

VOLUME 63, NUMBER 4, OCTOBER 2019

# THE TRACKER

JOURNAL OF THE ORGAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY





# JULY 26–31, 2020

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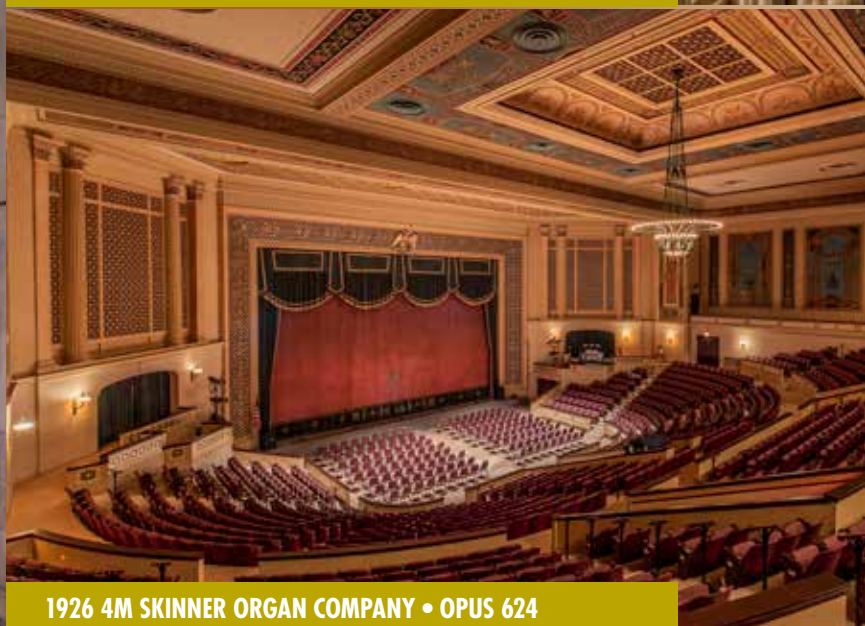
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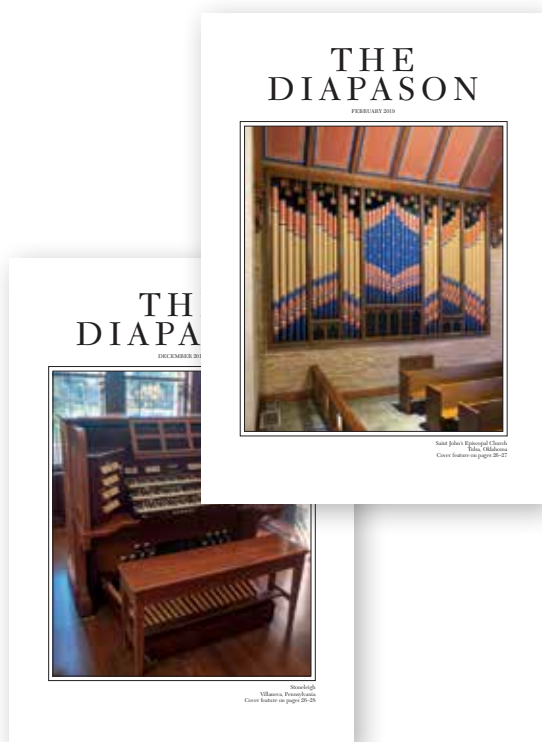
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# THE TRACKER

VOLUME 63, NUMBER 4, OCTOBER 2019

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THE TRACKER is subjected to peer review by the Organ Historical Society Publications Advisory Board, the Archivist of the Organ Historical Society, and the Editor Emeritus of The American Guild of Organists.



### ON THE COVER

The 1866 Koehnken & Co. organ in the Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio. The organ was restored in 2004 by the Noack Organ Co., Opus 147. This instrument will be featured during the OHS 2020 annual convention.

PHOTO LEN LEVASSEUR

ED McCALL

## From the CEO



THE GLOW from attending the OHS convention in Dallas Texas still burns as brightly as the hot summer sun while I take some time to write this October column. We were all wishing for those cool fall breezes back then. The convention that took place mid-July, nevertheless, was a glorious celebration of the pipe organ in the southwest. Over two dozen instruments were on full display thanks to our recitalists and to the local committee who selected them. Those in attendance remarked at the seamless schedule, the delicious cuisine, and the attentive convention staff. From the opening Evensong at the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, through the tour of Roy Redman's shop and a final meal at the Stockyards in Fort Worth, OHS delegates savored a bouquet for the senses—sights and sounds of pipe organs to last at least until the convention in Columbus, Ohio, takes center stage. I loved meeting the delegates who attended the convention and am grateful for their thoughtful words of appreciation.

A final word of gratitude to the Dallas committee:

- ▶ Chris, Benjamin, and James for spearheading the event
- ▶ Rene for tirelessly ensuring on-time scheduling with buses and making sure *everyone* arrived safely
- ▶ Françoise for outstanding meal services, including fresh flower decorations from her own garden!
- ▶ Joel for navigating the roiling waters of performer schedules and requirements
- ▶ Jesse for graciously hosting the OHS in Denton
- ▶ Scott for the Evensong and leading the Biggs Seminar
- ▶ Scott for your work on the committee
- ▶ Sheryl for assisting with hotel arrangements
- ▶ Larry for hosting at SMU
- ▶ Bobbie and committee members for shepherding the Biggs Scholars programs
- ▶ Jacob, Marcia, Bynum for behind-the-scenes efforts

The Dallas convention offered many the opportunity to have open, honest discussions about determining “historic” as a descriptor of an instrument. From my perspective, these

# From the CEO | CONTINUED

conversations grew from the roster of instruments on display across the DFW metroplex region. As Bynum Petty writes in his review,

Of the 27 organs heard at the Dallas convention, 16 were built in the mid- to late-20th century, and eight in the 21st century. Of the 24 recitalists heard, more than half were under the age of 50; and as such, the OHS undeniably is a forward-looking organization that embraces the present and looks towards the future with alacrity, yet one with deep roots in the past.

I think back to 1956 when the founding members of the OHS, as teenagers, walked the streets of Manhattan. It is not far-fetched to suggest that organs built around 1900 heard by 18-year-olds then would be considered historic. Fast-forward to 2019. Our Biggs Scholars, most of whom were born only some 20 years ago or so would share the same sensibility about instruments manufactured in the mid-'60s and '70s. So, I posit that "historic" is an ever-advancing distinction and one that is a vital part of the OHS evolution.

It is well to be reminded that all music and all historic organs were once new, for truly we experienced the history of the future in Dallas. (BP)

It hardly seems possible that one year ago I was in Rochester, meeting you for the very first time. It has been a busy period of growth for the OHS and I would like to share some of those highlights with you here:

- ▶ Created the "Sustaining Member" category
- ▶ Created and launched STUDENT CHAPTERS across the country
- ▶ Wrote successful grant applications to provide funding for the October symposium
- ▶ Hired part-time accountant/bookkeeper to provide the OHS staff and board with up-to-date and accurate financial reporting
- ▶ Ran two successful online elections
- ▶ Submitted a massive grant proposal to the National Endowment for Humanities for our Library and Archives

- ▶ Launched OH! a monthly newsletter featuring current events and upcoming news
- ▶ Convention issue of THE TRACKER provided significant cost-savings to the OHS
- ▶ Held a successful convention in Dallas
- ▶ Planning for Columbus 2020
- ▶ Announced plans for an OHS convention in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, in July 2021
- ▶ Developed plans for the Aeolian-Skinner Symposium at Stoneleigh in October 2019
- ▶ Re-opened the online OHS e-shoppe with refreshed inventory

The four of us who work at the OHS national office in Villanova, Pa., are proud of the accomplishments made since last summer. We continue to strive every day to serve the needs of our members across the country and across the ages. The OHS is evolving and with each step taken it is our intention to honor the past while preparing us all for the future. Knowing and accepting any areas of improvement is a critical part of our planning process. I am grateful that our staff and our members are a reflective group, concerned that this evolutionary process is guided by solid principles and guarded by a terrific board of directors.

