

T H E T R A C K E R

News Letter of the Organ Historical Society

Editor: Kenneth F. Simmons

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No. 2

SOME LETTERS FROM MR. JOHN GEIB OF NEW YORK - by Joyce Ellen Mangler

Among the early records of the First Unitarian Church, Providence, now in the care of the Rhode Island Historical Society, are a group of letters from the New York organ building house of John Geib & Co. which hold considerable interest to organ historians. These carefully preserved documents, twelve in all, are representative of the various stages leading up to the purchase by the Benevolent Congregational Society of an organ for their new meetinghouse, from their resolution early in 1802 stating that

"We, the subscribers, believing it to be the wish of everyone who frequents public worship (whether influenced by Piety, Ostentation or Pleasure), that the 'Concord of Sweet Sounds' make a part of their Devotional Exercises -- Do agree to have an Elegant Organ in order that the insufficiency of Singing alone may be obviated, and that the music, necessary on the Lord's Day, may be no longer dependent on Caprice,"

to the payment in December 1803 of a bill presented by a Daptain Godfrey for unloading the organ at the Providence wharf.

In general, the letters from John Geib (1744-1819) are valuable, revealing the many problems of an early organ builder, including heretofore unknown information about Geib's own bankruptcy case in New York courts, as well as many amusing comments about the workmanship of his competitors. The references to his own work will prove important in supplementing the historical records of the churches where his organs were installed. One letter, in particular, is especially informative, and seems worth presenting in its entirety. In order to retain the charm of Geib's letters expressed in his curious spellings, no editorial corrections have been made. These spellings are understandable when one considers the German origin of the writer, shown in his frequent interchange of "d" for "t" and "b" for "p" as well as improvised phonetic spellings of words such as "fram" for "frame" and hier" for "here," with the delightful addition of "Vaschumana."

To briefly acquaint the reader with the persons and places mentioned in the following letter, these names may be noted: David Vinton whom Geib addresses in the third person, was chairman of the organ committee at the Church who had inquired about the new Avery organ in the First Church, Salem, Massachusetts; John Paff, a New York music dealer at 127 Broadway, later published music by Geib's son Adam (1780-1845); Captain Anthony sailed one of the many trading ships between New York and the port of Providence; Avery and Clico were apparently well-known European organ builders in the era: Christ (Episcopal) Church was situated on Ann Street, between William and Nassau Streets until 1822; the German Lutheran Church has been identified by Mr. F. R. Webber as St. Matthew's, at the corner of Broome and Elizabeth Streets in New York City.

* * * * *

New York June 6th 1802

Mr. Vinton

Sir --

Your letter of the 22d of may, has been handed to me by Mr. Paffe and I made inquiring in the post office after yours of May 6th but could not find a letter derected to me, till at last, I went to the Captain Mr. Anthony and he del^e me a letter of May 24th in the same haure, a gentlemen met me in the Street, told me their was a letter advertised in the Post Office belongin to me; I went re^{live} the same been yours of May 6th.--in all those letter, Mr. Vinton had the politeness to invite me to com directly with Mr. Anthony to Providence, which at present is impossible--as been about the Erec-

(Cont'd on page 2)

SOME LETTERS FROM MR. JOHN GEIB (cont'd)

tion of that large Organ for St. Georges, and which will be intierly finished in 6 weekes, and my absence would Delay the work very much--therefor hope, my not been pre-sent by the Contract, will not Cause a Delay--Mr. Anthony had the Goodness to go with me to Church, and he will give you a good aicaunt of what he seen--

Mr. Vinton had also the goodness to observe to me, whate he seen at Salem -- and that the Organ cost only 341 pounds Sterling, with a deal case; painted, no annulet (?); and add the Expenses of Paking; fright; insurence; Duty; and till it is put up, will cost them 2000 dollars--and upwards, and then run the Risk, if a good one -- well if not -- no indepenting on my good work--and flater myselfes, that I thinke to be capable of building an organ with Mr. Avery of London, or a Monser Cllico of Paris, and a few more in Europe, and beside responsible for every thing build or manufactured by me.-- Considring all advantages--the building an Organ consisting in such a number of dif-ferent articules, in the country where it is to stand, and to be used, must certainly have the perseverance in durability, and a few dollar cannot been a oject to a Soci-ety of gentlemen,--- a friend of mine seen the Organ at Salem and speak but slightly about it--and I think, I could build one for the same whate that Cost, an the same plane--Sin hier follow a description of the organs I have build for this City, which will be a quiet to the gentlemen to fram the Contract.

