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The public is invited to join the Muscatine Art Center for the presentation, "American Musical Organettes: The Early Years of Mechanical Music in the Home", by Muscatine collector Brian Walter. The 45 minute presentation will explore the use of musical organettes in the home from 1879 to 1920. The presentation is offered in conjunction with a temporary exhibition on Musical Organettes and will take place on Thursday, January 23rd at 5:15 PM in the Muscatine Art Center's Music Room. Admission is FREE.

An organette was a mechanical accordion that was manufactured in the late 1800s by several companies, most notably the Autophone Company of Ithaca, New York. Music was recorded on rolls of perforated paper and turned over a track bar. Air was produced by hand- or foot-operated bellows, which would be pushed through the perforations corresponding to different notes, much like a player piano. Some models of organettes were played by mechanically blowing through them, but most were played with a crank that was turned to create a vacuum.

There were at least six models made – the standard 22-note model, the 32-note Autophone, the Concert model (tabletop with operating handle and cabinet style with floor pedal) and other floor standing models. The Autophone Company manufactured the organette in vast numbers. In 1889, it was noted in Harper's Magazine that the Autophone Company recorded 18,000 units sold.

Although these types of machines were sold into the 1930s, they began to lose their popularity by 1900 while the home phonograph rose in popularity. The Rollmonica -- or "player harmonica" -- sold during the late 1920s and the 1930s was the last organette produced.

Muscatine Art Center presents “American Musical Organettes: The Early Years of Mechanical Music in the Home”

Written by Lynn Bartenhagen
Thursday, 09 January 2014 10:41

The Laura Musser Mansion Small Gallery currently features the first in a series of music box exhibits from the private collection of Brian Walter. The temporary exhibition and the presentation by Brian Walter are the first in a series on historical music boxes.

EVENT DETAILS:

Lecture: “American Musical Organettes: The Early Years of Mechanical Music in the Home”

Who: Brian Walter

When: Thursday, January 23, 2014

Time: 5:15 PM

Where: The Muscatine Art Center’s Music Room

Admission to this program is FREE.

Please contact Katy Loos, Program Coordinator, with any questions or concerns at [563-263-8282](tel:563-263-8282) or by

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