



THE

AMICA

AMICA
Automatic
Musical
Instrument
Collectors'
Assn.

AUTOMATIC MUSICAL INSTRUMENT COLLECTORS' ASSOCIATION

BULLETIN



SoCal Chapter Report

Report by Diane DeTar



A group picture in the backyard.

On May 3rd, about 30 AMICA members gathered at the home of Janice and John Osborne for a wonderfully unique meeting centered around their collection of antique pinball machines. These machines were early, rare examples—each with its own personality—and needless to say, everyone had a great time trying them out.

From the pinball room we moved into the living room, where John treated us to an Edison cylinder phonograph playing one of FDR's Fireside Chats. He also demonstrated a 78 rpm record player and played "The Big Rock Candy Mountain." Although the recording dated from 1919, I remembered it from Burl Ives when I was a kid. I've been playing the QRS roll since Christmas trying to learn the words, so hearing it at the meeting was a fun surprise.

Next, John introduced us to his custom-built 64/88-note player piano. He added a 64-note tracker bar along with a triangle and rinkytink bar, plus an array of levers to switch the extra instruments on and off and to move between the 64- and 88-note tracker bars depending on the roll. All the rolls used the same spool ends, eliminating the need for different drive chucks—an impressive bit of engineering.

We also enjoyed their beautiful Nelson Wiggins cabinet Nickelodeon, perfectly sized for the room and sounding wonderful. From there, John moved us into the family room to play several music boxes.

The weather couldn't have been better, and many members relaxed outside at the tables set up in the backyard, surrounded by a lovely desert landscape. Cactus and succulents require so little water, and you're seeing more and more of this style in Southern California.

As always, the day wrapped up with a short club meeting and Lowell gathering everyone for a group photo. It was a fun, informative, and thoroughly enjoyable day for all of us.



John demonstrating his expertise!



John pulling out the internal electronics to show Kravitz how it works.



John and Janice in front of the 64/88 note Drachmann piano.



John explaining the steps he took adding the 64 note tracker bar to the player action.



Chatting with Frank Nix in the backyard.



A beautiful Nelson Wiggins. The RCA Victor cylinder phonograph is next to it.



The pinball room.



A very easy pumper!



In the back...John and Janice Osborne, Jerry Pell, Jody Kravitz, Wayne Johnston and Diane DeTar, Mike and Rosanna Argain, Blue LoLan, Dave Allan. Doug, Steve and Frank Nix sitting in front.



Jerry Pell, Mike and Rosanna Argain, Frank Nix, Wayne and Diane, Joel Feldman, Dave Allan.

Chicago Chapter Report

Report by Ken Walczak

On a crisp Saturday afternoon—December 13, 2025—the doors of the Sanfilippo estate swung open, inviting members of the Chicago chapter of AMICA, along with guests from MBSI, COAA, ATOS, and SPSC, into a world where music, history, and craftsmanship converge. What awaited inside was not merely a holiday gathering, but an immersive journey through one of the most extraordinary collections of mechanical music ever assembled.

Beginning at 3:30 p.m., guests stepped into a house alive with sound and motion. Every room offered a new marvel: orchestrions, music boxes, and automated instruments of nearly every conceivable kind, each painstakingly restored to pristine—often better-than-original—condition. Knowledgeable docents brought these pieces to life, not only setting them in motion but sharing the stories behind their intricate workings. The result was less a tour and more a living museum, where the past performed for the present.

As the afternoon gave way to evening, attendees gathered in the estate's opulent theater for a formal welcome and a performance that would become a highlight of the day. Acclaimed musician Nathan Avakian took to the magnificent pipe organ and concert grand piano, joined by his sister Claire Avakian, whose vocals added warmth and elegance to the program. A live projection of the organ console allowed the audience to witness the artistry firsthand—hands and feet dancing across keys and pedals in perfect harmony. It was, by all accounts, a spellbinding performance. At 6 p.m., the concert concluded, and guests made their way—on foot or by ride—to the enchanting Carousel Pavilion. There, the celebration continued with a lively social hour underscored by the cheerful strains of orchestrions. By 7 p.m., a lavish holiday buffet was underway, followed an hour later by dessert, accompanied by the nostalgic sounds of fairground and band organs.

Beyond the music, the pavilion offered its own wonders. A striking display of stationary steam engines stood alongside a gleaming brass steam locomotive, complete with a Victorian coach and caboose open for exploration. Nearby, the beautifully restored 1890s Eden Palais Salon carousel spun once more, delighting guests who climbed aboard for a whimsical turn.

