

## Starr-Gennett Legacy Concerts bring Class Acts to Richmond



*Ed Polcer Quintet on stage.*

Lingle Auditorium at the new Reid Hospital once again hosted a big crowd for another outstanding ensemble of musicians at our recent October 9, 2009, Gennett Legacy Concert. This night we featured Ed Polcer on cornet and Mark Shane on piano. The other top-flight musicians joining in were Frank Tate on bass, Kevin Dorn on drums, and Australian Adrian Cunningham on reeds.

The first Gennett Legacy concert was held in Lingle Auditorium in March of 2009 and featured Mark Shane, Jon-

Erik Kellso, Dan Levinson, Christian Berg, and Jim Leslie. The auditorium was standing room only! What a terrific night of live music.

The concert series has brought current jazz notables to Richmond for spectacular and intimate musical settings showcasing the classical songs from the Gennett catalog. Starr-Gennett Foundation partners with Reid Hospital and Health Care to bring these concerts to Richmond.

Lingle Auditorium has outstanding acoustics, making it an ideal place to see and hear these musicians in the Gennett Legacy concert series. Reid Hospital also offers dinner discounts in their restaurant for Gennett Legacy ticket-holders on concert night. Many folks come early, have dinner, and join the featured

musicians for an informal chat in the auditorium prior to concert time.

We are planning two or three more Gennett Legacy concerts in the coming year. The Xavier University Swing Series in Cincinnati brings major artists close to our area, and we have worked with the university to bring these musicians to Richmond to play before or after their Cincinnati performances. It's not hard to convince them: with a selection of Gennett greats like Fletcher Henderson, Bix Beiderbecke, Coleman Hawkins, and Hoagy Carmichael, having a chance to play this music *with*—and *for*—other enthusiasts is a choice gig.

Look for upcoming information about our next Gennett Legacy concert at Lingle Auditorium—don't miss it!

In this Issue	Page
♦ Legacy Concerts	1
♦ Gallery Move	1
♦ Walk of Fame	
♦ Attracts Tours	2
♦ Starr-Gennett in the Media	2
♦ Untouchable Times	3
♦ Fall Festival	3
♦ Independence Day	3
♦ Starr Canada, Pt. II	4

**Mark Your Calendar!**

- ♦ *Tuesday evenings*  
Nov. 21-Dec. 22, 2009  
**Christmas in the Depot District—Gallery open**
- ♦ *Saturday evening*  
February 20, 2010  
**Untouchable Times**



**33 South 7th Street  
Richmond, IN 47374  
Phone: 765-962-2860  
Fax: 765-966-0882  
info@starrgennett.org  
www.starrgennett.org  
Look for us on Facebook: Starr Gennett**

## Starr-Gennett Gallery on the Move

Our gallery and gift shop are now open at our new location—Richmond Furniture Gallery on Ft. Wayne Avenue. The Starr-Gennett merchandise display windows are placed about midway along the Furniture Gallery's front-face, and you can get to the shop through the main doors.

Roger Richert, Richmond Furniture Gallery's owner and a Starr-Gennett Foundation board member, is excited about the new addition to his history-packed store. "We're re-painting our entire store to get ready for this!" Richert says. The Starr-Gennett gallery will now be open 7 days a week at the same hours as the Richmond Furniture Gal-

lery, and Richert and his staff are pleased to incorporate Starr-Gennett into their store. All sales proceeds will continue to benefit the Starr-Gennett Foundation.

Appropriately, the new gallery features some new commemorative items. For starters there's a limited edition T-shirt designed by local graphic artist Michele Walker. She wanted the look

to be contemporary and a bit edgy, while emphasizing Gennett's Record's role in introducing new artists and new sounds that would soon become "mainstream." Thus the "Original Indie Label" T-shirt design was born. A black shirt with a white design of paint splatters and swirls, it stands out as a testament to the wearer's Starr-Gennett pride!



For history buffs, we have reprinted a set of six historical postcards that illustrate the journey musicians would have taken from the train depot to the  
*(Cont. on p. 3)*

**Volunteer Newswriters**  
Donovan Clark  
Christie Joy  
Anne Thomason  
**Staff Newswriter**  
Terri Hardy  
**News Photos Courtesy of**  
Jon Ford  
Bob Jacobsen  
Michele Walker

## Walk of Fame Attracts Tour Groups

By Rachel E. Sheeley  
Reprinted from *Richmond's*  
daily newspaper, the *Palladium-Item*, with permission.

Visitors are coming to Richmond to learn about the Gennett Records Walk of Fame.

