



THE OLD PIANO ROLL NEWS

A Publication of the Barton Player Piano Company

Spring 2010

The Sanfilippo Collection: The Ultimate Experience

By Don Barton

Jasper and Marion Sanfilippo's automatic musical instrument collection which started with a single Steinway Duo Art reproducing grand piano in 1976 has evolved into the largest collection of restored automatic musical instruments in the world. The astonishing collection includes over 200 music boxes and phonographs, 65 coin-operated pianos, violin machines and photoplayers, 60 large American and European orchestrions, 25 dance organs & band organs and an 8000-pipe theatre organ.

This massive collection is housed in the "Place de la Musique," the Sanfilippo residence on a 57 acre wooded site outside of Chicago. The original 6,000 sq. ft. residence was expanded to 44,000 sq. ft. in 1992. This included an elegant main entry foyer and four-story music room with a 250-seat balcony, which allow guests to enjoy concerts given on the 80-rank pipe organ.

In 1997 the carousel building was completed. This building houses the spectacular "Eden Palais" carousel built in 1890, in addition to large band organs, steam engines, and the 1881 Grant railroad locomotive.

Two factors stand out that make this collection unique, besides it's extensive



Left, this organ console controls 8,000 pipes, percussions and sound effects in five rooms behind the four-story high curtain. To the right, just a few of the 65 coin-operated pianos found in the vast collection.



size. One is that every instrument has been painstakingly restored. The stained glass, finish, mechanical systems, piano actions ... all restored to their original condition.

The second is the generosity of the owners. Although this is not a public venue, the Sanfilippos have held

charitable functions at the Victorian Palace that have raised in excess of three million dollars. One annual event is held June 5-6 by the Hopeful Heart Foundation, which offers "a helping hand for those in the arts that are facing medical difficulties and challenges." The cost of the event is \$75, which includes open tour of the collection, organ

concert, and a catered reception in the Carousel Building. To order go to www.hopefulheart.com/concert.htm.

Note—this short article does not do justice to this magnificent collection. I have viewed the collection twice and consider it the best \$75 I have ever spent. Don't let this opportunity pass you by!

Tenth Annual Piano Roll Flea Market and Movie Event



Piano Roll Flea Market

Saturday, March 27, 2010

8:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

2715 Fourth St. S.E., Minneapolis

Trim your piano roll collection or add rolls to your collection. Hundreds of new and used rolls. Plus a great selection of restored and used player pianos.

Cost to vendors: \$20/table; \$10/half table

Movie & Organ Concert

Saturday, March 27, 2010 • 2:00 p.m.

The Historic Heights Theatre

3951 Central Ave. N.E.

Columbia Heights • 763-788-9079

Barton Piano is proud to sponsor the 10th Annual Movie Event and Organ Concert. This year's feature will be *Gold Diggers 1933*. We will also have a short silent film with organ accompaniment by resident organist Ed Copeland. And for those of you that have tired of the the "You Asked for It" feature, we will be showing a new documentary that takes us through the piano roll manufacturing process. The suggested donation is \$6.

PIANO ROLL FLEA MARKET
Saturday, March 27, 2010
8:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
2715 Fourth St. SE, Minneapolis
612-578-1102



Barton Player Piano Co.

2715-4th Street S.E. • Suite #40
Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 578-1102

Movie Review—*Gold Diggers 1933*

Gold Diggers of 1933 is a depression-era Busby Berkley extravaganza based on the 1919 Broadway play *The Gold Diggers*. The film stars Ruby Keeler, Dick Powell, and Ginger Rogers. The plot is silly, but as in other Berkley choreographed productions, the lavish musical productions save the film.

The film contains four song and dance sequences. "We're in the Money" is sung by Ginger Rogers and of course includes scantily-clad show girls dancing with giant coins. The "Pettin' in the Park" number is just plain weird. The "Shadow Waltz



Production" is worth the price of admission. It features a dance by Keeler, Rogers, and many female violinists with neon-tubed violins that glow in the dark (no pianos in this one). "Remember my Forgotten Man" is a gritty evocation of depression-era poverty. The military scenes

confused me until I remembered that the original play was produced in 1919. It almost has an anti-war feel to it.

To sum it up, don't expect great acting or story line, however expect to again be wowed by the creative genius of Busby Berkley.

National Player Piano Week Celebrates Past and Present

by Don Barton

National Player Piano Week is a fictitious week of celebration that exists only because the late Harvey Roehl (Vestal Press) produced and sold bumper stickers designating such a week. There has been no national, state, or local proclamation designating April 2-9 as National Player Piano Week.

Mr. Roehl recalled that it was taken from an early 1920s music publication. Bob Berkman of Q.R.S. Music Rolls believes it was a promotion of the Standard Player Company.

Player pianos were a significant part of our American musical heritage. Before the advent of the phonograph and radio, the player piano was THE form of family entertainment. No family gathering was complete without a session around the player piano. Every song that hit the top 40, Broadway, or



the Hymnal was produced on the piano roll. And no bar or restaurant was complete without a nickelodeon that played the popular hits of the day.

Perhaps there should be a week set aside to celebrate such an important part of our musical heritage.

In the meantime:

1. Have a player piano party
2. Add some new piano rolls to your collection
3. Finally make the decision to restore your player piano
4. Have your piano tuned
5. Or, if you don't own a player piano...BUY ONE TODAY!

