WHY?

On Wednesday, June 27, 1956, during the AGO convention, a group of organ enthusiasts met in the choir room of St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City. This was made possible through the courtesy of Harold Friedell, organist and choir director of the church.

There was no general announcement made at the convention about the meeting; but rather the word was passed via the "grape vine" to people who were known to have an interest in early American organs and their builders. The idea originated with Miss Barbara J. Owen, who was encouraged by all to proceed. Kenneth F. Simmons agreed to moderate the meeting.

The purposes for which the gathering was called were three-fold:
1. To determine if there were enough persons interested to establish an organization of any kind.
2. To see if a central file could be kept of information concerning old organs which are to be sold or scrapped, in order to prevent these examples of early American organ building from being lost or destroyed.
3. To possibly work out a newsletter or publication whereby notes of interest to this group and other data could be mutually exchanged.

A lengthy discussion of these topics followed in which was decided establishment of this newsletter. Mr. Simmons agreed to receive and compile all data. Albert F. Robinson volunteered to have all copy mimeographed and posted to the mailing list.

Miss Owen offered to keep a file on organs for sale.

No organization or society was officially established.

Those present were Horace Douglas, Dorothy Ballinger, Robert Clawson, Albert F. Robinson, Barbara J. Owen, Donald K. M. Paterson, Kenneth F. Simmons, Charlene E. Simmons, Homer D. Blanchard, and Randall E. Wagner.

The meeting was adjourned and later some present made a pilgrimage to some of the forgotten organs of Manhattan.

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POLICY

As you all pretty well know, practically all organs imported from England in the 18th century were personally played by Handel. There are also a great number of first organs and old organs still in existence. In other words, there are many claims made concerning the old organs which on complete examination do not stand up.

It is of the utmost importance therefore in our reporting that we take time to be accurate. It is likewise essential in all stop lists and data, that the names are spelled exactly as the builder used them. The more complete information is presented, the more value there is to the research to and for everyone.

(continued on page 2)
POLICY (cont'd.)

Any identifying characteristics should be noted. Naturally, a stop list is not the real meat of an organ. When it is at all possible, one should examine the pipe work and record as much data as possible on material, scaling, and markings. This later phase of the builder's art of the past is all too often overlooked.

In the interest of uniformity it was decided, at the New York meeting, that we would ask that all use the format commonly used in The American Organist.

With the above words from me, I now throw this all to each of you. For this to be continued it is necessary for all to lend a helping hand. We can send out no news if we receive none.

Many of you have dug deep and uncovered a great wealth of information, and may feel that you should treasure it as your own. This of course is your privilege and we respect your thoughts.

However, there is so much more to be found that I personally doubt that the entire history of American organ building will ever be known. I have had the honor to meet and talk to Mr. F. R. Webber. There is no doubt but that his knowledge of the history of American organs is the most complete in existence. When he was asked why he has not written a book on the subject, his reply was to the effect that he did not have enough complete information. His notebooks cover at least a half century of searching. My point here is that this is such a vast field, and each of us knows phases that no one else can claim; and if everyone could contribute something, that would be a service to others. At the same time I do not believe that anyone stands to lose by our efforts.

Therefore further editions are dependent on what each contributes. The frequency of publication will depend on the rate that information is received. When these two factors are known we will be able to know what can be done, and report this to you. In the meantime all articles should be sent to me. Nothing will be published that is not specifically so marked. If you have any suggestions or ideas in regard to the newsletter, society, or interest, forward them to me. When a clear picture of your desires and interest are in hand, we shall call an open meeting similar to that of June and move forward at that time.

Names to be added to the mailing list of those who are seriously interested in American organ building will also be received at my address.

There is no charge for this issue, and none planned until we are certain that there is enough interest to establish this on a permanent basis. Everyone is contributing time and information without any financial remuneration. In the future any charges will cover only cost of publication. No one, including myself, has any plan for personal profit; everything is on a volunteer basis.

(Signed) KENNETH F. SIMMONS
20 Devonwood Road
Wayne, Pennsylvania

NEW YORK PILGRIMAGE
as reported by Barbara J. Owen

You are probably waiting for material to get the newsletter started, so I am enclosing the 'specs' of some of the organs we saw on our pilgrimage around down-town New York the day after our first meeting. This ought to be good to start off with. I'm afraid I don't have the 'specs' of the two in St. Peter's which are of great interest. (We hope to have these for the next issue.)

