1 1/2" for #8. I used the dividers to make a pin prick in the card for each position. Then I used a fine point ballpoint pen to mark each pinpoint so the exact point can be easily seen. Different accordions are likely to have a slightly different zero point, so I merely used scotch tape to attach the scale to the supporting board. I set the pointer exactly to the zero point and using a suck tube, read each movement of the 4 accordion sections. I now adjusted the hex screws to adjust the movement of the 4 accordion sections, exactly.

A few years ago I had adjusted the accordions in my piano to make each step exactly 1/2 way between the adjacent steps. I took the accompaniment accordion out of the piano and put it in the jig and was very elated to find that #1, #4, and #8 were exactly correct as indicated by the jig. Only #2 was slightly high. At this time I don’t know why this was so, and I have changed that setting to agree with the jig. With the accordion I was using to test the jig, I had put new felt on the #1 stop blocks. The movement of the #1 section with strong suction moves after the initial position showing that the hex screws are sinking into the unseasoned felt. This shows that the setting will become unsatisfactory with use, and will have to be re-adjusted then. The other stops are original, and well seasoned, and reach a solid stop, which does not change with varying suction. Since the new felt on the stop blocks will with time and use, become indented by the hex head screws, I wonder if the factory used a set-up to operate the accordions for a goodly period of time to season the felts. If not, after a relatively short period of time the accordions travel would have been improper, and the piano then would not play properly. If, after a couple of years of operation, the accordions would have been returned to the factory for re-calibration, then the piano would play properly for a long time. I wonder if this was often done.

Adjusting the accordions using this jig takes only a few minutes, and the results are very accurate. The #1 and #2 steps are very important and very critical in adjustment. Using the adjustment blocks leaves much up to the person doing the adjustments. Therefore, the adjustments are not likely to be accurate.

In rebuilding the accordions, I would not put new felt on the stop blocks, as the original felt is well seasoned, and not so subject to change.
Here is a photo of a most unusual Duo-Art stack that I thought you might find interesting. It is an original stack from a 9’6” Steinway Duo-Art (not the piano that I refitted 12 years ago). As you can see, a type of flange finger is connected to a short lower push rod that connects to each pneumatic, then a shorter upper push rod goes up to the keys. On the far end of the finger is an adjustable stop button that contacts the underside of the keybed. I am speculating that the factory may have used this design for a more positive and stronger stop than the normal arrangement of a leather nut and felt washer contacting the underside of the slotted guide rail. With twin 15” pumps and motors (one motor and pump shutoff during re-roll), the piano should be able to play very loudly perhaps necessitating this unique design. I am reasonably confident that the 9’6” Steinway that I equipped 12 years ago, originally had a stack like this as it had diagonal cutouts adjoining its keybed slots that correspond to the angled metal brackets shown in this photo. Until I saw this stack, I never could figure out what those tapered slots had been for. If you have any thoughts regarding this unique design, I’d like to hear them.

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1896
News
From
The Chapters

FOUNDING CHAPTER
Reporter: Thomas J. McWay III
President: Bing Gibbs (408) 253-1866

September 8, 2001

It was a perfect fall Saturday afternoon in Palo Alto, California for our joint meeting with both the Founding Chapter and the Sierra-Nevada Chapter at Don Ellison’s home. John Motto-Ros has told me that in the future both the Founding Chapter and the Sierra-Nevada Chapter will have joint meetings together for AMICA members. This will give everyone more opportunities to get together. It is on the average about a 3-hour drive by car to go from Sierra-Nevada chapter area to the founding Chapter area in the San Francisco Bay area. This is working out good for most AMICA members.

Members started to arrive at Don’s home at about 2:00 p.m. and stayed until about 8:00 p.m. Don has just restored his patio and big side yard. A perfect place to relax and talk with other AMICA members and friends on a beautiful afternoon. It was such a wonderful day that close to 60 AMICA members showed up here today. This is the most members that I have seen so far this year. An enjoyable time for everyone.

Inside Don’s home he had about four player pianos. Several members spent time listening to each one and a few members played some songs on these pianos.

About 4:00 p.m. dinner was served outside on Don’s new patio. Don Ellison supplied steaks, salad, and drinks. Members came with munchies and desserts. George Cunningham spent all afternoon with the BBQ of the steaks and other foods. For the next two hours everyone enjoyed eating, drinking, and talking to each other. Some members went inside Don’s home to relax and listen to player piano music.

About 5:10 p.m. there was a Happy Birthday singing for George Cunningham who is 71 years young today. Happy Birthday George from all the AMICA members. A big white cake was given to George. A happy ending for a wonderful BBQ dinner today.