The Organ Historical Society functions because of the generosity of its members, donors, advertisers, and benefactors. Membership dues alone do not come close to covering the cost of our annual budget. It falls to those who love and care for this organization to make our ANNUAL APPEAL a resounding success. The move to Stoneleigh, while significant and worthy of celebration, comes at a cost to the Society. Please take the time to read through the centerpiece financial report on our stability, our resources, and our needs for 2020. We need *every member* to help the OHS gain traction with our finances and position us for greater success ahead. I told our Biggs Scholars in Dallas that the OHS intends to be the *professional organization of choice for everyone who loves the pipe organ*. Won't you help us fulfill that goal?

Ed McCall

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## THE BARTON ORGAN OF THE FAIR PARK AUDITORIUM, DALLAS

THE ORIGINAL CONSOLE was owned for years by one Bob Foley and his well-known organist partner, Raymond Shelley (whom E. Power Biggs procured a Columbia recording contract for) and was prominently displayed in their music room. It was seen publicly during a regional convention ca. 1970 while it was still mostly intact.

We can clarify some specification errors and questions, as well. Barton, like the other major theater organ companies, had a very standard and well-known specification progression and seldom deviated from their tried-and-true layouts after their earlier works of 1920–1923. We know what stops were derived from what ranks and, in the case of the Fair Park, both first-hand knowledge and some existing electrical components give many clear clues and information as to what was what.

Going down the line:

- The small Diapason was unified to 4' at least on the Great but likely had no Diaphone octave
- The Tibia Clausas had no 2' extensions
- The 2' Fifteenth was a unification of the Viol d'Orchestre without exception—these ranks carried the principal string unification from 16'–2'
- The Flute appeared on Great divisions at 1⅓' but never at 1', not even on the magnum opus at the Chicago Stadium
- The 4' Pedal Flute would have likely been the standard Concert Flute borrow as found on all larger Bartons
- The Mandolin was a “rinky-tink” attachment to the Piano and affected all Piano stops when engaged
- Chrysoglotts (a form of Celesta) were 37 notes
- Glockenspiels were always 37 notes
- “Bells” is the reiterating mode of the Glockenspiel and designated with this name on the tabs. It was not a separate instrument.
- Traps did not and could not appear on Pizzicato touch. Pizzicato is a momentary plucking effect that has no practical use for striking percussions. Barton's Pizzicato normally involved a “Solo to”– coupler and, rarely, a Pedal reed or Diaphone. All of the Fair Park (and most other organs') Pedal traps, however, appeared on 2nd Touch.

Barton's metal pipe suppliers were mostly Dennison (also Diaphones), Gottfried, and Meyer for some strings, Diapasons, and Quintadenas. Percussions came from Deagan (on occasion listed as Nagaed).

Clark Wilson, July 9, 2019

WHILE I KNOW NOTHING of the organ itself, the four-manual Barton console made its way to Wichita, Kansas, at the home of Raymond Shelley, a well-known organist of Wichita's Miller Theatre at the time. Following Shelley's death, the console went to the home of Bob Foley (in Wichita) with the intention of attaching it to the already existing theater organ. (I visited this home and saw the silent set-up in the quite large music room.) The planned attachment was never accomplished and following Foley's death in the late 1990s, his partner, David Dillon, sold off everything and moved to Oklahoma City.

Bob Goodwin, July 19, 2019

ALTHOUGH LONG USED by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and Dallas Opera, the Fair Park Music Hall's vast spread of 3,400 seats was far from ideal for either. The DSO has not performed there in 30 years, since the opening of the I.M. Pei-designed Meyerson Symphony Center. The Dallas Opera left ten years ago for the new Foster & Partners-designed Winspear Opera House, where Texas Ballet Theater also performs. The Music Hall is mainly used now for big touring productions of musicals and occasional pop and jazz concerts, and even some of those now happen at the Winspear.

Scott Cantrell, July 10, 2019

## AMERICAN ORGANS ABROAD

IN 2003, E. & G.G. Hook No. 553 (III/39, 1870) left the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Woburn, Massachusetts, its home for over 130 years, to cross the Atlantic and be re-installed in the Kirche zum Heiligen Kreuz (Church of the Holy Cross), in Berlin, Germany (*see* Lois and Quentin Regestein, “Hook No. 553 to Berlin, Germany” in *The Diapason*, February 2003). While sad to see it leave, George Bozeman comforted me with the fact that it was free of an acoustic tomb and sounded fantastic in its new home.

In 2009, David Wallace installed his Opus 64, a rebuild of E. & G.G. Hook No. 173 (1854) in the Church of Our Lady & Saint Rochus, in Boom, Belgium. I discovered this a decade after the fact when a YouTube video popped up in *Recommended* listing.

About 2017, the German firm Orgelbau Schulte installed what was originally Steer & Turner Opus 14 (1869) in Cologne; (Rodenkirchen, “St. Maternus”). That same firm is actively soliciting business in Europe to buy old British and American organs, refurbish or rebuild them as needed, and install them in European churches. Looking at the list of organs available on the Schulte website: [http://www.orgelbau-schulte.de/de/htmls/england\\_amerika.htm](http://www.orgelbau-schulte.de/de/htmls/england_amerika.htm). I recognize many from the pages of the Organ Clearing House.

While it is better to see vintage American organs going to use elsewhere than adding to a landfill, it is a bit chill-

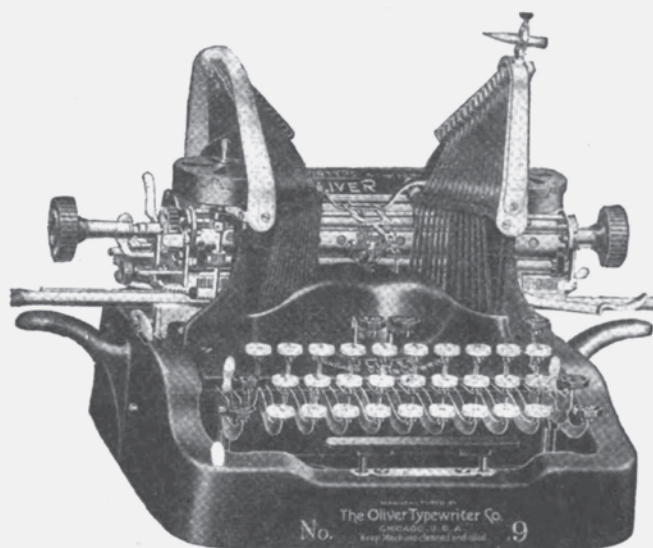


ing to think this trend could grow to the point that future OHS conventions might be held in Germany because that will be area of the largest concentration of historic American organs! While three instruments do not make a trend quite yet, stranger things have happened: how many people did you know who drove an imported car in the 1960s?

There was adequate production by Henry Erben, the Hook brothers, the Steeres, and William Johnson that we won't miss a few of them being reinstalled in Europe, but perhaps we should consider a response for the day that some other landmark instrument is sold to an overseas buyer.

I can easily imagine some three- or four-manual instrument, once the magnum opus of its firm, or some smaller gem of particular significance, languishing in a vacant church in a now decaying urban center or a shrinking community in the farm-belt, being picked up for a trifle and shipped out of the country. Indeed, two of the organs shown on the *Instruments Available* page of the German website once graced the cover of THE TRACKER. E. & G.G. Hook & Hastings No. 779, (II/15, 1874, Keokuk, Iowa) was featured in Vol. 29 No. 4 (1986) and heard at the 1986 OHS convention. Hook & Hastings (III/38, 1905, McKim Residence, Washington D.C.) was showcased in the Fall 1971 issue. Bill Czelusniak pointed out to me that the Steer & Turner now in Germany but still in its Victorian Gothic case, was formerly in Grace Methodist in Keene, New Hampshire and was a featured instrument at the 1974 OHS convention.

Do we protest that America is being robbed of its heritage, or congratulate the Europeans for being wiser than our



fellow citizens in recognizing these hidden treasures? Or just accept that a prophet is not without honor except in his own country? (Remember when American concert artists chose European-sounding stage names?)

Or perhaps this could be the little push needed to convince that reluctant organ committee that if they don't buy that instrument, some overseas buyer will recognize the bargain and snap it up.