It appears we now have a name. Visiting one church that Thursday, en masse, a housekeeper asked us "Who shall I say is here?" Homer Blanchard came up with: "The Organ Historical Society". That's what we called ourselves the rest of that day!
NEW YORK PILGRIMAGE (cont'd.)

Sea and Land Presbyterian Church, New York
Henry Erben, 1844

Great: 8 stops
  Open Diapason (TG) ..... 8'
  Open Diapason Bass ... 8'
  Dulciana ............... 8'
  Stopped Diapason ...... 8'
  Flute .................. 4'
  Principal ............... 4'
  Twelfth ................ 3'
  Fifteenth .............. 2'

Swell: 5 stops (2 bass)
  Open Diapason ...... 8'
  Stopped Diapason ... 8'
  Principal ............. 4'
  Trumpet ............... 8'
  Principal Ch .......... 4'
  Tremulant

Pedal: 1 rank
  No knob. Rank of Bourdon pipes that appears to have been added later and is on permanent-ly. The rank is probably one 8ve, as the lower 8ve of pedal keys pulls down the upper octave, if a P-P 4' were on.

Couples:
  Couple, Great & Swell
  Great & Swell, 8ves.
  Pedal

Compass of Great Organ 59 notes
Compass of Swell Organ 35 notes
Compass of Choir Organ 24 notes
Compass of Pedal Organ 30 notes

This is a 'G' organ, both Manuals and Pedals beginning at GGG. As the organ was not playing when seen, it was not possible to determine whether all the Great stops were full compass. Probably the Dulciana and Flute were not. The five treble stops of the Swell are enclosed in a small swellbox; the two "Choir bass" stops are on a separate chest, and unenclosed. They are extensions of two of the treble stops.

The organ stands in the rear gallery of the late-Colonial stone building (built 1819), and has a handsome Georgian case of rich, dark wood built in five sections. The original graceful simplicity is in part spoiled by the later addition of two heavy carved pinnacles atop the corner towers, obviously built to conceal the tops of the Pedal pipes, also a later addition. These have the effect of destroying the symmetry of the case, and making it top-heavy. However, it still stands as one of the best examples of Erben's artistic casework.

Judson Memorial Church, New York
Frank Roosevelt, 1892, Opus 512

Great: 9 stops
  Open Diapason ......... 8'
  Dulciana ............... 8'
  Viola di Gamba ..... 8'
  Doppel Flute .......... 8'
  Octave ............... 4'
  Hohl Flute ............ 4'
  Octave Quinte ...... 2 2/3'
  Super Octave ......... 2'
  Trumpet ............. 8'

Swell: 13 stops
  Bourdon (split knob) 16'
  Violin Diapason ...... 8'
  Salicional ............ 8'
  Dolce ................ 8'
  Spitz Flote .......... 8'
  Quintadena .......... 8'
  Gemshorn ............ 4'
  Flute Harmonique .... 4'
  Flageolet ............ 2'
  Cornet ............... 3rks

Pedal: 4 stops
  Open Diapason .... 16'
  Bourdon ............ 16'
  Violone ............ 16'
  Violoncello ........ 8'
  Swell to Great
  Swell to Great Octaves
  Great to Pedal

Compass of Manuals: 59 notes
Compass of Pedals: 30 notes

Oboe ................. 8'
Vox Humana ......... 8'
Tremulant

The organ is located in the right-hand side of the back gallery, and stands free. The case is unusual, consisting of three flats on the side facing the gallery, divided by Lombardic columns topped with angels with spread wings, and joined from top to top with carved garlands. The side facing the nave is similar. Columns and paneling are richly ornamented in gold.

The pipework is in perfect condition, though the action needs some repairs.
NEW YORK PILGRIMAGE (cont'd.)

The tone is good, and the ensemble rich. Several of the individual voices are very outstanding, among them the fine, smooth Pedal Violoncello. A superb organ, on the whole.

The blowing mechanism deserves mention. It is said to be the first electrically-driven in the city. Whether this is so or not, it is certainly one of the oldest. It consists simply of an ordinary electric motor, which turns a series of belts and wheels attached to a crank shaft which operates three feeders below the reservoir. The speed with which the motor operates is determined by a rheostat which is operated by a chain attached to the top of the reservoir, making it automatically speed up when there is any great demand on the wind. It supplies perfectly steady and even pressure, and seems to leave nothing to be desired.