After dinner, inside Roger Johnson played some of his favorite Ragtime songs for us on one of Don’s pianos. Around 8:00 p.m. most of the AMICA members started to leave. Again, a great get together and a wonderful time for everyone here today. Let’s do this again next year, Don. Thanks again for everything you did.

Richard Reutlinger has again offered to have our annual Christmas party at his Victorian home in San Francisco, California for all AMICA members. This will be on Sunday, December 16, 2001, from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. Last year’s Christmas Party at Richard’s home was most enjoyable for all. Hope to see everyone there again. This will be our last meeting and get together for this year. Both the founding Chapter and the Sierra-Nevada chapter AMICA members are welcome to attend this Christmas Party.
Founding Chapter and Sierra-Nevada Chapter members talking about more joint activities from now on.

Bing Gibbs talks about future activities.

Earl Scheelar and John Motto-Ros talk about AMICA.

Don Ellison

Members talking.

Don, Richard, and Ed

Members talking.

Bedroom with Player Piano - a great combination.
George Cunningham spent all day preparing BBQ dinner.

Members getting a piece of birthday cake.

George cutting prime tip.

George cutting his birthday cake.

Richard Reutlinger and friend.

Birthday cake for George who is 71 years old today.

George and Sharon Cunningham.

Members listening to player piano.

Roger Johnson at Player Piano. Roger played some Ragtime songs later in the evening for us.
Good food, good music and good times were shared by all at our August Chapter Meeting held at the home of Carol Veome. First, Carol’s home is a treat in itself being the former home of Chicago Cub’s Baseball Hall of Famer, Gabby Hartnett and deemed a Chicago landmark. Carol’s collection is one of the finest in the Chicago area, and includes a Spanish style Steinway Duo-Art, a Seeburg “G” Orchestron, 1940’s Wurlitzer style 1015 juke box, Mills Violano-Virtuoso in a rare circassian walnut case, music boxes, rare and unusual phonographs, and an assortment of highly collectable 1950’s audio equipment.

We all enjoyed socializing and seeing our AMICA friends, in addition to meeting some first-time attendees. Carol provided ham and turkey and everyone brought their favorite side dishes to produce quite a feast. We then gathered for a business meeting and focused our discussion on how to introduce AMICA to the public and build national and local membership. We encourage all current members to get the word out to family and friends on the unique and fun hobby of player pianos.
An AMICAn examines the Circassian walnut Mills violano.

Rob Deland listens to a Polyphon upright disc music box.

Elsa and Joe Pekarek listen to Mel Septon explain about the restoration of Carol’s Seeburg “G”.

Jackie Dupon poses with a heavily carved Stella console music box.

Wayne Wolf, Richard Van Metre and Connie Wolf

Host Carol Veome with her very rare Melba phonograph.

Fred Plank and George Wilder with the Violano

The Spanish style O.R. Steinway Duo-Art.

Curt Clifford and George Wilder listen to the Mills Violano.
Aldo had no shortage of informative and interesting stories to tell.

Aldo’s view of the group as he demonstrates the Wurlitzer “Peacock” juke box.

Secretary Richard Karlsson moves in to get a good look at this rare old phonograph.

The items in the “Caruso Collection” included pictures, newspaper articles, records, letters, cartoon caricatures drawn by Caruso, a bust, a death mask, many personal items, actual costumes he wore. There was a movie theater with a collection of movies and documentaries. I’ve been told the Mancusi’s collection rivals and may even “top” that of the large Caruso Museum in Milan, Italy.

A 120 year old, original Edison light bulb that still works, just one of many on display.

Aldo playing the Tanzbar but he’s “faking it”. What he did not tell us until later, there’s a roll inside.

Opera and Automatic Musical Instruments

I enjoy hearing stories of people like Aldo Mancusi who quit what they feel they “have to do” so they can pursue “that consuming passion” and are successful in the resulting major life change. Aldo sold his interests in a private contracting firm to pursue his love for opera and anything Enrico Caruso. This love, together with the support of Lisa and fellow enthusiasts would eventually become The Enrico Caruso Museum in Brooklyn, New York. Aldo has done outstanding work educating the public with his lectures, exhibits on the subject of Caruso, Italian opera as well as his other work in the Italian community. Aldo’s title is “Cavaliere - Ufficiale” bestowed upon him by the Italian government in recognition of his great efforts. Mayor Rudolf Guiliani gave Aldo a proclamation for arranging a benefit performance by Caruso’s great grandson. Aldo was part of a “Caruso” documentary that appeared on PBS. The Mancusi’s also have a large collection that includes Edison memorabilia, phonographs, music boxes, player pianos, music and other novelties, Roman artifacts and more.