German Luthern Church

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. OpDiapasson throughaute from treble GG. to F in alt-- | |
| 2. Stopdiapason | do - do - do |
| 3. Principal - | do - do - do |
| 4. 12th | do &c |
| 5. 15th | do &c |
| 6. Tiers | do &c |
| 7. Cornet . treble) | |
| 8. Sesq. Bass) 3 rankes | |
| 9. Trumpet - throughaute as befor | |
- Two pair of bellowes, an ellegant best ma-hogany case, gild front and ornaments -- 9₂ by 15 feet. Duble && in front, and a set of keys in great organ, and one set from fidle G in Swell - a trimland - the cost 1000 in this place.

Swell from Fidle G

1. opd or Dulciana
2. Stopd
3. Principal
4. Hautbois

Christ Church Organ

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. opdiapasson throughoute from duble GG to F in alt | |
| 2. Stopd | Do-- Do - Do |
| 3. principal | Do &c |
| 4. 12th | Do &c |
| 5. 15th | Do &c |
| 6. Tiers | Do &c |
| 7. Cornet treble) | |
| 8. Sesq. bass) 3 rankes | |
| 9. Trumpett - throughaute as befor | |
- Two pair of bellowes, with an ellegant ma-hogany case, gild front ornaments, 10 by 15 feet -- Duble && (begings) in front. one Sett of keys for Great organ--one set for choir & swell the Cost 1200.

Choir & Swell -

1. Stopdiapasson in choir. Bass
2. Flute throughaute
3. 15th - Do
- Stopdiapasson Treble Swell
4. Dulciana - Swell
5. princ - Swell
6. Vaschumana - Swell
- 15 Stopes

SOME LETTERS FROM MR. JOHN GEIB (cont'd.)

I thought it proper to send the plane for both, them organs and which ever you bleas to take, must be inserted in the agreement, the agreement to be singe by you gentlemen and sent to me for the same, the cash to be paid as followes. the first payment 200 pounds and evert two months after 150 till I have rec 950L then the rest of 250 to be paid in May next, when the Organ finished; that is to say, if you should choose the plane of Christ Church organ, and if that of the German Lutheran Church, you may devite the payment, and leave only 200 pounds when finished to be paid, this is the plane I have built all the organs hier, and also the (illeg.) in Europe --

I wish Mr. Vinton all the success required in his undertaking and I shall spare no pains to make amends in the goodness of my work, and am

Sir

with all respect
your most able serv^t

J Geib

be so ablidging as to let Mr. Anthony bring the Contract to my Hause for Execution and let it be rote in the firm of J. Geib & Co -- for my son is sing the same --

N.B. I have at present not time to make a drawing of your organ, or else I would but I engage to forfeite anything if not the same as any one bleas to choose.

* * * * *

In epilogue, we learn through the remaining correspondence that delay of payments for the organ forced Geib into bankruptcy. Work was put aside in favor of other contracts, with the completed instrument, costing \$2500, actually delivered seven months after its contracted date of May 1803. Geib's "opus 4" (if we are to judge from the information provided in the letters), described as

"one large elegant, well finished, good toned organ - the case to be of the best mahogany, to measure eightenn feet high, twelve feet wide, and five feet deep, with three towers front gilt ornaments & pipes as usual"

differed little from his installation for Christ Church, leaving the discrepancy in cost to speculation. The Unitarian church was destroyed by fire in June 1814, as was Christ Church in a later year. However, the organ had a less tragic fate than its New York prototype, with pipes rescued intact to be incorporated into another instrument built by the Goodrich Company of Boston in 1816.

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THE CHAPEL ORGAN OF THE DUKE OF CHENDOS

We received a number of interesting letters concerning the inquiry made in our last issue about the organ at Cannons. Herewith follow some excerpts from some of the letters which will be of interest to our readers.

Wm. King Covell writes "...look back to "The Organ" Volume VII No. 25 (July 1927) pp 52-54. If you do not have this available, let me know and I will give you a summary of it. The article is by Andrew Freeman and is entitled "The Handel Organ at Gosport". There is a picture of the organ (half-tone plate) and a full description of its history."

W. L. Sumner writes from Nottingham "...The organ, built by Jordon in 1720, was removed to Holy Trinity Church, Gosport (across Portsmouth Harbour) and was enlarged by Hill the organ-builder. It was untouched in the War, in spite of the heavy 'blitz', which destroyed so much in that district. It is played Sunday by Sunday. I have no photograph, but will take one when next I am in Portsmouth."