Both divisions are on the same level and on one great chest, divided in the middle and winded at both ends.

Bowery Mission, New York

Great: 9 stops
Open Diapason ....... 8'  Gamba ...............8'  Doppel Fl8te ........ 8'  Stopped Diapason .... 8'  Principal ..........4'  Clarionet Flute ..... 4'  Flute Harmonique ... 4'  fifteenth ..........2'  Trumpet .............. 8'

Swell: 8 stops
Open Diapason ...... 8'  Open Diapason ...... 8'  Violin Diapason .... 8'  Violin Diapason .... 8'  Viol d'Orchestre .... 8'  Aeoline ............8'  Principal ..........4'  Cornopean ..........8'  Tremulant

Pedal: 3 stops
Open Diapason ...... 16'  Bourdon (T & B) ....... 16'  Open Diapason ...... 16'  Violin Diapason .... 8'  Violincello .......... 8'  Bourdon .......... 16'  Stopped Diapason ... 8'  Sw-Gt 8' & 4'

Couplers:
Sw-Gt 8' & 4'
Sw-Ped
Gt-Ped

Compass of Manuals: 58 notes.  Compass of Pedals: 30 notes.

This organ was given to the Bowery Mission by Princeton University about 1895. It was probably in the old chapel, or some other building, and apparently had been there for some time. The organ is in a front gallery above the pulpit platform, and the console is in a very small space attached to the C side of the organ. It was apparently rebuilt at the time of its installation in the Mission, and the case modified, as several painted pipes can be seen on offset chests behind the present case. The organ is no longer used regularly (".....we have a lovely *** downstairs!") and is deteriorating. The pipes are covered with a film of grease from the kitchen directly downstairs.

NOTES, QUOTES, and COMMENTS by K. S.

Today the family made a trip to Lancaster, Pa., to see the two Tannenberg organ cases still in existence there. The organ at Trinity Lutheran Church was in the process of being cleaned because of plaster which fell into it accidently while an air duct was being installed. The craftsmanship of this case and of the one in the First Reformed Church are worth the time of the visit.

Does anyone have any proof that Gustav Hesselius ever built an organ?

Johnson fans may be interested to know that a trip to Peoria, Ill., is fruitless as the Reformed Church and organ vanished around the turn of the century. (Opus 473) Opus 610 in Calvary Presbyterian Church is in the process of being rebuilt and moved. I was unable to get the stop list.

Spent considerable time dismantling and examining the pneumatic stack from John son Opus 781. The workmanship was excellent and the stack as good as new. Incidently, this was not made by Johnson, but rather by Ira Bassett, 453 West Harrison Street, Chicago, Illinois. The patent date is August 1888.
NOTES, QUOTES and COMMENTS (cont'd.)

It might be interesting to check the possibility of some connection between the short-lived W.H. Johnson & Co., 578 Washington Street, Boston, Mass., 1880 --- reed organs --- and the Westfield Johnsons.

Barbara Owen and Ed Broadway are compiling a list (the first portion of which will appear in the next issue of "The Tracker") of 18th and 19th century organ builders and including some data on each.

After a long and fruitless search for material on Conrad Doll data, I now have a lead that may prove interesting. If so, you will be hearing more about him and his work.

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SOME INTERESTING "SPECS"

Calvary Presbyterian Church, Buffalo, New York
Johnson & Son, Westfield, Mass. Opus 837, 1896