Two separate tour groups recently made stops in the city to learn more about the role of Starr Piano and Gennett Records in Richmond's history. Starr-Gennett Foundation executive director Terri Hardy and foundation vice president, Richmond City Clerk Karen Chasteen, joined one group for a bus tour of Richmond.

The tourists, members of Meadowood Retirement Community in Bloomington, Indiana, were familiar with Hoagy Carmichael and were capti-

vated by the mural of the musician on South Ninth Street and with the Leland Residence, Hardy said.

Other stops included the historic Pennsylvania Railroad Dept, the Walk of Fame in Whitewater Gorge Park, Earlham College and the Richmond Art Museum.

Kathy Weigle, activities coordinator for Meadowood Retirement Community, later wrote to Hardy that, "Our group members were quite taken with the Walk of Fame, as well as the murals. Some were literally blown away by the impact of the Starr Piano Company."

Another group from the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills in Cincinnati, Ohio, also

visited and did a bus tour of the community with Hardy and Karen Montgomery, who co-chairs the annual Walk of Fame Celebration with Chasteen. The church group was fascinated by the murals and by learning about Gennett's connection to gospel music, Hardy said. Among the tour group's members was Kay Barksdale, who is known as Cincinnati's Gospel Jewel. Barksdale is a member of the Gospel Hall of Fame and has performed with Lionel Hampton and Thomas A. Dorsey, who is known as the "Father of Gospel Music" and is among the Walk of Fame inductees.

In addition to the Starr-Gennett destinations, the church group toured the Gaar Mansion and had lunch at

Little Sheba's.

Having the two groups visit, Hardy said, was rewarding because it gave the Starr-Gennett Foundation a chance to share its story and to see the excitement of the visitors.

## Untouchable Times Returns in February

The Foundation's annual fundraiser, *Untouchable Times*, will be held on Saturday evening, February 20, 2010. Music for this dinner-dance and casino with a 1920's "speakeasy" theme will be provided again by the *Cool City Band* of Indianapolis, led by Roy Geesa and supported by vocalists Jimmy Guilford and Shannon Forsell. Please mark your calendar and watch the Foundation's website for further details.

## Starr-Gennett in the Media—and on the Net

**On Film:** Starr Piano and Gennett Records are among the subjects of a new, hour long documentary titled *Movers & Stakers: Stories along the Indiana National Road*. It features the nation's first federally-funded interstate highway, which runs from Maryland to Illinois and was laid out in the 1800's. Now designated U.S. 40 but still called "The National Road," it traverses Indiana between Richmond and Terre Haute for a distance of 156 miles.

"Movers" were travelers on the National Road who crossed Indiana as pioneers headed west. "Stakers" were those who stopped off in Indiana to develop towns, churches, colleges, and industries. They included the founder of an enterprise which

evolved into Starr Piano and Gennett Records. The segment of the documentary devoted to that story is condensed from a videotaped interview with Starr-Gennett Foundation secretary Donovan Clark, conducted last year at the former factory site in Richmond's Whitewater Gorge Park.

Produced, written, and directed by Nancy Carlson, associate professor of telecommunications at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, the documentary was sponsored by Ball State and by the National Scenic Byways Program of the Federal Highway Administration. (For further details, see <http://nationalroad.iweb.bsue.edu/>.)

**In Print:** On Tuesday, June

30, 2009, the Los Angeles Times devoted considerable space to Gene Autry, the cowboy singer and film star whose memory is honored in L.A.'s Autry National Center of the American West. The article noted that Autry had recorded for Gennett and that this year's Gennett Records Walk of Fame Celebration, held in September, was dedicated to his memory. (Highlights of the celebration are reported on page 3.)

### Internet Delivery of the Starr Gennett Newsletter:

Starting with this issue, the *Starr-Gennett News* will be delivered by posting it to the Foundation's website. On the homepage, click "News."

The switch to internet delivery was prompted by the in-

creased costs of printing and conventional mailing, as well as the Foundation's desire to "go green" where possible. Paper copies of the newsletter will continue to be furnished to Foundation members who lack access to the internet. All members have been so notified by mail.

The format of the newsletter will change as well and is illustrated with this issue. Although the usual seven pages have been cut to four and their graphics streamlined, the *News* will be published quarterly henceforth instead of just twice a year.

The Foundation thanks members for bearing with these changes. They will not compromise newsletter content in any way.