From J. R. Knott, President of the Organ Club "...the "honor" of being THE Handel organ, in the considered opinion of the late Andrew Freeman lies with the instrument at Holy Trinity, Gosport. The original stoplist is not known. In 1857 the stoplist was: Great (GG to F) Open Diapason, Stopped Diapason, Principal, 12th, 15th, Sesq III,

THE CHAPEL ORGAN OF THE DUKE OF CHANDOS (Cont'd.)

Mixt II, Mounted cornet V, Trumpet. Choir (CC to F) Stopped Diapason, Dulciana, Principal, Stopped flute, 15th, Viol di Gamba (ex Vox H). Swell (Fid. G to F) Open Diapason, Stopped Diapason, Principal, Cornet III, Trumpet, Hautboy. Pedal (GG to G) one 8ve of large scale unison pipes."

F. R. Webber corroborates the above and adds the interesting information that the "great Witley Church contains the windows and the fine ceiling from the demolished Chandos Chapel."

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PROGRAM AND SPECIFICATION - Submitted by Mr. Robert Whiting of Philadelphia
Exhibition of the New Grand Organ
CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY
Corner Shawmut Avenue and Cobb St., Boston
Monday Evening, May 21st. 1877, at 8 o'clock

Programme

1. Chorus - Gloria from Jos. Gr. Zangl, Op. 90.
Church Choir
2. Prelude, B Minor. Bach
3. Intermezzo Schumann
4. Reminiscence of 5th Symphony Raff
5. Triumphal March Whitney
Mr. S. B. Whitney
Organist of Church of the Advent, Boston
6. Song - Sancta Maria Faure
Mr. G. Frank Monroe
7. Registration Fantasie (written for opening of the Boston Cathedral Organ) . Whiting
Introduction, Theme with Variations, March tempo, Intermezzo, Finale
8. Fugue, D Minor Bach
9. Andante, with Variation. Spohr
10. Overture to William Tell (arranged by G. E. Whiting) Rossini
By Request
Mr. G. E. Whiting, Organist of Church of the Immaculate Conception, Boston
11. Song - Christmas Song Adam
Mr. G. Frank Monroe
12. Sonata No. 1, F Minor Mendelssohn
Allegro moderato, Adagio, Andante Recit., Allegro assai vivace
13. Overture - Jessonda Spohr
Mr. Samuel B. Whiteley, Late Organist of Holy Trinity, Brooklyn, N. Y.
14. Chorus - Pope Pius IX Jubilee Hymn The Rev'd P. T. Mohr, S.J.
Church Choir

Description of the Grand Organ in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Boston, Mass. Built by E. & G. G. Hook & Hastings of Boston. The instrument comprises three Manuals, each of 58 notes, and a Pedal of 30 notes, 45 speaking stops, 9 mechanical registers, including couplers, and 6 pedal movements for combinations, etc. Total no. of pipes 2880.

All manuale couplers connecting with the great key-board are controlled by knobs directly over it, and are operated by pneumatic motors.

Pneumatic motors are applied to each note of the great manuale and its couplers.

All the combination pedals are double acting, and operate without affecting combinations previously made by the registers.

There are two bellows, at different pressures. The higher pressure bellows has parallel feeders of double capacity, operated by an hydraulic motor.

program and specification (cont'd.)

The exterior comprises groups of large metal pipes, richly decorated at the front, and wood pipes at the sides, sustained by ornamental bands and columns, above a substantial casing of ash and walnut woods.

The organ is placed in the west gallery - 35 ft. high, 24 ft. wide, 20 ft. deep.

The builders of the organ ask attention to the massive, well-balanced tone of the full organ, to the excellent diapasons, and to the superior quality of the reed stops. Also, to the perfect evenness and nice finish of the tone, to the delicacy and ease of the touch, and to the convenience, accuracy and lightness of each mechanical appliance.

GREAT ORGAN, 15 Stops

1. 16' Open Diapason
2. 8' Open Diapason
3. 8' Doppel Flote
4. 8' Gemshorn
5. 8' Gamba
6. 8' Hohlflote
7. 6' Quinte
8. 4' Flute Harmonique
9. 4' Octave
10. 3' Twelfth
11. 2' Fifteenth
12. IV rank Cornet
13. IV rank Mixture
14. 8' Trumpet
15. 4' Clarion

SWELL ORGAN, 12 Stops

16. 16' Bourdon
17. 8' Open Diapason
18. 8' Salicional
19. 8' Stopped Diapason
20. 4' Octave
21. 4' Flauto Traverso
22. 3' Nasard
23. 2' Flautino
24. IV rank Cornet
25. 8' Cornopean
26. 8' Oboe (with Bassoon)
27. 8' Vox Humana