Three Manuals - CC to c' - 61 keys Pedals - CCC to F - 30 keys
Swell: 14 stops Great: 10 stops Choir: 7 stops
Bourdon ............ 16' Dbl.Op.Diapason Geigen Principal ............ 8'
Bourdon Bass ........ (lowest 7 w std) 16' Dulciana ................. 8'
Open Diapason ...... 8' Open Diapason ...... 6' Melodia ................. 8'
Salicional (7 fr-#7). 8' Viola da Gamba ...... 8' Fugara ................. 4'
 Aeoline ............ 8' Doppel Flute ............ 8' Flute d'Amour ............ 4'
Stopped Diapason .... 8' Octave ............... 4' Piccolo ................. 2'
 Quintadena .......... 8' Flauto Traverso ...... 4' Clarinet: Orchestral Bass. 8'
 Flute Harmonique ... 4' Twelfth ............ 2 2/3' Blowers' Signal
Violin .............. 1' Super Octave ........ 2'
Fiautino .......... 2' Mixture III rks .... 2'
Dolce Cornet III rks. 2' Trumpet .......... 8' Pedal: 5 stops
Cornopean .......... 8' Open Diapason .......... 16'
Oboe & Bassoon ..... 8' Violone ............... 16'
Vox Humana ......... 8' Bourdon ............... 16'
Couplers: (draw-knobs placed over the Swell manual)
Swell to Choir Great to Pedale Pedale Check
Swell to Pedale Choir to Pedale
Couplers: (and other Mech. Stops --pneumatic push-knobs between manuals)
Swell to Great, Unisons Choir to Great
Swell to Great, Octaves Great Organ Separation

Tremolos: (Mechanical push-knobs placed between the manuals)
remolo to Swell Organ Tremolo to Choir Organ

Pedal Movements:
Forte, Great Organ Forte, Choir organ
Mezzo, Great, Double acting Piano, Choir, Double acting
Piano, Great, Double acting Forte, Pedal organ
Forte, Swell organ Piano, Pedal, Double acting
Mezzo, Swell, Double acting Great to Pedale reversible
Piano, Swell, Double acting Balanced Swell Pedal
Balanced Choir and Great Pedal

All ranks complete - 61 Mixtures - 183 Pedale - 30

All choir stops and four great stops (12th, Super Oct., Mixture & Trumpet) are enclosed in a separate swell box, making two independent boxes.

Dimensions - 28' high, 25' wide, 13' deep (from front to back)

(From a Johnson Advertisement)
INTERESTING "SPECS' (cont'd.)
Methodist Church, West Brookfield, Massachusetts
Hook (E. & G.G.) - 1858

Manuals: 56 keys
Great: 7 stops
Great: 1858
Swell: 7 stops
Pedal: 1 stop
Pedal: 25 keys
Great Diapason .... 8' Open Diapason ......... 8' Sub Bass .............. 16'
Flute Bass ......... 8' Stopped Diapason Bass ... 8'
Flute tf ............ 8' (17 pipes) Couplers:
Viola d'Amour tf .... 8' Stopped Diapason tf ..... 8' Swell to Great
Octave ............ 4' String tf ............. 8' Swell to Pedal
Flute ................... 4' Principal tf' ......... 4' Great to Pedal
Fifteenth ............ 2' Celestine Bass (17 pipes) 4'
Bellows Signal Hautbois ............ 8' Hook down Swell Pedal
Tremolo

Pedal actions:
Great, full
Great, piano single action in only

Federated Church, Warren, Massachusetts
Steer & Turner, Westfield, Mass., 1875

Compass of Manuals - 58 keys
Great: 10 stops
Swell: 9 stops
Pedal: 2 stops
Pedal movements: (single action)
Great-Melodia & Dulciana Great-Full Great to Pedal Reversible

Nameplate left of center over the manuals and gives the above spelling "Steer"

This organ is the most pleasing of the firm that I have yet heard. K.S.

ORGANS ON THE MARKET - by Barbara J. Owen

1. Johnson Opus 532, 2-17, 1879. Christ Protestant Episcopal Church, Red Hook, N.Y. Price $500.00 - good condition generally, some repairs needed on action. (Latest I heard was that they are now considering restoration: K.S.)


ORGANS ON THE MARKET (cont'd.)


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CODA (to the first edition)

Information concerning sale or disposal of old organs should be sent direct to:

Miss Barbara J. Owen
500 Winthrop Avenue
New Haven 11, Conn.

Articles submitted for publication, notices of change of address, or names to be added to the mailing list, should be sent to:

Kenneth F. Simmons
20 Devonwood Road
Wayne, Pennsylvania

This edition was mimeographed at the Chapel of St. Cornelius the Centurion, one of the six chapels of Trinity Parish in the City of New York, located at Fort Jay, Governors Island, New York harbor. Two choirboys, John Whelihan (12) and Michael Shea (12), operated the mimeograph machine.

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"SOLI DEO GLORIA"