Aldo’s view of the group as he demonstrates the Wurlitzer “Peacock” juke box.

Secretary Richard Karlsson moves in to get a good look at this rare old phonograph.

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We watched a documentary in the Movie Theater. Pictured are Luigi Todesko and friends, who came all the way from Italy. Luigi (on the left) is a tenor who treated us to a great opera performance. Before I toured the Mancusi’s Caruso Museum, I could “take or leave” opera. I left with a respect and admiration I never thought possible.

We at the Lady Liberty Chapter are thankful for the support the rest of the country and so much of the world have shown New York City in the wake of the recent tragedy.

Bloomdale, Ohio, may be a small town in western Ohio, but it houses one of the largest mechanical music restoration shops in the United States, and was the first stop for AMICA’s Midwest chapter Meeting. On Saturday, September 15th we met at the home of Terry and Joan Haughawout, where we learned about the history of the Mills Violano-Virtuoso, and saw many of them demonstrated after being rebuilt by Terry and his co-workers. The first was a single model, serial #4841, one of the last made. Mills started with number 101 in 1906, and made about 5000 of these instruments. The first ones used to stand on cast iron legs and only had the violin inside. At the request of the royal family of England, a piano was added to accompany the violin. There are approximately 1000 left in the world today, including 36 bowfront models. One of these is in their music room.

Terry also demonstrated a 1942 Wurlitzer Victory jukebox, containing a 1936 mechanism. Manufacturers weren’t allowed to use metal during the war so they went across the country, buying up old machines to refurbish into these newer models. This one is all mechanical, and was found in someone’s kitchen being used as a table!

The Link nickelodeon in the living room has the original oak cabinet (see photo). It plays 15 tunes on a roll and was restored using all original parts, including a xylophone in the top.

Their garage is used as the finishing area, where the violins are restored, and there they make all of their own wiring harnesses on a harness machine. Then the new polished metal parts are lacquered to avoid tarnishing. Even more instruments were in the shop, a short drive away. Some machines are already complete - including a symphonion upright music box with saucer bells, shipped from Germany. We were entertained by the Weber orchestra with selections from Terry’s collection of 40 classical rolls. It was interesting to compare the different models of Violanos side by side, each waiting to return to its owner.

After the shop tour, we went to downtown Findlay for dinner at Waldo Pepper’s Restaurant. The Old Peculiar String Band entertained us with old-time music featuring dulcimers, banjos, harmonica, guitar and string bass.

It wasn’t much further down Main Street to the home of Gregg and Karen Cline. They have been working on recreating their authentic Victorian décor for 10 years and their phonograph collection started when Gregg thought it
would be appropriate to have a Victrola in the parlor. The music boxes were right at home in the Victorian atmosphere highlighted by Bradbury and Bradbury hand-silk-screened wallpaper. Plaster mouldings and ceiling details accented the dining room, home to a Reginaphone playing both discs and records. Their wonderful collection includes both cylinder and disc phonographs and several music boxes as well.

The next morning found us back in Findlay at the home of Wes and Sherri Neff. Wes is an excellent craftsman as evidenced by the many pieces of hand-made furniture in the house. Of course that included roll cabinets with leaded glass doors! But the centerpiece of the home was their 1927 Knabe Ampico A 5’4” grand with figured mahogany case, restored in 1999. We took turns playing Ampico rolls with ones on the 1925 Wheelock Upright Duo-Art Pianola, also recently rebuilt. And fans of foot pumping got plenty of chances to try out their 1918 Bond upright player. All of the instruments were beautifully refinished, and we could see Wes’ attention to detail as he showed us the workshop where another piano was in progress.

It was such a beautiful day that Judy Chisnell decided to hold the business meeting outside on the Neff’s patio. With over 60 members and guests in attendance, it was the one place where we could all be together at the same time. Among the usual orders of business, we voted to assist the National First Ladies’ Museum and historic site with their search for a Reproduco to provide music in the museum. Ken Vinen will head the committee to decide what role AMICA should have in procuring and restoring an instrument. We hope the chapter can visit the museum as part of a meeting in 2002. 10,000 visitors from 50 states and other countries around the world have seen the museum so far, and the chapter looks forward to being a part of promoting mechanical music there in the years to come.

Many AMICA members have purchased rolls from The Music Roll Shop’s many auctions over the years. Owner Elizabeth Rettig opened the doors to our chapter so we could take home a few souvenirs of our visit. Framing the shelves of floor-to-ceiling rolls were lots of decorative outdoor flags, a new sideline to the business. The pianos inside the shop were always in use as we tried out the rolls before buying them.