PEDAL MOVEMENTS

1. Forte Combination Pedal for Great Organ, with appropriate pedal stops
2. Piano Combination Pedal for Great Organ, with appropriate pedal stops
3. Forte Combination Pedal for Swell Organ, with appropriate pedal stops
4. Piano Combination Pedal for Swell Organ, with appropriate pedal stops
5. Reversible Pedal for Great and Pedal Coupler
6. Adjustable Swell Pedal

CHOIR ORGAN, 9 Stops

- | | | |
|----------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Metal 58 | 28. 16' Lieblich Gedact | Wood 58 |
| " 58 | 29. 8' Geigen Principal | Metal 58 |
| Wood 58 | 30. 8' Dulciana | " 58 |
| Metal 58 | 31. 8' Melodia | Wood 58 |
| " 58 | 32. 4' Flute d'Amour | Wood & Metal 58 |
| Wood 58 | 33. 4' Dolce | Metal 58 |
| Metal 58 | 34. 2' Piccolo | " 58 |
| " 58 | 35. 8' Clarinet | " 58 |
| " 58 | 36. 16' Cor Anglais | " 58 |

PEDAL ORGAN, 9 Stops

- | | | |
|----------|-----------------------|----------|
| " 232 | 37. 16' Open Diapason | Wood 30 |
| " 232 | 38. 16' Bourdon | " 30 |
| " 58 | 39. 16' Violone | " 30 |
| " 58 | 40. 16' Trombone | " 30 |
| | 41. 12' Quinte | " 30 |
| Wood 58 | 42. 8' Violoncello | Metal 30 |
| Metal 58 | 43. 8' Octave | Wood 30 |
| " 58 | 44. 8' Trumpet | Metal 30 |
| " 58 | 45. 4' Super Octave | " 30 |

MECHANICAL REGISTERS

- | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|
| Wood 58 | 46. Great Organ Separation |
| Metal 58 | 47. Swell to Great, Coupler |
| " 58 | 48. Choir to Great, Coupler |
| " 232 | 49. Swell to Choir, Coupler |
| " 58 | 50. Great to Pedal, Coupler |
| " 58 | 51. Swell to Pedal, Coupler |
| " 58 | 52. Choir to Pedal, Coupler |
| | 53. Tremolo Swell |
| | 54. Bellows Signal |

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NOTES, QUOTES and COMMENTS - by Kenneth Simmons

From Welling, Kent (England) "Our congratulations to Barbara Owen on becoming the first president of The Organ Historical Society. We all wish your society every success and will follow your progress with much interest . . . Yours sincerely, J. R. Knott, F.R.S.A., President, The Organ Club 1956-57." I would like to thank Mr. Knott and our other friends across the sea for their warm greetings and interest for the Organ Historical Society. Incidentally, our circulation is still on the increase. Not only

are copies going all over the United States and Canada, but copies of the last issue went to England, France, Italy, French Equatorial Africa, and Nigeria.

Activities of members of the Organ Historical Society in behalf of our cause are also on the increase. I did a short article for "The Crescendo" about THE TRACKER and OHS, and recently gave an illustrated lecture for one of the local clubs. Barbara Owen sent the following news of activities:

"The OHS was represented in the recent excellent month-long exhibit of organabilia in the lobby of the Chicago public library. This exhibit was put on by the Chicago chapter of the AGO as a part of their celebration of their 50th anniversary.

"In Lexington, Ky., the local AGO recently had a meeting at the home of Mrs. Wm. Lloyd Mahan which featured a historical talk and a recital on Hook & Hastings #1723, built in 1895, which had recently been removed from a nearby church and installed intact in the Mahan home.

"Recent recitals given on old organs include those given on August 13 and 18 by Barbara Owen on the 1864 Hook in First Baptist, Burlington, Vt., and the 1875 Hutchings-Plaisted in the Universalist Church, Woodstock, Vt.; by Ronald C. Perera on the W. H. Clark organ in the Swedenborgian Church of Yarmouth Port, Mass., on Sept. 1st; by Philip Buddington on the Steere and Turner restored by Delaware in the North Church, Amherst, Mass., on October 6th. Besides these, recitals were given on the Andover rebuild in Newburyport (described in the last issue of THE TRACKER) on October 20th by Melville Smith; and also an Andover rebuild of a Hamill on the same date by Mary Crowley Vivian, in the Unitarian Church of Billerica, Mass."

For those who are keeping records of pipe marks, Bob Reich writes: "I found the name 'John W. Heel' written on one of the 15th pipes in the small John Roberts organ I am working on in Smithtown, New Hampshire."

We receive a number of requests for back issues of THE TRACKER which we are not able to fill. To those who have asked, I would like to say that we intend to reissue Volume I as soon as it is practical to do so.