Food for thought,  
Stephen Hall

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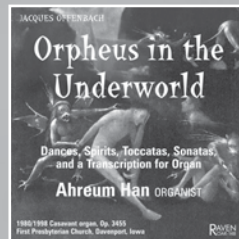
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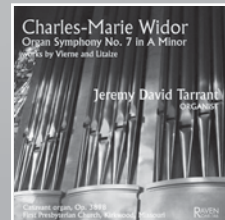


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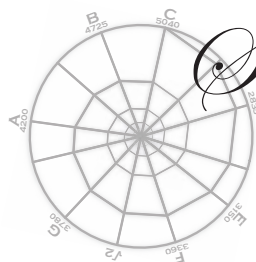
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# A Young Man of Great Promise

## *Franklin S. Whiting and his organ for Saint Paul's Church in Otis, Mass.*

BARBARA OWEN

**D**URING THE FIRST HALF of the 19th century, a surprising number of individuals were building organs in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania. Some went on to found large and well-known establishments that were building organs by the hundreds during the second half of the century; others were more short-lived or smaller in scope, but still produced a substantial number of instruments. Yet, during this period there were individuals, usually, but not always, in areas away from the larger urban centers, who were also building organs in much smaller numbers. Scattered largely throughout New England and upstate New York, they were clever and musically-inclined craftsmen with some skill or training in woodworking, often working alone or with family members or occasional helpers.

And they were meeting a need. Their clientele consisted largely of smaller or newly-established churches in their immediate vicinity, and while a few of these small builders may have occasionally produced a modest two-manual organ, their output consisted mainly of sturdy little one-manual organs whose major purpose was leading congregational singing, providing a more reliable substitute for the string or woodwind instruments previously used for that purpose in many churches. How many of these small and dutiful instruments were produced here and there prior to 1850 is not easily determined. Some individuals are known to have produced fewer than a dozen instruments, including an occasional little house organ; others eventually moved on to other enterprises (often including reed organs) as competition from the urban builders reached out to small towns, thanks to improved transportation. And, as small communities (and churches) grew, virtually all those original small organs were eventually replaced by larger ones. Once in a while, though, we stumble, quite happily, across an exception.

One unique exception is Saint Paul's Episcopal Church in the small rural Massachusetts town of Otis. Founded as one of the earliest Episcopal churches in western Massachusetts, its pleasing wooden building with tall Gothic plain-glass windows was completed in 1830 and consecrated in 1832, the

land having been the gift of Lester Filley (1791–1859), a warden of the church, member of the state legislature, and Otis resident. The organ was built in 1833 and bears the nameplate of F.S. Whiting of New Haven. A recent church history states that the organ cost \$110, but a parochial report from the June 1833 diocesan convention states that “Within the last three months, a good organ built expressly for the church, has been purchased by the parish; in aid of this object the members of the Berkshire Bar very generously contributed \$110.”<sup>1</sup> At the time, Filley was president of that organization. Thus it would seem that this donation was only a portion of the parish's cost for the organ, rather than the total cost, which is unknown. The fact that the purchase was reported in June would suggest that it was made slightly earlier, and the organ presumably constructed and installed during the summer and early fall. Two years later Rev. Calvin Wolcott reported that the Otis congregation “have a good house, good organ, and ordinarily a large and attentive congregation.”<sup>2</sup>

The church's location, though, in a small farming town distant from any major city, caused it never to have had sufficient membership to become an independent parish. It functioned largely as a mission of Saint George's Church in Lee during much of its existence; for most of the 20th century, only as a summer church, with guest clergy. In 1938, the steeple was destroyed in the famous hurricane of that year, and water poured into the organ. The Diocese of Western Massachusetts wanted to close and demolish the damaged building, but local sentiment prevailed and funds were raised by residents to rebuild the steeple and restore the building. While there was no official standing committee, the small group of local members faithfully carried out all essential functions, from fund-raising and care of the building to engaging the summer clergy and providing flowers for the services.<sup>3</sup>

1. *Journal of the Episcopal Diocesan Convention* (June 1833): 40.

2. *Journal of the Episcopal Diocesan Convention* (1835): 29.

3. *From Blackstone to the Housatonic*. Diocese of Western Massachusetts, 2002.



However, the fact that the church was still unoccupied during part of the year seems to have led to break-ins by vandals who caused extensive harm to the organ already damaged by water and rodents. That was its state when first discovered by Organ Historical Society members in the 1950s. As Alan Laufman described it, “Most of the wooden pipes were smashed, and the metal pipes were horribly mutilated, not one was intact. Chest wind-channels and pipes were filled with rodent droppings, nests, and horse-chestnuts.” It was more or less written off as a sad loss. But nobody reckoned on the determination and skill of European-trained master restorer Richard Hamar, who later encountered the organ:

From July to September 1965, Richard Hamar carefully restored the organ. He cleaned every part, and repaired and oiled all the wooden parts. He stripped and refinished the case, regilding the non-speaking wooden [front] pipes and adding a roof, to protect the pipes from any future leakage from above. He repaired damaged wooden pipes, most of which had come totally unglued, and using every scrap of metal he found in, under, and around the organ, he re-rounded and remade the metal pipes. He was able to salvage every pipe that had not completely disappeared, and fabricated new ones to replace ones that were missing altogether. He rebuilt the windchest, releathering the pallets and replacing the pull-down wires. He even salvaged rusted hand-forged screws, cleaning them and deepening the slots before coating them with Vaseline to avoid future rusting.

When the organ was built, the two 8' stops were operated by drawknobs, while the 4' stop was brought into play by means of a foot lever, even though never-connected knobs existed for it and a prepared-for 2' stop. When Richard Hamar provided the 2' Fifteenth, which he made from old pipe metal, he removed the foot lever and associated actions, as they would have interfered with the traces and trundles for the new stop, and fabricated new stop actions for the Principal 4' and the 2' Fifteenth. The toeboard for the Fifteenth was already drilled out, and the rackboard spotted.<sup>4</sup>

The bellows (the feeder of which is foot-pumped by the player) was also releathered during the restoration. The organ was thus again heard during the following summer's services, and remained in regular use during the subsequent years. Nor did it elude the interest of organists and historians. In 1989, it was included in an “organ crawl” by members of the Berkshire Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, during which Paul Hamill performed music of William Selby, Arthur Bird, and Daniel Pinkham. In 1994, the Organ Histori-



*Saint Paul's Church, Otis, Mass.*

cal Society held its annual convention in the area, and Stephen Long played a program of short works by Herbert Howells and John F. Kriebel in the Otis church, and accompanied the singing of an original hymn composed by former Biggs Fellow David Hagberg.<sup>5</sup>

## THE BUILDER

But who was F.S. Whiting of New Haven, the builder of this interesting organ, and what was his background? We first encounter him in the *New Haven Daily Herald*, where, in the fall of 1832, we find a series of advertisements under the heading of “ORGANS” stating the following:

F.S. WHITING

having located himself sometime since in this city would now inform the public that he will make to order Church and Chamber organs of all descriptions wanted by city or country purchasers. He has on hand just finished an elegant Chamber organ at the Cabinet Ware-Room of Messrs. Blair & Bowditch which he offers for sale. The

4. Alan Laufman, ed. *Organ Handbook 1994 Connecticut*, Organ Historical Society (1994), 82.

5. *Ibid.*, 81.

tone and workmanship of his instruments he will warrant inferior to none made in this country.

N.B. Organs & Pianofortes repaired and tuned on short notice. Corner of Church and Court Streets opposite the Tontine.<sup>6</sup>

A year later we find him advertising “For Sale, a PIANO FORTE. Inquire of the subscriber, opposite the Tontine. F.S. Whiting.”<sup>7</sup> This might suggest that he was also making pianos, unless this was only something he had taken in trade, perhaps for the advertised chamber organ? The Tontine was a large hotel facing the Green, where the 1912 court house is now located, so Whiting would seem to have obtained an excellent downtown location for his workshop.