Most of us then went to Jeffrey’s Antique Mall, one of the largest in Ohio. There weren’t many piano rolls there, but many members were leaving with new treasures. Collecting isn’t limited to music memorabilia in our group!

We enjoyed our visit to many new sites in Ohio, and we thank our hosts, the Neff’s, Haughawout’s, Cline’s, and Elizabeth Rettig for their gracious hospitality.
Don Junglas admires the Cline’s elaborate stereoptican - classic Victorian entertainment.

Stuart Grigg admires the Double Violano - newly arrived from the Service City Museum in Australia.

Take your pick of Mills Violanos - including a “Home” model with columns and cabinet doors concealing the mechanism.

DINNER

Dave VanOosten and Ken Vinen buy rolls from Charmaine Haas’ van Ampico sale.

Literal translation? Denny Eiland and Jeff Brabb wonder about our unusual greeting “AMICA ALL CAPS Next Door!” It turns out the Neff’s requested the restaurant to spell AMICA with all capital letters.

The “Old Peculiar String Band” entertained us at dinner - Joe Steiner, Chris Cooper and Kathy Baltz.

CLINE HOME

The Cline’s Victorian house on historic South Main Street.

Don Junglas with the Cline’s elaborate stereoptican - classic Victorian entertainment.

Ken Vinen at the Victor recording horn.
Gregg Cline and Terry Warner discuss collections in the dining room.

Doris Kline and a selection of Gem phonographs.

The Merchants on a morning walk down Main Street.

Nipper has quite a selection to listen to, including an original Berliner to match the painting.

Wes Neff and the “before” version of this Duo-Art upright.

Sherri Neff at the keyboard of their Wheelock Duo-Art Pianola

Holly Neff presides over the breakfast buffet.

At 81, Lawrence Frazer is a professional player piano pumper.
Band Organ Rally

The Pacific Can-Am Chapter hosted its first Band Organ Rally on September 1-2 in Ocean Shores, Washington. Fifty-two people from three states plus Canada registered for the rally and hundreds more attended that weekend.

The fun began the evening before at an Open House for rally registrants at the home of Norm and Sally Gibson. Highlight of that gathering was the authentic 1950s-style soda fountain, manned by soda jerk Pat Cavanaugh and his assistant, Shirley. Guests ordered treats from the menu with hot fudge sundaes a popular choice. We enjoyed seeing the Gibson’s many collections, and previewed Norm’s newly built band organ, “The Scotsman,” which made its official public debut the next day.

The rally was held at the Ocean Shores Convention Center. Large organs were spaced throughout the parking lot, as were numerous hand-cranked organs. Inside, a large room displayed music boxes and phonographs covering a period of over one hundred years. Four times each day, demonstrations of these were given and history related by MBSI members Ron Tyler, Dick Oldenberg, and Pat Cavanaugh. These sessions were well attended and enthusiastically received by people of all ages. Many visitors said they had no idea that such instruments existed. By asking for a $1 donation for each person, we made more than enough to pay the cleaning fees for the convention center. Thanks to the volunteers who manned the donation table!

In another room, we demonstrated a pumper player piano and let the public take a turn to pump. This, too, was an enormously popular exhibit. Maury and Fran Willyard generously donated the piano for the weekend, and Norm Gibson transported it to the convention center where it got played for two straight days by Wes and Bev Spore, Carl Dodrill, Brian Tate, Maury and Fran Willyard, Jack Becvar, and Carl and Peg Kehret.

As thousands of tourists streamed into Ocean Shores for the weekend, they were greeted by a series of Burma-Shave-type signs inviting them to enjoy “The Happiest Music on Earth.” The convention center’s reader board also advertised the event. Even the weather cooperated: we had blue skies and sun both days.

Local merchants provided all rally registrants with discounts on everything from clothing to ice cream cones.
They also donated dozens of fantastic door prizes for our Saturday night banquet. Master of ceremonies Norm Gibson kept the banquet pace brisk as he drew the names of the lucky winners.

Five awards were also presented at the banquet: Dave Wasson won the award for Furthest Distance Traveled to Rally; Bill Masterman won for Most Organs Hauled to Rally; Pat Cavanaugh was honored for Most Supportive Organ Rally Assistance; and awards for Outstanding support of the Mechanical Instrument Demonstrations went to Dick Oldenberg and Ron Tyler.

The festivities concluded with a wind-down open house back at the Gibsons with all participants enthusiastically saying, “Let’s do it again!”
Norm Gibson played his “Scotsman” band organ - a true labor of love. It sounded great and Norm looked terrific in full Scottish costume.

Shirley Nix operates the Nix’s Limonaire organ.