Some Perks of the Player Restoration Business

There are those days, after redoing a set of valves for the third time to get them just right, resulting in a wage less than minimum, I start fantasizing about having a real job. I set the project aside (gently, not against the wall) and run out to get the mail. I open a letter from one of my customers and the efforts of my labors immediately become worthwhile:

Don,

We never formerly thanked you for the fabulous outstanding player piano you reconditioned for us! It is a joy to have and makes the household echo with music. The girls played the piano for five hours straight! Thank You so much! It is the best birthday gift ever!!

Sincerely, Kim Ford and the Werling family

—And—

Dear Mr. Barton,

I really enjoy the piano. I've never been able to play myself (I seem to be musically challenged), so I enjoy it more than most.

We celebrated Easter here at our house, with 35 people. The player piano was



Werling family

playing for quite a bit of the time. Six of my brothers and sisters and my mom (whose piano it was) were playing, listening, and singing along. My brother sat there surrounded by his children, all joining in—it was reminiscent of our childhood when my dad sat on the bench with his children standing around singing. Thanks to you we once again enjoy this calming, heart-warming experience, and we get to share it with the next generation.

Sincerely and with gratitude, Rosalie Peltier

QRS Piano Roll Update

In the 2009 issue of the Old Piano Roll News, we reported that QRS had ceased producing piano rolls at the Buffalo, N.Y. facility. It was announced that they would be moving the roll operation to their facility in Seneca, PA. At that time, they had produced a two to three year inventory of rolls.

Update 2010

The piano roll production equipment is still in the Buffalo facility. No decision has been made as to when and where production will resume. According to Bob Berkman, "Our intent is to resume the production of player piano rolls when our current inventory runs out."

Editorial

By Don Barton RPT DPS

Reading between the lines, I would interpret Mr. Berkman's use of the word intent to mean, "If there is a demand

for our product, we will resume the production of piano rolls."

The simple truth is that the hunger for piano rolls has diminished from a ravenous high of 10 million piano rolls sold in 1926, to an anemic 25,000 rolls in 2009. With all of its flaws, the capitalist economic theory works, that is, if there is a demand for a product, someone will produce it. Therefore, it seems to me that the future supply of piano rolls rests with the owners of player pianos. QRS still has a catalog of over 1,900 titles which includes Ragtime, Broadway Shows, popular artists (Abba), Celebrity Series (Eubie Blake), Children's, Classical, Religious, Nostalgic, and the Super Star rolls. QRS still has a great selection of most titles listed in the catalog.

Stop in at the Piano Roll Flea Market on March 27th or stop in during National Player Piano Week and freshen-up your roll collection.

The Player Piano Man's Favorite QRS Rolls

I set out to select my *Top Ten List* of piano rolls, but immediately came to a halt. The QRS library is simply too vast to pick only ten. So I will list some of my favorites from several different categories.

Ragtime

5353 Tiger Rag J. Lawrence Cook

Broadway & Movie Musicals Great

Sing-a-longs

XP-183 Ain't Misbehavin' Waller &

Cook 6 selections

XP-335 Beauty and the Beast 2 selections

XP-199 42nd Street 5 selections

XP-153 Hello Dolly Pt. 2 6 selections

XP-134 Music Man 6 selection

XP-121 Oklahoma 5 selections

Country/Western Hits

XP-243 Patsy Cline Hits, Vol. 1 4

selections

10-932 Great Balls of Fire

XP-211 Hank Williams Country Hits 3

selections

Classical & Light Classical

XP-232 Amadeus 3 selections

XP-385 Toccata & Fugue in D Minor

(J.S. Bach)

Canon in D (Pachelbel)

Music to Put You in the Mood

11-058 Georgia on My Mind (Ray

Charles style)

10-942 Unforgettable

Just for Fun

10-353 Kitten On The Keys

8124 Bumble-Bee-Boogie

Celebrity Series Live Hand-Played

Performances

Cel-121 Gershwin Medley Liberace

Cel-162 Eddy Duchin Medley Peter

Duchin

Cel-184 Duke Ellington Hits Marion

McPartland

Super Star Hits on Long-Play Rolls

XP-231 Beatles Hits Vol. 1 3 selections

XP-406 Abba Hits 2 selections

XP-187 Barry Manilow Hits Vol.1 3

selections

XP-195 Glen Miller Hits Vol.1 4

selections (Tuxedo Junction)

XP-241 Glen Miller Hits Vol.3 3

selections (Juke Box Saturday Night)

XP-226 Frank Sinatra Hits 3 selections

(N.Y., N.Y.)

Gershwin

C1005 & C1006 Rhapsody in Blue

(Gershwin play Gershwin)

Q-256 They Can't Take That Away From

Me

Pianos For Sale *Lowest Prices in Years!*

Just like other segments of the economy, the player piano market is running at much less than full steam. Prices are half of what players would have commanded just five years ago, which makes it a very opportune time to purchase a player piano.



Cable Player Piano fully restored with electric pump and auto rewind & shut-off. Originally \$6,000 now only \$4,995.



Busby Berkley can't be wrong...white grands are in! 1923 fully restored Weber Dou Art Reproducing Grand. Originally \$15,000. Now only \$7,500.



The Best of Two Centuries! 1905 Beckwith Piano with the revolutionary Pianomation CD system. Matching bench, beautiful refinished walnut case. Price reduced \$8,995 to \$7,495.



Aeolian Sting Manual pump or electric with auto-rewind & shut-off. Price reduced \$2,495 to \$1,995.



Christmas Collector's Roll 2009

Sinatra Christmas

1. Mistletoe & Holly
 2. The Christmas Waltz
 3. We Wish You a Merry Christmas
- This is the 27th Xmas collector's roll QRS has presented. The arrangements are fun and the style is definitely Sinatra-esque. \$34.95

View more of our fine pianos on our website: www.bartonplayerpianos.com.