The evening built to a dramatic and fitting crescendo: the “battle of the organs.” Two mighty instruments—the 110-key Gaviolaphone and the Wurlitzer 180 Military Band Organ, both favorites of Jasper Sanfilippo—filled the space in a thrilling musical dialogue. It was a grand finale that left many wishing the night could continue just a little longer. Amid the joy and celebration, there was also a moment of reflection. The community remembered theatre organist Jay Warren, whose performances had graced many past holiday gatherings. His absence was deeply felt, but his music—and the spirit he brought to these occasions—remained an enduring part of the evening's harmony.



The weather cooperated and gave us a perfect holiday view of the house.



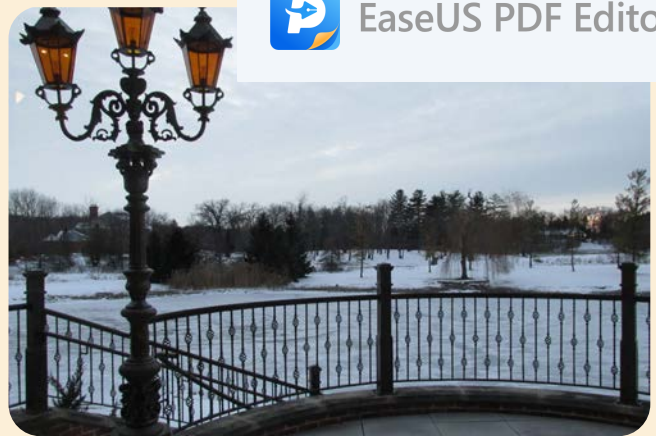
These participants seated themselves comfortably to await the concert.



Three gentlemen enjoying the beauty of the perfume passage.



Some participants viewing the holiday decorations in the perfume passage.



A scenic winter view was afforded from the perfume passage.



A view of the collection of perfume bottles spanning 3,000 years in the perfumery.



The ice cream shop in the Parisienne street scene.



The penny arcade afforded a view of an early attempt to present moving pictures.



Numerous listeners enjoyed the Nickelodeon.



Listeners availed themselves to concentrate on listening to the banjorchestra.



Two of the participants apparently deciding whether to take a chance on the slots.



The arcade offered a variety of antique machines for viewing and operating.



Some rare and odd arcade machines were available for examination.



A full panorama of the Nickelodeon room.



One gentleman was able to take a photograph without a crowd blocking the view.



Hopefully the little critters won't get too close to the fire.



The grand staircase leading up to the Welte.



The audience getting ready for the concert.



A view of the keyboard.



The beautiful chandelier and stained glass skylight gracing the entrance.



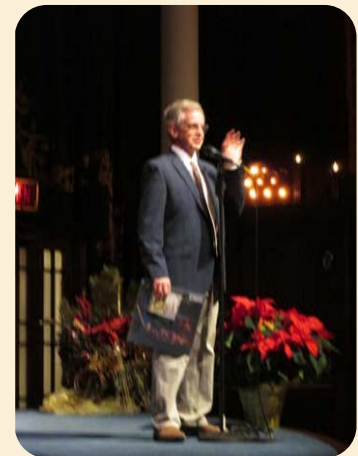
The interior of the Mills Violano with the violin and piano action.



Nathan Avakian at the keyboard.



Jeffrey Sanfillipo welcoming the guests.



The curator, Gregory Leifel, addressing the attendees.