I am certain that many of you have thought that I must have vanished from the earth since I have not answered your letters. I would like to say, on my behalf, that this Fall has been extremely busy and that unanswered correspondence is piled high on my desk. I do hope that now that the holidays are past, I will be able to "catch up".

Mr. N. Richard Wilson, 5 Collins Street, Chateaugay, New York, would like to hear from readers who know of organs built by Ryder. Mr. Wilson moved a 2-11 Ryder of about 1870 and found the voicing and action excellent. The Great Diapasons are very well made of sturdy spotted metal, he says.

Tom Eader has been busy on the Baltimore builders, and we shall learn more of his work in the next issue of THE TRACKER. He has recently purchased an early 19th century organ which he plans to set up soon. The details sound intriguing.

It will soon be time to think about our annual conference. Watch for detailed announcement and information in the April issue, and plan to attend.

Robert J. Reich, 23 High Street, Methuen, Mass., would like information on John Roberts of Frankford, Pennsylvania, (organ builder) and any of his existing organs.

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ADDITIONS TO THE BUILDERS LIST

Barnhart, John: Baltimore. Built 1837-41.

Bimeler, Peter: Zoar Village, Ohio. Miller by trade, built organs c1880.

Clap, John: Cincinnati, Ohio. Built c1857

Crowell, William: Mt. Vernon, New Hampshire. Built early 19th century.

Dayton, J: Wolcottville, Conn. Built few organs prior to 1860.

Deré: Quebec City, Canada. Built c1880

Gratian, Joseph: Alton, Ill. Built c1897 on.

ORGANS FOR SALE: (Note - Interested parties should contact Miss Barbara J. Owen
P. O. Box 64, Portland, Conn., for detailed information.)

1. Johnson & Son, 1891 Opus 766, 2-19, State Hospital for Insane, Jacksonville, Ill.
2. Johnson & Son, 1885 Opus 649, 2-22, Central Baptist, Jacksonville, Ill.
3. E. & G. G. Hook, 1857, Opus 226, 1-8, Bethlehem Lutheran, East Hampton, Conn.
4. Simmons & McIntyre, 1849, 1-5, Christ Episcopal, Stepney, Conn.
6. John G. Marklove, c1880, 1-6, Fred N. Buch, Ephrata, Pa.
7. Diffenbach, c1860, 1-5, Fred N. Buch, Ephrata, Pa.
8. S. S. Hamill, 1882, 2-14, Grace Evangelical United Brethren, Hanover, Pa.
9. George Andrews, c1860, 1-8, Baptist Church, New Berlin, New York.
10. Hook & Hastings, c1885, 2-7, Marshall Stone, Arlington, Virginia.
11. Small early 19th century parlor organ, 1-5, Zion Episcopal, North Branford, Conn.
12. George Jardine, 1867, 2-15, without case.

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FURTHER ADDITIONS TO THE BUILDER'S LIST

Hales, Norris G.: Baltimore, built 1837-42.

Jenneys: Boston. Engraver by trade; built a chamber organ prior to 1799.

Newton: Norwich, Vermont. Built prior to 1798.

Park & Paddock: St. Johnsbury, Vermont. Built c1841.

Peasley, Aaron M.: Boston. Patented an organ 1818.

Smith & Allen: East Berkshire, Vermont. Built c1885.

Smith, Joel: Middlefield, Conn. Engraver by trade, built organ c1800.

Ware, Josiah Holbrook; Medway, Mass. Built c1833, later partner of G. Holbrook.
(Goodrich man.)

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CODA

This issue of THE TRACKER (as all previous ones) is published free of charge by the Organ Historical Society. Costs are covered by a group of voluntary contributions sent in from time to time by members and friends of the Society. Donations (no matter how small) and articles submitted for publication should be sent to the editor:

Kenneth F. Simmons
20 Devonwood Road
Wayne, Pennsylvania

March 20th is the deadline for the next (April) issue

Inquiries about the Organ Historical Society and especially about the sale or disposal of old organs should be sent to the Society's president:

Miss Barbara J. Owen
P. O. Box 64, Portland, Conn.

Notices of change of address and requests for copies of the organ report form -- still available and free for the asking -- should be sent to:

Albert F. Robinson
St. Cornelius Chapel
Fort Jay, Governors Island
New York 4, New York.

Your comments, suggestions and criticisms are welcomed. Write us now.

This copy was mimeographed at the Chapel of Saint Cornelius the Centurion, (Trinity Parish in the City of New York) Governors Island, New York Harbor.

"SOLI DEO GLORIA"

(Reprinted Dover, Del, Feb., 1961)