The installation of the Otis organ was said to have taken place in 1833 also, and here we must wonder what Otis’s connection with a virtually unknown and newly established New Haven organbuilder might be. A little internet genealogical research, however, reveals that the donor of the Saint Paul’s church land and organ, Lester Filley, was in fact a Connecticut Yankee, born in Wintonbury (now part of Bloomfield), who had studied at Yale Law School, and who did not migrate to Otis until 1814, when he married a young lady from Otis, set up a law practice there, and eventually was appointed postmaster in 1841. A decade or so later he moved to Lee, where he also practiced law, and was instrumental in founding Saint George’s Church there in 1856. He died there in 1859, but is buried in Otis.

Perhaps Filley retained some friendships or other connections with former Yale associates who remained in the New Haven area, and who might have recommended Whiting to him. He may even have heard of him from some members of the Whiting clan living in Great Barrington, for he served briefly on a commission to study the extension of a railroad from Hartford to the area in 1836, and among the commission’s members was General John Whiting, a fellow lawyer, whose son Francis had studied law at Yale.<sup>8</sup> Filley presumably knew General Whiting as early as 1830, when both were among a group of men given as references regarding the sale of a tavern in Great Barrington.<sup>9</sup>

According to Alan Laufman’s research, Whiting had already built another organ in 1831 for Trinity Church in what is now Seymour, Connecticut, not far from New Haven,

which Filley may have been aware of. That church’s online history does state that an organ was acquired in that year, although it claims that it was from Jardine. However, George Jardine was still in England then, and didn’t arrive in New York until 1836, and research on Jardine by Peter Cameron, citing the records of the Seymour church, confirms that the Jardine organ, said to have been a rebuilding (and probable enlargement) of the Whiting organ, was not installed until 1851, and was eventually replaced by a larger Roosevelt organ in 1891.<sup>10</sup>

The next information on Whiting comes, sadly, from obituaries, for on the morning of February 25, 1834, young Whiting, organbuilder—only 25 years of age—died from what another source called a “fever.” This was in an age when seacoast cities experienced occasional outbreaks of cholera or smallpox, not infrequently attributed to the arrival by sea of infected sailors, foreign immigrants, or African slaves. Even an illness as common as influenza, which we today can usually prevent or cure, could claim the life of a healthy young man back then. And in this case, one who might have gone on to become a noteworthy organbuilder. Whiting most likely would have completed the Otis installation in the summer or fall of 1833, and, for all we know, might even have been planning another organ at the time of his death.



Whiting’s 1832 advertisement suggests that he had only recently arrived in New Haven, and an obituary confirms it: “Mr. W. was a young man of great promise, and, in the short time that he had been located among us, had gained the esteem of all who had become acquainted with him. Although a stranger among us, he will nevertheless be long remembered by the Church of which he was a member, the Sabbath School in which he was a teacher, and in the circle of friends which he has left among us.”<sup>11</sup> But if obviously not a local person, where did he come from? As it turns out, the church he belonged to was the First Church (Center Church on the Green), where he was “Admitted from First Church, Guilford, N.Y.” in 1833.<sup>12</sup> Another obituary provides further confirmation:

His funeral was attended on the Sabbath, from the Center Church, immediately after divine service. A sketch of his character was given by Mr. [Rev. Leonard] Bacon, and the parents and kindred of the deceased, who reside in the state of New-York, and who had not then heard of his

6. *New Haven Daily Herald* (November 26, 1832).

7. *Columbian Register* (May 25, 1833).

8. *Hartford Times* (January 4, 1836).

9. *Connecticut Courant* (January 12, 1830).

10. Information found in Seymour church records by Peter Cameron.

11. “Died,” (*New Haven*) *Connecticut Herald* (February 25, 1834).

12. *Historical Catalog of the Members of First Church of Christ in New Haven, Connecticut* (New Haven, 1914).



death, were remembered in our prayers; and one, [who] was supposed to be most deeply wounded by this providence, was very feelingly remembered by the pastor, who led the devotions of a sympathizing audience, the Mutual Aid Association, of which Mr. Whiting was a member, attended as mourners. The hearse was followed by the family where he resided, and a large succession of Sabbath school teachers, members of the church, and others, who respected the memory of this lamented stranger.<sup>13</sup>

The records of New Haven's Grove Street Cemetery, only a few blocks from New Haven Green, confirm that a Franklin Whiting is interred there, on Sycamore Path. His father and other members of his immediate family are buried in Guilford, New York.

Clearly, young Whiting, in his short time in New Haven, had endeared himself not only to his church and associates, but also, it would seem, to a particular one of the church members. Edmund Franklin Ely (1809–1882), later noted as a missionary to the native Ojibwe people of Minnesota, had been a divinity student in Albany and a choir leader in the Fourth Presbyterian Church there before leaving for the mission field in July 1833, and obviously had become a good friend of Whiting's. His journals have been recently published, and in one of them he records receipt of a letter from a Rev. Hull in Watertown, N.Y. who reported "the death of my beloved friend Franklin S. Whiting of N. Haven Conn. He was the eldest son of Mr. Julius Whiting of Guilford, Chenango Co., N.Y., and was an organbuilder by trade. Had established himself in New Haven with fair prospects—was to have been married to a dear sister in the church, of my acquaintance, in a few weeks. The stroke is severe for the family."<sup>14</sup> Ely (whose middle name might suggest a familial connection) was born in Wilbraham, near Springfield, Mass., but came to Albany as a student in 1828 and although Guilford is some distance west of Albany, may have connected with some members of the Whiting family at that period.

Whiting came not only from an interesting town in upstate New York, but from an interesting family as well. His father, Julius, was both a deacon and "First Chorister" who led the choir in the First Congregational Church in Guilford Center, with another family member, Hiram Whiting, playing the organ. The church building had been completed in 1819, and the organ was built locally, by Elsworth Phelps.<sup>15</sup> Some sources cite Phelps's birth year as 1803, which would

have made him a somewhat improbable 16 years old at the time; however, a Phelps genealogy online gives his birth year as 1797, making him a more realistic 22-year-old when he built that organ. This event is, of course, quite significant with regard to the choir director's son Franklin who, having been born in 1808, would likely, at the age of eleven or twelve, have shown some interest in it—especially since he obviously came from a musical family.

Elsworth Phelps continued to build organs rather sporadically for the rest of his life. He seems to have moved briefly to nearby Homer, where he built an organ for the Episcopal Church in Ithaca in 1825, praised by a reporter who stated, "In justice to Mr. P., I will observe, that I have never heard a finer toned instrument of the kind. Its particular excellence appears to be, the adaptation of the tones of the pipes to the human voice."<sup>16</sup> Another organ, reportedly built by Phelps ca. 1829, was once in the Episcopal Church of Bainbridge, N.Y. By 1830, Phelps was back in Guilford and listed among the first members of the newly organized Christ Episcopal Church in Guilford Village that completed a building in 1834, for which he built an organ that was in use when that building was consecrated in 1836. This organ, initially in the gallery, was moved to a chamber at the right of the chancel when the building was refurbished in 1882, and remained there until replaced in 1909. It was described as having a G-compass keyboard, a 13-note G-compass Pedal, and "three stops, arranged vertically at the left, two were 8-foot stops, Diapason and Dulciana, and one was a 4-foot stop." The tone and volume were described as "quite satisfactory."<sup>17</sup> Phelps continued to live and work in Guilford, where he was still listed as a resident in the 1850 census, remaining active until around the time of the Civil War. While there is no actual record of it to be found, it would seem almost certain that young Whiting must have worked with Phelps—perhaps even from the traditional apprenticeship age of 14—before setting up on his own in New Haven, for the Otis organ shows him to have been a well-trained and accomplished professional.

Perhaps the real mystery is why this young builder chose to move to New Haven from rural upstate New York to begin an independent organbuilding career in the first place. Had he been encouraged by friends there? Was Lester Filley involved in some way, perhaps as a financial backer? Or had Whiting previously made a commitment to his unnamed fiancée in Center Church to relocate to her home town? We will never know. Perhaps there had been some promise of a contract for Center Church, since Trinity and North churches on either side of it already had small organs by the time Whiting arrived. As it was, however, the Center Church congregation

13. *The Religious Intelligencer* (1834): 10:637.

14. *The Ojibwe Journals of Edmund F. Ely 1833–1849*, ed. Theresa M. Schenck (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 105.