MBSI members Dick Oldenburg and Pat Cavanaugh demonstrated more than thirty mechanical music items in the “demonstration room.”

The Wassons play along with “Trudy,” their 97 key prototype.

Our annual gala event, the Founding/Sierra-Nevada Chapters joint meeting, was held September 8 at Don Ellison’s lovely Craftsman cottage in Palo Alto. Dan Stofle was co-host with Don, and George and Sharyn Cunningham were in charge of the BBQ - delicious tri-tip. Guests enjoyed a good portion of the afternoon in the beautiful, recently landscaped backyard.

SIERRA-NEVADA CHAPTER
Reporter: Nadine Motto-Ros
President: John Motto-Ros (209) 267-9252
Don has a great collection of instruments. Founding Chapter president, Bing Gibbs, played a variety of rolls on the 5’8” Knabe Ampico grand throughout the afternoon. The 1922 Farrand 88-note player also had a good workout. While we were all feasting on the great BBQ, the 1907 Schaeffer electronic upright with Pianocorder provided the entertainment. Last, but not least, Don has always wanted a Seeburg KT Special, and now he has one. It really plays great, and what a wonderful addition to any collection.

Our thanks to hosts Don and Dan, and to George and Sharyn for arriving early to do the BBQ.

These four made the meeting happen: George Cunningham, Dan Stofle, Sharyn Cunningham, and Don Ellison.

These two keep the Founding Chapter moving - Jack Edwards and Bing Gibbs.

Nice to see at the meeting Bernice Carnes and friend Jean Brickell.

Host Don Ellison’s newest family member, a superb Seeburg KT Special, boy does it play great! Congratulations, Don.

Happy Birthday, George, you did a great job on the BBQ!

Two heavy duties - John Motto-Ros, Sierra Chapter and host Don Ellison, Founding Chapter.
August Meeting

It is not unusual for visitors to AMICA meetings to see homes filled with a variety of antiques. Many, but not all of us have our homes furnished, at least to some degree, with items of roughly the same vintage as our pianos. So it was an interesting treat for the twenty or so Texas Chapter of AMICA members who attended Alan May’s meeting on Turtle Creek in Dallas on August 26th at 2:00 pm. Alan’s home is decorated – very tastefully I might add – in the most modern style imaginable, with art by many important late 20th century artists and furniture reflective of a more sleek, modern approach of the last half of that century, rather than the first. One may ask how to fit a Steinway Duo-Art into this style of decorating. One simply refinishes it! Alan’s outstanding piano has been skillfully and tastefully refinished in a color best described as “putty”, and looked completely and totally at home in his ultra-modern home.

Those who came to this meeting expecting to see “only a Duo-Art” were in for a sonic treat, for Alan is the proud possessor of not only a fine piano, but also one of the finest music rooms one is likely to find. And he has reason to be proud. Alan’s music room was acoustically engineered by the same acoustic designers responsible for the marvelous sound in the Eugene McDermott Concert Hall at the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, as well as many of this country’s finest halls in other cities. Since the capacity of his music room is six persons, Alan demonstrated its remarkable acoustic properties to us in shifts, and, quite frankly, it was stunning. I am yet to hear ANY audio recording sound as good, and I doubt I ever will.

After we had all seen – and heard – Alan’s music room, we conducted a short business meeting. Chapter president Jerry Bacon, assisted by the memories of other long-time chapter members, recounted for us some of the early history of the Texas Chapter. I personally was not aware that the Texas Chapter was only the third AMICA chapter to be formed. We have a long and proud history, and are moving forward with renewed energy. It was announced that Bill Flynt will be hosting our annual Holiday Meeting, and that plans were being made for a Houston trip in October. The Houston trip will bring the number of meetings this year to seven, more in one year than we have had in many years...possibly ever!

After the business meeting was plenty of time to play the piano, explore the fascinating art objects, and socialize, as we in the Texas Chapter love to do. But, all good things must come to an end, and late in the afternoon, Chapter members began trailing off, content with their memory of a fine Steinway Duo Art and an absolutely stunning music room.

We would like to thank our gracious and elegant host, Alan May, and a special thank you as well to chapter Vice-president Tony Palmer, who arranged this meeting. The Texas Chapter is fortunate to have both of these kind gentlemen as members.

Brian Cather
How Can the Home Compete with Jazz Halls and Shallow Plays

in point of attractiveness to growing boys and girls?

The Plan Urged by Foremost Educators

Outside attractions, from the jazz craze to the shallow play, are enticing our boys and girls away from home. The effects are dangerous and far-reaching.

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(“... I suppose that includes watching a player piano for the first time, too!”)

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305
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