## Starr-Gennett Stars in Richmond's Fall Festival

The Starr-Gennett Foundation played a significant role in this year's revival of Richmond's historic Fall Festival. The 2009 Gennett Records Walk of Fame Celebration on September 11 and 12 honored country music traditions with a tribute to 2007 inductee Gene Autry, and added new medallions to the Walk commemorating Gennett artists Wendell Hall, Bradley Kincaid, Ernest and Hattie Stoneman, Artie Shaw, and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. The Walk of Fame induction ceremony and other activities in Gorge Park highlighted the weekend, but Starr-Gennett maintained a presence all over town.

Festivities began on Friday with a reception at the Leland Residence. The reception featured cowboy musician Don Edwards, and a talk on Gene

Autry given by Holly George-Warren, music biographer and author of best selling books on Woodstock and a recent biography of Gene Autry. Holly George-Warren traveled all



Don Edwards

over Richmond to teach people about Gene Autry. Holly not only talked at the induction ceremony on Saturday about Autry's life and career, but also signed and sold books at Hastings, presented a slideshow at the Gennett Mansion, and spoke to participants in the Young Authors Conference held at the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Blues Club. Holly

considered her encounter with budding writers a highlight of the weekend, and she was able to sign many works by junior authors and inspire them to keep writing.

On Saturday morning Don Edwards served as Grand Marshall for the Kids Fest Parade, where he was joined by Native American Oren Baumeister. Oren also presided at the Inter-Tribal Gathering in the gorge.

The induction ceremony included some wonderful music by the Richmond Community Orchestra, local musicians Gary Scott and Gene Webb, and the Stoneman Sisters of country music fame. Headliner for the evening concert which concluded the Walk of Fame celebration was Don Edwards, who performed for over an hour. The Stoneman

Sisters opened for Don and delighted the audience.

There were also children's activities, a rubber duck regatta, karaoke, Gene Autry movies in the gorge with free Texas Roadhouse peanuts, and delicious Baumbach's barbecue for sale along with diverse western-themed and Starr-Gennett memorabilia.

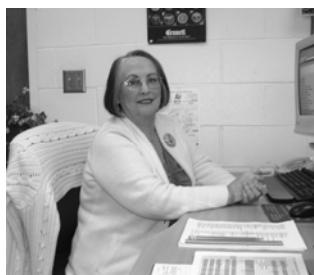
The Richmond Fall Festival also incorporated an annual event at the Wayne County Historical Museum: the Heritage Festival. The Museum has a small exhibit of Starr piano and Gennett Records artifacts worth seeing for anyone interested in the legacy.

Next year the Starr-Gennett Foundation will focus on popular music's blues heritage and the Gennett recordings which contributed to it.

## Independence Day

We are excited to announce that on July 9 of this year, Starr-Gennett officially achieved its own nonprofit status. Since 1991, the Foundation has been operating under the umbrella of the Wayne County Foundation (WCF). Starr-Gennett owes a great deal of gratitude to the WCF, which has also provided us with an office, employee benefits, bookkeeping, and numerous other resources over the years. This change coincides with other changes as well, beginning with a move to a larger office. In March, our home base "moved up" by moving down! Our organization is still housed in the WCF building at 33 South 7<sup>th</sup> Street, but we have moved from a closet-sized space on the

ground floor to a suite downstairs with room for at least three workers. We have taken advantage of this expansion by engaging college interns over the summer and adding one part-time employee who helps out daily. Her position was funded through a government on-the-job retraining program. Please welcome Mary Alice Keller if you call into the office!



Mary Alice Keller

## Gallery on the Move

(Continued from p. 1)  
recording studio. And we've designed a 2009 Gene Autry postcard in the style of the Old West. (Autry was the Gennett recording artist whose work gave this year's Gennett Records Walk of Fame Celebration its theme.)

Another new item is a short glass tumbler imprinted with the Starr-Gennett logo. Tumblers can be purchased individually or in sets of four.

Starr-Gennett has acquired some "green" products as well—clocks and mobiles made from old Gennett records and cutting/serving trays made from recycled glass bottles and etched with the Foundation logo and "Richmond,



Logo Tumbler

Indiana."

The gallery will be staffed by Foundation volunteers on Tuesday evenings from just before Thanksgiving to just before Christmas. Area Foundation members are encouraged to drop in then and say "hello."

## The Starr Company of Canada, Part II

By Betty Minaker Pratt

(Appearing in the Winter 2009 edition, Part I outlined the formation and rapid expansion of Starr Canada under the leadership of its founders, J. A. Croden and Wilfred D. Stevenson. A prohibitive Canadian tariff on imported manufactured goods enacted in 1918 caused them to establish Canadian facilities for producing Starr phonographs. The story resumes with an account of how Starr-labeled records were supplied.)