15. "Guilford Centre Church Rededication, 1897," reprinted in *Local History Notes* website, 2014.

16. *Ithaca Journal* (February 16, 1825).

17. "The Old Organ," in Leona R. Weir, ed., *History of Christ Church, Guilford, New York, 1830–1955* (Guilford, 1955), 53–54.

continued to endure the musical ministrations of a group of wind and string musicians referred to by Rev. Bacon as “Nebuchadnezzar’s Band” (whose strong point was said to be have been “expression”) until 1855,<sup>18</sup> when Center Church suddenly caught up with the other churches in town by installing a substantial three-manual organ built by E. & G.G. Hook of Boston.

Over the years, all of the earlier organs in growing cities like New Haven have been replaced by a succession of newer and larger ones, but up in the small rural town of Otis, young Whiting’s small and well-crafted instrument, despite periods of damage and disuse, continued its simple Sunday-morning duties into the early years of the 21st century, if usually only during the summer, played for the final two decades by Pat Constantinos. Eventually, however, because the people in Otis could no longer properly maintain it or continue to hold services there, the doors of Saint Paul’s Church were officially closed by the Western Massachusetts Diocese at the end of the 2015 summer season. The five-branch antique crystal chandelier, a gift from Boston’s Old North Church in 1830, was removed and was to be returned to the Boston church.<sup>19</sup> The pulpit and a prayer desk, also said to have been gifts from Boston churches, were also removed, and the building put up for sale. This caused considerable distress to members of the community, and as a result the empty but historic building was eventually offered as a gift to the town, whose voters, after considerable discussion, accepted it at a town meeting in May 2017.<sup>20</sup> A Historical Committee has since been formed to take charge of the building’s care and use for town functions.

The Whiting organ was given to Christ Church Cathedral in Springfield, and funds were provided by the diocese for its removal and restoration. It was thus dismantled by William F. Czelusniak near the end of October 2015, and taken to his workshop for further restoration work, particularly to the windchest, which required new leather to properly seal the note channels. This and all other restorative work has been carefully documented by the restorer according to Organ Historical Society principles. Wind is still provided by the original projecting foot lever, operated by the organist. Now provided with a custom-made movable platform, the organ was placed in the cathedral in May 2016.<sup>21</sup> Although never officially dedicated, Whiting’s small and gentle-voiced organ, restored and given a new home, has already been heard there on certain occasions, and will surely continue its long history of usefulness in aspects of the cathedral’s varied musical life.

18. Henry T. Blake, *Chronicles of New Haven Green* (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1898), 111.

19. “Old North Church Reclaims Colonial-Era Chandelier,” *Boston Globe* (November 9, 2015).

20. “Gift to Town of Old Church Dominates Otis Town Meeting,” *The Berkshire Eagle* (May 22, 2017).

21. Correspondence from William Czelusniak, March 2 and 3, 2019.



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The 4' Principal is of metal except for the three lowest pipes, which are of stopped wood.

The Fifteenth is new, but made by Richard Hamar from old metal, and is two pipes smaller in scale than the Principal.<sup>22</sup>

22. Description in Laufman, 1994 *Organ Handbook*, 82.



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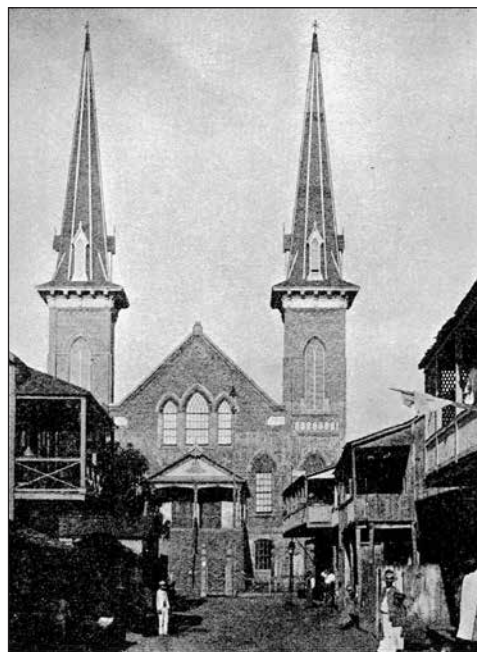
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# Wray Taylor and the Kaumakapili Church Organ

JAMES LEWIS



AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY, Honolulu's churches could boast of a number of American and foreign organs that would have been the pride of many American towns. Boston was represented by an organ from George Stevens and two organs each from William B.D. Simmons and Hook & Hastings. San Francisco builder John Bergstrom constructed three instruments for Honolulu venues, while an organ from German builder E.F. Walcker & Cie. was ordered in 1899 for the German Lutheran Church. Organs imported from Great Britain included an 1863 instrument by J.W. Walker for the Episcopal cathedral, and two organs from the London builder Bevington & Sons, the largest of which is the subject of this article.

On April 1, 1838, the Kaumakapili Church of Honolulu was organized by working-class Hawaiians who desired to be treated as equals and felt uncomfortable worshipping alongside the royalty and wealthy of the community in the Kawaiaha'o Church.<sup>1</sup> In 1839, the new congregation constructed the "Protestant Church for the Common People," a building of adobe with a thatched roof, that could accommodate as many as 2,500 worshippers.<sup>2</sup>

After 42 years, the congregation decided to construct a more substantial edifice of brick. The adobe building was razed and on September 2, 1881, Princess Liliuokalani laid the cornerstone for a new church built on a high basement with a wide flight of stairs leading to the auditorium entrance. The two tall spires flanking the central portion of the facade were visible from both land and sea.

Perhaps influenced by the Bevington & Sons organ installed in Honolulu's Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace in 1875, the Kaumakapili Church purchased a 26-

rank instrument from the Bevington firm in 1886. The newspaper announced:

By the *Zealandia*, an order was sent forward for a fine organ for Kaumakapili Church, in this city. The order was sent to Messrs. Bevington & Sons, of London, who were the builders of the organ in the Roman Catholic Cathedral here, and it is said the new organ will be the largest of its kind in the city. When finished, Kaumakapili Church, with its new organ, will be one of the finest places of worship to be met with here or elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

The finished organ was erected in the Bevington factory on May 16, 1887, and over the following two weeks, two recitals were given to introduce the new instrument to the London public:

The large new organ for the Kaumakapili Church, Honolulu, built by Messrs. Bevington & Sons, the well-known London organ builders, was completed on May 16th. A private letter from the builders to Mr. Wray Taylor<sup>4</sup> states that they have spared no expense in any way to make one of the finest instruments ever turned out of their factory. The action and other parts of the instrument have been specially adapted to the requirements of the tropical climate. When placed in position in the church, the organ will present a most imposing appearance.

On Tuesday evening, May 17, a recital was given on the new instrument at Messrs. Bevington's organ works, London, by Dr. J. Frederick Bridge, organist of Westminster Abbey. Dr. Bridge is one of the finest organists in England and on this occasion played the following programme:

3. *Hawaiian Gazette* (November 30, 1886).

4. Wray Taylor was organist of Honolulu's Episcopal Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew.

1. The Kawaiaha'o Church served as the chapel of Hawaii's royal family.

2. *Hawaii Star Advertiser* (November 20, 2010).



Concertante . . . . .Handel  
 Berceuse . . . . .Delbruck  
 Toccata & Fugue in C. . . . .Bach  
 Nocturne . . . . .Chopin  
 March (*Ruins of Athens*) . . . . .Beethoven  
 Larghetto . . . . .Haydn  
 Air with variations . . . . .Lemmens  
 Marche des Templiers . . . . .Benedict

Colonel George Macfarlane was present at the recital and both he and Dr. Bridge made short speeches at the conclusion of the programme, complimenting the builders very highly on their work, especially as regards the carillons.

