

RAAGTIME To RICHES

A MUSICAL LEGACY

December 14, 1973

Shabby old man leaves collection worth millions

By Alan Merridew

WALTER N. H. Harding was a shabbily dressed old man who wandered around his West Side neighborhood, often sitting alone on a bench in Columbus Park.

The white-haired former piano player died Wednesday in his run-down frame home at 110 N. Pine Av. He left a book and sheet music collection worth millions of dollars.

A man installing wire mesh screens nearby reported the death, according to Shakespeare Area homicide detectives, who said Harding appeared to die of a heart attack.

LATE WEDNESDAY afternoon, the Northern Trust Bank, 50 S. La Salle St., dispatched security guards from the Kane Service to watch the building.

Cook County coroner's deputies sealed the house and its treasures inside. According to a spokesman for the Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St., Harding's collections "was one of the finest in Chicago and perhaps in the Midwest." It is to go to England's famous Bodleian Library.

Harding was brought to America from England when

ing organs in silent movie houses. But in the talkies started his job reduced to working as a church organist.

He never played church or retired.

HARDING WEL in 1935, according to a Newberry spokesman, collecting into a now his collec

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1973

Organist Dies at 90 in Home Filled With Rare Sheet Music

CHICAGO, Dec. 13 (UPI)—A former ragtime piano player and movie-house organist of the silent-film era died today at the age of 90, leaving behind a collection of sheet music and rare books that experts dis agreed on the value of the collection. The police quoted one source at Newberry Library as having said the collection included 18th-century materials that originally assembled by Sir John Stainer, English organist and scholar, was worth at least \$3 million.

Harding did not play church or retired. He never played church or retired. He never played church or retired.

Harding's personal habits were as casual as his house-keeping and another librarian who knew him said he "was terribly seedy, rarely bathing or changing his shirt."

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The police said he was apparently a victim of a heart attack. His body was found by a workman installing wire mesh screens.

Security guards were called in to play the organ.

Champaign, said Harding's Krummel, who has been in d every room with makeshift Every wall's lined with ummel said each music in the library. Davis, 60, said he had seen Harding's collection in the library.

'Incredible' Book Collection Found

CHICAGO (AP) — The body of a 90-year-old retired musician who bought rare books "for pennies" was found Thursday in a hotel which housed the collection, now valued at upwards of a half-million dollars.

The man, Walter N. H. Harding, was found in a hotel room.

passes the period from about 1650 to 1850 and is primarily devoted to music.

Dr. Donald W. Krummel, professor of library science and of music at the University of Illinois, described the works as "an incredible collection."

But he said "it was a rather chaotic collection."

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A small display
celebrating the

WALTER HARDING COLLECTION

in the Bodleian Library

7 – 29 January 2012

Bodleian Library Proscholium, Old Schools Quad, Cattle Street, Oxford

Open Monday to Friday 9am – 7pm; Saturday 9am – 4.30pm; Sunday 11am – 5pm

ADMISSION FREE

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/about/exhibitions>