Records made in Canada were supplied by Herbert Berliner, who had moved some discarded record presses from the Berliner Montreal factory to his new Compo record factory in Lachine, Quebec, and by May, 1919, began pressing American Starr-Gennett masters in Lachine for Starr Canada. The following year, Croden visited England and Europe, returning with "mothers" to be pressed by Compo for Starr.

The newly formed Starr Company of Canada quickly gained a subsidiary, Starr Phonograph Company of Quebec, under the supervision of Roméo Beaudry, an important figure in the early production of Francophone recordings in Canada. He distributed Francophone records on Starr and Compo labels in Quebec province starting in the summer of 1920.

Early Starr labels were printed with a large "Gennett" logo, surrounded by a scrolled hexagon, and "Starr Co. of Canada, London, Ont." in gold lettering at the top. Steven Barr, author of *The Almost Complete 78 rpm Record Dat-*

*ing Guide*, has written a label dating guide with matrix numbers and a general company history of both U.S. Gennetts and Starr/Compo in Canada (pp. 48, 161). He describes how "Starr" grew to be the favorite printed name on the Canadian label. (Also see *The Virtual Gramophone* at <http://www.collectionscanada.com>.)



Starr Co. of Canada label

If we could walk into the Starr store in London, Ontario between the years 1917 and 1924, we might meet a few young musicians such as the Lombardo brothers who frequented Dundas Street at the time. We might also say hello to Melville Standfield of Toronto, who started as a traveling salesman with Starr [APN Jul-Oct., 2006, "Standfield-MacPherson Company Phonographs...."].

In 1917, Standfield was recruited by the London office to establish Starr Canada agencies in Western Ontario. In 1918, he traveled to British Columbia. By the spring of 1920, Starr Canada stores appeared in all major cities from the west coast to the Maritime Provinces, and in September the firm was elevated to charter status, becoming the Starr Company of Canada, Limited. By March, 1922, at the height of the company's record sales, there were 101 Starr dealerships in Toronto alone.

Croden and Stevenson were very busy dispatching traveling salesmen such as Standfield, D. S. Cluff and J. W. Caswell (formerly of White Sewing Machine Co.) to all corners of the country. They unloaded boxcars of Starr equipment shipped to London from Indiana, and developed the Starr record pressing business with Herbert Berliner in Montreal.

On April 28, 1922, a disastrous fire in the Starr Canada warerooms on Dundas Street resulted in a massive sell-off of damaged goods [*Toronto Daily Star*, May 19, 1922, p. 10]. That setback may have induced a reversal of the company's fortunes. In 1923, the Starr Company of Canada, Limited, converted from a private to a public company [Indiana Historical Society/courtesy of Richard Green], and John Croden left to open a real estate firm in London [London Free Press, Jan. 20, 1950, p. 21].

In 1924, Starr Canada started to liquidate its stock and assets [letter from George Welsh, Starr Richmond, Jan. 26, 1926]. That same year, Wilfred Stevenson briefly became vice-president of the Starr Piano Company in Richmond, Indiana [CMTJ, Feb. 1924, p. 78]. He was the first non-Gennett to be made an officer of Starr Indiana after Henry Gennett became its president.

Between 1926 and 1929, John E. Roberts moved the Starr of Canada headquarters from Dundas Street to a smaller office at 410 Rectory Street in London and was in charge while the remaining stock was sold off. In January, 1926,

Stevenson became manager of Sun Records in Toronto [CMTJ, Jan. 1926, p. 24].

The Starr Piano Company's Canadian subsidiaries do not appear to have remained under the supervision of the company headquarters in Richmond beyond 1925, when the Compo Company bought the Canadian Starr label. The Starr record label continued to flourish in Canada after the Richmond firm discontinued it in the U.S.A. in 1925.

Compo used the Starr label until ca. 1951-1952 when Herbert Berliner sold the name to Decca. But recordings from the Starr and Apex catalogue continued until 1959. (See *The Virtual Gramophone* at [www.collectionscanada.com](http://www.collectionscanada.com).)

Betty Minaker Pratt is a graduate in Museum Studies from the University of Toronto, where an interest in the history of Canadian piano and phonograph factories began. Along with Bill Pratt, a Canadian Antique Phonograph Society (CAPS) executive, she has continued this interest thanks to 30 years of collaboration with CAPS members. Their collections and their technical and musical knowledge have provided the foundation for ongoing original research.

**Join Us!**

**If you like what you see of our work, please consider joining or rejoining the Foundation. Sign up and make your membership donation conveniently online. Click "Membership" on our homepage to begin.**