On Tuesday evening, May 24th, another recital was given by Dr. H. Walmsley Little, FRCO, and organist of Holy Trinity Church, Tulse Hill, London. The programme was:

Postlude in D . . . . .W.G. Wond  
 Air with variations . . . . .A. Freyer  
 Ave Maria (16th century) . . . . .Arcadelt  
 Allegro Vivace in A . . . . .Morandi  
 Sonata No. 4 in B flat . . . . .Mendelssohn  
 Evening Prayer . . . . .Smart  
 March (*Rock of Israel*). . . . .H.W. Little  
 Allegretto in B Minor. . . . .Guilmant  
 Poet & Peasant Overture. . . . .Suppe

The organ is to leave England July and may be expected in Honolulu the latter end of October.<sup>5</sup>

The organ arrived in Honolulu in January 1888, two months later than predicted, and the newspaper announced:

Among other freight brought by the bark *Min* arriving on Friday, is the great Kaumakapili Church organ. It was built at Messrs. Bevington & Sons Organ Works, London. It will take about a month to put this mammoth “kist of whistles” in position, after which the citizens will have opportunities from time to time of regaling themselves with the massive roll of its thousand harmonies.<sup>6</sup>

It took more than a month to have the organ ready for the dedication recital. One of the problems encountered by the installers was a lack of proper water pressure to run the water motor operating the bellows. The newspaper explained:

It will be blown by water power, an hydraulic motor having been fixed to the bellows handle and when at work, there is not the slightest noise. The only trouble is, the pressure of the water in that part of the city is very low

and when playing the full organ it is not enough. This will be remedied when a larger water main is installed.<sup>7</sup>

The Kaumakapili organ had an elaborate case with two pipe towers and a fan of belled trumpets at the top. Mechanical key action was employed and the attached keydesk had drawknobs arranged in vertical rows on angled jambs. The 16' Double Diapasons on both the Great and Swell each had a twelve-note stopped Bourdon bass, available on separate drawknobs. Although it was a two-manual instrument, an additional third manual was included for playing a 24-note Carillon operated by pneumatic action.

Honolulu's leading organist, Wray Taylor (1853–1910), was invited to play the opening recital at the Kaumakapili Church. Taylor, of Lowell, Mass., had been hired in 1880 as organist and choirmaster of Honolulu's Episcopal cathedral. On arriving in Honolulu, Taylor judged the cathedral's 1863 J.W. Walker “a poor example”<sup>8</sup> and had it replaced in 1881 with a two-manual, 23-stop organ built by George Stevens of Cambridge, Mass.

In 1881, Taylor married Lydia Keomailani Crowninberg (1859–1887), a high-ranking member of Hawaiian royalty, but she died in her 27th year after an illness, leaving Taylor with four young children to raise. He remarried in 1889. In addition to his involvement in local musical matters, Taylor was editor of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Secretary of Hawaii's Bureau of Immigration, and later became the Commissioner of Agriculture.

Wray Taylor was responsible for the organ music played on many royal occasions and gave inaugural recitals on nearly every organ arriving in the Hawaiian Islands between 1880 and 1900. Along with being chosen to play the opening recital on the new Bevington & Sons organ, Taylor was also hired as permanent organist of the Kaumakapili Church. The inaugural recital was held on April 8, 1888, with members of the Hawaiian royal family in attendance. The program consisted of the following works:<sup>9</sup>

a. Kaumakapili March in F. . . . .Taylor  
 b. Berceuse in A. . . . .Delbruck  
 c. Evening Prayer. . . . .Smart  
 d. Fantasia in C major . . . . .Tours  
 e. Carillons de Dunkerque . . . . .Carter-Turpin  
 f. Prelude & Fugue in C. . . . .Bach  
 g. Fantasia Pastorale . . . . .Wely  
 h. Andante in C. . . . .Silas  
 i. Flute Concerto . . . . .Rink  
 j. War March from *Athalie* . . . . .Mendelssohn

7. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (February 27, 1888).

8. *Lowell (Mass.) Daily Courier* (September 18, 1880).

9. *Daily Bulletin* (April 9, 1888).

5. *Honolulu Advertiser* (June 30, 1887).

6. *Hawaiian Gazette* (January 17, 1888).

The day following Taylor's recital, a review appeared in the newspaper:

The inaugural recital of the grand organ, lately imported for the Kaumakapili Church, took place on Saturday evening, when that magnificent instrument responded to the magic touch of Mr. Wray Taylor to whom its manipulation has been permanently entrusted.

The appearance of the organ upon entering the building is imposing in the extreme, the decorations being in excellent taste. But when the organist took his seat and the rich chords of the opening march swelled through the edifice, one was transported in imagination to some of the cathedrals of the old world. The programme was appropriate to the occasion and its rendition was evidently appreciated by the audience which had assembled. With the splendid range of stops, every feature of the music was brought out with telling effect. The organ is equivalent to a whole orchestra of instruments and the notes elicited from it under an experienced hand comprised endless variations, the chime of bells being especially effective.<sup>10</sup>

Tremulant to Swell by Ventils under the Swell keys. Two octaves of Carillons on separate Manual by Pneumatic Action. Composition Pedals—Three on Great and Three on Swell. Pitch Pine Case surmounted with a fan of projecting Trumpet Pipes in center. Front pipes—of special white-ribbed Metal, decorated in gold and color.<sup>11</sup>

The Kaumakapili organ was a popular attraction for visitors and local residents alike, and it was played for services and recitals by Wray Taylor until 1900, when it was destroyed by a fire that incinerated the church building and all of the furnishings. The congregation met in a temporary wood chapel until a new edifice was built and consecrated on June 25, 1911.

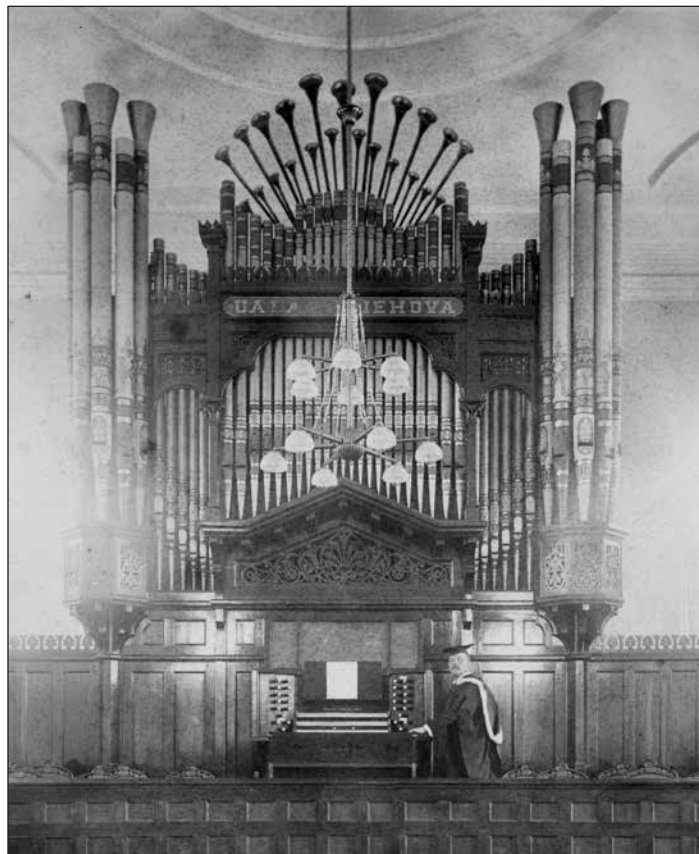
In 1902, Taylor departed on a 14-day leave to attend to business in San Francisco when it was discovered that he had embezzled \$850 (about \$25,000 in today's currency) from Commission of Agriculture funds. The next year he turned up in New York City claiming he had been to London, but said he remembered very little of the trip.<sup>12</sup> Hawaii's Grand Jury chose not to indict Taylor who, by this time, had made his way to San Francisco where he became organist-choirmaster at St. George's Episcopal Church. He served here until 1910 when he suffered a stroke and died, never having returned to the Hawaiian Islands.<sup>13</sup>

10. *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (April 9, 1888).

11. *Honolulu Advertiser* (June 30, 1887).

12. *Honolulu Advertiser* (December 20, 1903).

13. *Hawaiian Star* (July 16, 1910).



Wray Taylor poses next to the 1888 Bevington & Sons organ in the Kaumakapili Church.