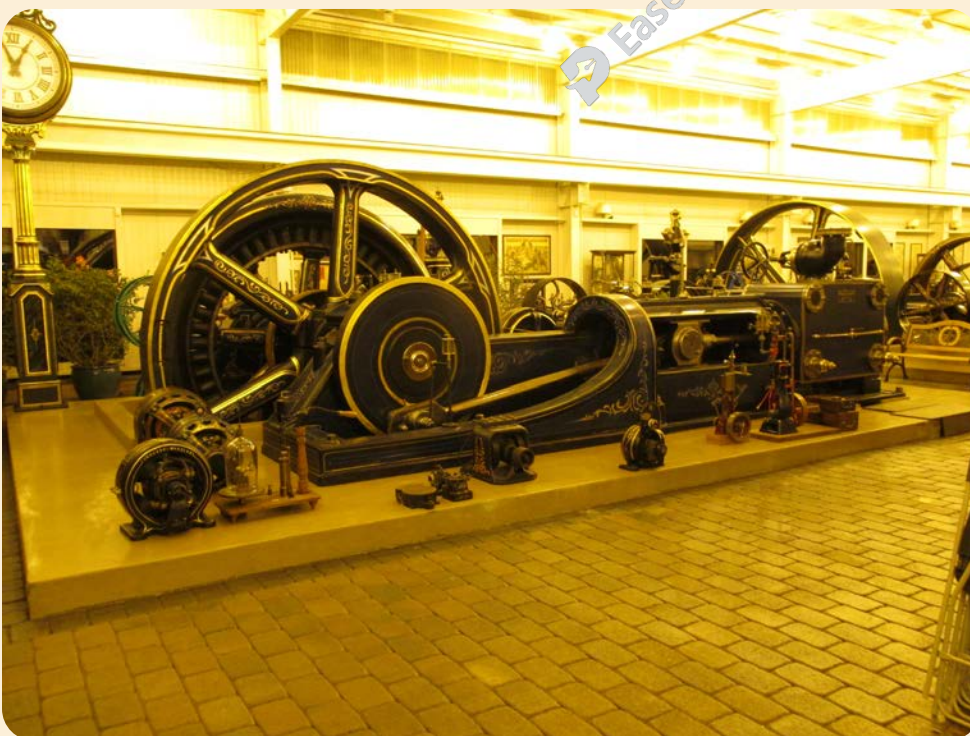
Attendees enjoyed the buffet to the lighting of the organs.



The magnificent Howard tower clock in the Carousel Pavilion.



View of the façade in front of the carousel.



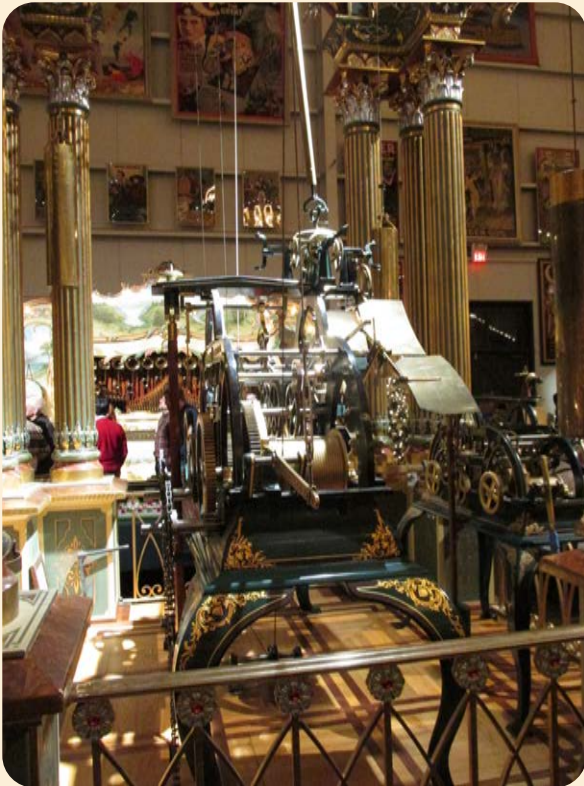
A massive steam engine and generator on display.



A switch panel occupied a bank of meters, but no one got near them. The switches might not have been live? Maybe?



The gallery of stationary steam engines.



The Howard clock tower mechanism.