# SPECIFICATION OF THE ORGAN BUILT IN LONDON BY BEVINGTON & SONS, FOR THE KAUMAKAPILI CHURCH, HONOLULU 1888

Compass: Manuals, 58 notes, C–a<sup>3</sup>  
Pedal, 30 notes, C–f<sup>1</sup>

## I. GREAT

- 16 Bourdon (12 notes)
- 16 Double Diapason
- 8 Open Diapason
- 8 Dulciana
- 8 Claribel
- 4 Principal
- 4 Harmonic Flute
- 2 Fifteenth
- Mixture III
- 8 Trumpet
- 8 Clarionet

## II. SWELL

- 16 Bourdon (12 notes)
- 16 Double Diapason ]
- 8 Open Diapason
- 8 Bell Gamba
- 8 Voix Celeste
- 8 Lieblich Gedeckt
- 4 Principal
- 2 Piccolo
- Mixture II
- 8 Horn
- 8 Oboe

## III. CARILLON BELLS 24 notes

## PEDAL

- 16 Open Diapason
- 16 Bourdon
- 8 Violoncello

## COUPLERS

- Swell to Great
- Great to Pedal
- Swell to Pedal



# The 64th Annual Convention of the OHS

## *A Celebration of Youth and Contrasts*

BYNUM PETTY

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!  
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music  
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night  
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

*The Merchant of Venice*, Act V, Scene 1

INDEED, sweet harmony was in the air throughout the City of Dallas during the mid-July 2019 convention of the Organ Historical Society, “a city spell-bound under the aging sun.”<sup>1</sup> Intentionally, this was no ordinary gathering, as it was a celebration of youth and the future. First settled in 1841 beside the Trinity River, and later incorporated in 1856, Dallas is still a youthful growing city, with cranes and new construction ubiquitous across its massive 385 square-mile footprint.

Thirty-seven years after the fledgling settlement was founded, the first known pipe organ arrived and was installed at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Cathedral. Built in 1877 by Joseph Gratian of Alton, Illinois, the organ was likely the largest in the state. Of the eight organs Hook & Hastings built for Dallas institutions, the first was a modest two-manual instrument installed at First Methodist Church in 1894.

By the mid-1950s, the tracker organ revival was in its nascence, and

the first modern organ with mechanical key-action was built by Sipe-Yar-brough in 1962 for St. Stephen’s Methodist Church in Mesquite, a Dallas suburb. The success of this instrument and those to follow set the now familiar paradigm of Dallas being on the leading edge of the organ renaissance, with new instruments—both mechanical and electropneumatic—being created by enlightened organbuilders. Of the 27 organs heard at the Dallas convention, 16 were built in the mid- to late-20th century, and eight in the 21st century.

Of the 24 recitalists heard, more than half were under the age of 50; and as such, the OHS undeniably is a forward-looking organization that embraces the present and looks towards the future with alacrity, yet one with deep roots in the past. The youngest of the recitalists were returning Biggs Scholars, all under the age of 30.

Established in 1978, the E. Power Biggs Scholars Program awards recipients with full convention registration, all convention transportation expenses, and a two-year OHS membership. Members of this year’s class of twelve



*Juget-Sinclair Organ*

1. . From Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “On Hearing a Symphony of Beethoven.”



Renée Anne Louprette



Joshua Stafford



Schoenstein organ of Park Cities Presbyterian Church

were offered an exclusive master class in service playing given by Scott Dettra, and a masterclass in the performance of Charles Tournemire's *L'Orgue Mystique* presented by Richard Spotts, one of this year's Biggs recipients.

Youthfulness apart, the convention was a study of contrasts—both that of repertoire and organs themselves—with the first two recitals heard Monday morning (July 15) setting the pattern. Margaret Harper, associate organist of St. Michael and All Angels Church, Dallas, and recipient of the DMA degree from Eastman School of Music, began her recital on the moderate-sized two-manual Noack organ at the Episcopal School of Dallas with Sweelinck's *Esce mars*, followed by two works written in the 21st century: Nathan Lang's quiet *Offertoire* and Serge Arcuri's *Les Espaces infinis*, a challenging work for both performer and audience.

Following Margaret Harper was Joshua Stafford's energetic romp on the massive Schoenstein organ at Park Cities Presbyterian Church. Dressed in a dazzling flower-spangled dusty-blue suit, his performance was greeted by roars of approval from the audience. The organ, with its seamless expression, was ideal for Stafford's transcription of Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*; and under the control of Stafford, lead the audience with authority in vigorous hymn singing.

Renée Anne Louprette, university organist at Rutgers, played an all-French recital on the colorful tracker built by Juget-Sinclair at Christ the King Church. Undeniably conceived in the modern French style with all the resources necessary for the literature played—Franck, Alain, Boulanger, and Widor—Louprette's was a solid, confident performance. Bravo!

An organ with a similar stoplist, but not similar sound, was played by Alcee Chriss at St. Thomas Aquinas Church. Despite weak foundation tone on this Schudi tracker, the gloriously expansive *Plein jeu* from Guilain's *Pièces d'Orgue pour le Magnificat* excited



Biggs scholars at brunch with the OHS board of directors

the ears, while the chorus reeds lacked the French *éclat* necessary for Durufé's Suite, Op. 5. After his vigorous performance of the Suite, Chriss acknowledged his audience's demand for more by playing Art Tatum's arrangement of *Tea for Two* as an encore. Alcee Chriss is a rising star to be sure, and one with a sense of humor, too.

Parts of two days were set aside to examine and hear organs on the campuses of Southern Methodist University, Dallas, and the University of North Texas in Denton. Both schools boast mechanical-action instruments of the highest order, including C.B. Fisk's Opus 101 at SMU and Wolff's three-manual organ at UNT.

Time spent in Dallas and its environs was time well spent, indeed, with solid performances on exemplary instruments. There were no disappointments and for this, we acknowledge our debt of gratitude to those who organized and executed this rewarding excursion into the baked State of Texas: Christopher Anderson, Benjamin Kolodziej, and James Wallmann. Yet with no disappointments, not all events were equal, as two organs and two performances bear special consideration as monumental pillars of the convention: Bradley Hunter Welch on the C.B. Fisk at Meyerson Symphony Hall and Douglas Cleveland on the Richards, Fowkes & Co. at Church of the Transfiguration.





Visit to the Redman organ shop.

Preceding Welch's performance was David Pike's (executive vice president and tonal director at Fisk) lecture on "Building Fisk Opus 100," an engaging and enlightening essay on the development, execution, and eventual installation of this magnificent instrument. On paper, Welch's program appeared to be a "hit or miss" affair anchored up front with Messiaen's "Transports de joie" from *l'Ascension* and closed with Jonathan Scott's transcription of the Finale from Saint-Saëns's Third Symphony, both stitched together in unlikely fashion with six Schübler Chorales by J.S. Bach in the middle. Ladies and gentlemen, Bradley Hunter Welch is an extraordinary musician who happens to be an organist, and one whose programming defies convention. Yes, Messiaen and Saint-Saëns were the anchors, but Bach provided the delicate garlands connecting the two. Even in the cavernous space of the Meyerson, Welch's reading of Bach sparkled with color and intimacy. To this he added Frederick Swann's melodic *Trumpet Tune*, reminiscent of those by Norman Cocker, C.S. Lang, and David Johnson; and Joel Martinson's *Aria on a Chaconne* with its tip of the hat to sister compositions by Flor Peeters and Charles Callahan. Not given to hyperbole or writing in first-person, undeniably C.B. Fisk's

Op. 100 is a national monument, and Bradley Welch is a national treasure, truly *ne plus ultra*.

Preceding the final convention concert at Church of the Transfiguration was not a lecture on the organ, but rather a generous "happy hour" and dinner provided by the wardens and vestry of the church. Greeted with an abundance of wine, cheese, nuts, and nibbles, we eventually made our way into the parish hall for a memorable Tex-Mex dinner of freshly made guacamole, enchiladas, black beans, rice, salsa, and corn pudding. While dinner may have been deliciously soporific, the closing recital was anything but snooze inducing.