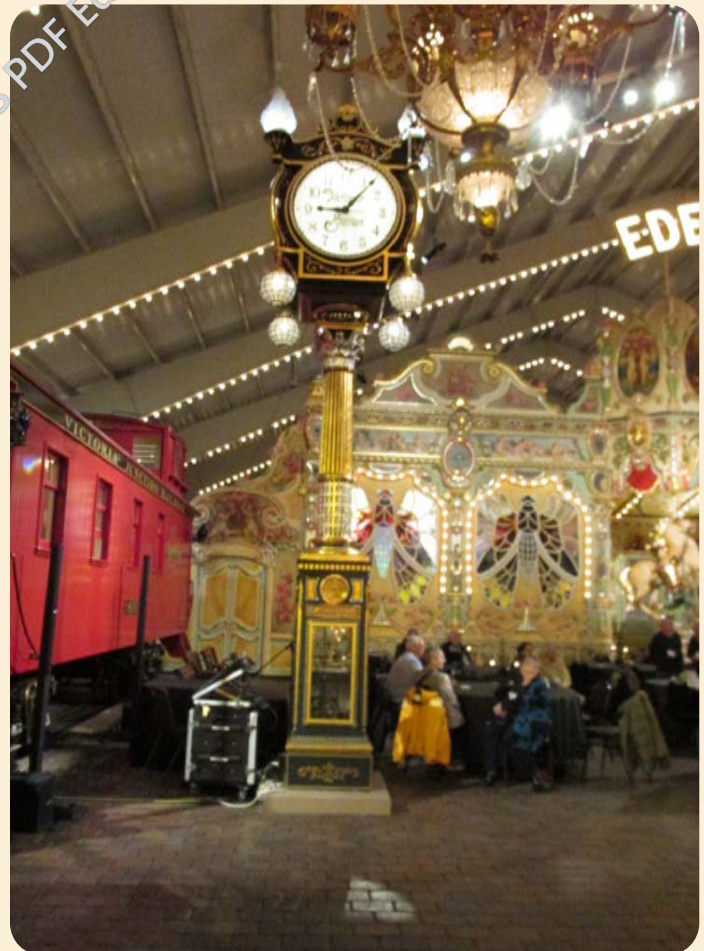
The gallery of stationary steam engines.



A view of one of the street organs that serenaded us.



Attendees enjoyed the Eden Palais carousel decked out for the holidays.



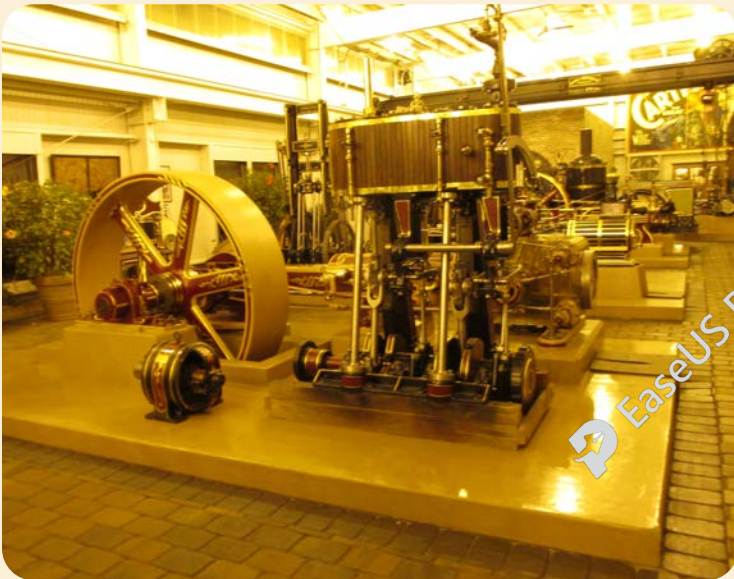
A full view of the street clock.



A horse drawn steam fire engine, which serves as a memorial to our first responders.



A brass steam locomotive was available to board and ring the bell.



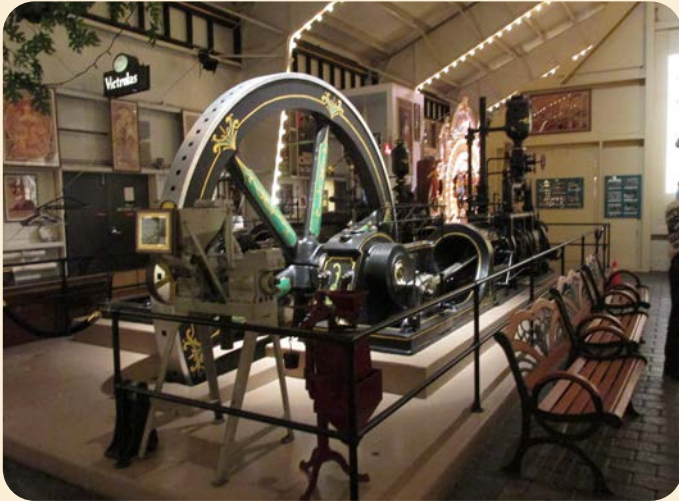
A marine steam engine on display.



A side view of the steam locomotive, which once hauled coal in the Ford plant.



The sumptuous buffet was a main attraction after the concert.



A large Vilter engine with a huge flywheel.



The massive and beautiful pipe organ console.



The Eden Palais carousel.



An attentive listener enjoying the solitude of the music.



Attendees listening to the Decap.