Douglas Cleveland's opening work written by a 17th-century Spaniard seemed on paper to be a poor match for the 18th-century North German leaning Richards, Fowkes & Co. organ, yet Cabanilles's *Batalla Imperial* was for my ears the most exciting composition of an otherwise superlative program. The dark reeds were quick, rich, and gentle, a beauty made possible by key-channel windchests and low wind pressure. Cleveland's reading of Bach's partita on "Sei gegrüßet" was the best I've ever heard, as he capitalized on the abundance of color found in the organ's vast tonal palette. For the penultimate work on the program, Cleveland was joined by Myles Boothroyd for a performance of Joel Martinson's *Triptych Fantasy* for Alto Saxophone and Organ, commissioned for the 2019 convention of the OHS. Cleveland concluded the evening's recital with two selections from David Briggs's show-stopping *Six Concert Etudes*. Immediately, members of the audience were on their feet roaring with appreciation.

Thus, we come to the end of a rewarding week filled with youthful talent, new organs, and new music. It is well to be reminded that all music and all historic organs were once new, for truly we experienced the history of the future in Dallas.



Schudi organ at St. Thomas Aquinas R.C. Church.



Henry Webb at the Redman organ in Northaven United Methodist Church



Stefan Engels at the Fisk organ in SMU's Caruth Auditorium

# Walter Holtkamp Sr., Remembered

## 1894–1962

RYAN MUELLER

Back of every forward stride which civilization has taken since the advent of time, you will find a man with original ideas—a man who never wavered until those same ideas were carried out in their entirety. And, as he labored, humanity looked over his shoulder, listened and learned—and then leaped upward another length on the road to realization.

Maxwell Droke

WHETHER OUT OF GENUINE ADMIRATION or formidable respect, few names in organbuilding history are as easily recognized as Walter Holtkamp Sr. This year marks the 125th anniversary of Walter Holtkamp's birth, a humble birth that would change the very fabric of pipe organ culture as it was known. While the quotation above could easily apply to many craftsmen, it is all too true as one examines Walter's life and his work, brought about through the Holtkamp Organ Company as he sought to reform American organbuilding.

Walter Holtkamp was born in 1894 to Henry and Sophia Holtkamp in the town of New Knoxville, Ohio. The Holtkamps were a musical household. Henry obtained a substantial reputation in the region as sales manager at a music store in Saint Mary's, Ohio. In 1903, the Holtkamps relocated to Cleveland, so that Henry could take charge of organ sales for G.F. Votteler & Co. Only a few years later, he was made responsible for tonal matters of the company. Teenage Walter was given sporadic tastes of the pipe organ business working for his father before enlisting in the U.S. Army towards the end of World War I. After discharge from the service in 1919, he returned to work for the company. No longer charged with just menial housekeeping tasks around the shop on Meyer Ave., he began to take on a faithful interest in continuing his father's lineage.

Walter Holtkamp Sr. came onto the scene, in earnest, at a pivotal point in organbuilding history. By the late 1920's, the popularity of electric action instruments and theater organs created a new style of musical ease and entertainment. Industrial giants such as M.P. Möller, Austin, Aeolian, and Wurlitzer were often focused on suave console gadgets and a wealth of foundation registers to support the symphonic music of the day. Votteler-Holtkamp-Sparling had its own unique contributions, both mechanical and tonal. While Henry Holtkamp's tonal design was rather mundane, many of their instruments boasted exuberant electric actions; some even with roll playing mechanisms. Perhaps the most notable creation was the Ludwigtone, an open wood stop, much like a small scaled Doppel Flute, only with a partition down the center, so that it is in reality two pipes blown by one wind conductor (the pipe foot). This angelic rank created a mysterious "celeste within a celeste" effect unlike anything done before. Though unique, this stop was far from the groundbreaking ideas that Walter had brewing inside.

At the age of 37, Walter took charge of the company after the sudden death of his father and older sister in 1931. One can only imagine how disheartened he must have been after such a loss, only to begin his career in abysmal economic times. Impacted by the past and eager for the future, the stage was set for personal discovery. Walter Holtkamp Sr. was a people person—a born organ salesman. He quickly made the best of every situation with a smile and perhaps a story about a local organ or a piece of music. It was this that earned him an engaging reputation among musicians. One of the greatest things to admire about Walter was that he was not a trained voicer; he later relied on the talents of his employees such as Charles Fisk and Lawrence Phelps to do his bidding. As tonal director, he frequented the voicing rooms, micro-managing the work of his staff. The way Walter handled tonal matters dur-



ing his beginning years might seem rather ordinary on paper compared to instruments being built today. When scaling new instruments, he often used a “cookie cutter” approach. Pipe construction and voicing specification sheets were regularly vague. Much like early hand-drawn construction blueprints, the details were left to be determined as needed on site. Little emphasis was given to variable scaling across different registers—overall timbre and clarity remained the chief concern. Because of his grand visions of pipe placement, Walter Holtkamp Sr. was truly in every sense of the word, an architect of sound. He knew that an instrument could only be judged by what is heard.

The first instrument designed and voiced under the sole care of Walter Holtkamp Sr. was built for Brunnerdale Seminary, in Canton, Ohio, as Job No. 1571 in 1932. While still fairly unified, the Brunnerdale installation was unlike anything seen or tried before. Slightly clearer textures, a borrowed  $2\frac{2}{3}'$  and  $2'$  in both the Great and Swell, and lower wind pressures allowed for a more transparent sound than past work by the company. The greatest achievement in this installation was what Walter called “the diapason chorus.” Located on an “A” chest, the Great Diapason and Octave stand proudly, with a Pedal Subbass flanking either side; the rest of the instrument is enclosed. This was the first exposed division of its kind in modern American times and rightfully set the organ and musical world ablaze with interest. One of his next instruments, built for Saint John’s Evangelical Lutheran in Cleveland continued to explore this idea of a diapason chorus, while at the same time began to eliminate redundant borrowing and unification.

Walter’s social reputation soon led to his friendship with Arthur Quimby, curator of musical instruments at the Cleveland Museum of Art. This friendship moved Quimby to go directly to him when it came time to obtain an instrument to be showcased in their famed Bach concert series. In 1933, Holtkamp installed what was to be the first and most famous Rückpositiv in the United States to the existing E.M. Skinner No. 333, as Job No. 1580. This classically-inspired exposed division consisting of:  $8'$ ,  $4'$ ,  $4'$ ,  $2\frac{2}{3}'$ ,  $2'$ ,  $1\frac{3}{5}'$ ,  $1\frac{1}{3}'$ , and  $1'$  topped with a three-rank mixture, was jaw dropping. If such a thing were to be added to a 1920s E.M. Skinner today, many organ enthusiasts would consider it criminal. No doubt there were skeptics who thought the same in 1933. Walter immediately became famous at a national level, a favorable reward for in fact actually lending the pipes to the museum. Rave articles were published in *The American Organist* and *The Diapason*. All this attention only convinced Holtkamp that he was on the right track to finding the American sound.

In 1934, Walter further developed designs of an “exposed chorus” for more instruments. It was at this time he attempted to bring the swell box itself out into the room, exposed. The only remaining example from this time period is Saint John’s

R.C. Church in Covington, Kentucky. At this point, Walter had done away with tonal designs of the past, having only one borrowed stop in the instrument. When speaking about the organ he said “Simplicity marks the instrument in all details, both structural and tonal. Principles demonstrated in the building of the organ for Saint John’s Church in Covington are the practical application of a credo. The efforts of my firm during the past four years, of which the building of the Rückpositiv for the Cleveland Museum of Art has probably been the most publicized, have been directed toward bringing the organ out into the open where it can reveal its true character. A new technique has had to be developed and this has often led us to the camps of the Silbermanns and Cavaillé-Colls. We have borrowed freely from these old masters but always with an ear for modern conditions. Stripping the instrument of inhibition and sophistication fulfills modern tenets and at the same time restores many of the most desirable primitive features.”<sup>1</sup> More instruments succeeded Saint John’s with great success and with that, Walter’s reputation as a revolutionary continued to grow.

It is easy to argue that Walter let his ego get the better of him at times and as such became rather radical at the expense of clients. One example was made for Saint James Episcopal Church in Cleveland, Job 1602, in 1937. The unusual Great consists of a  $16'$  Quintaton,  $8'$  Principal,  $8'$  Gedeckt and  $5\frac{1}{2}'$  Gross Quint. At a later date the  $5\frac{1}{2}'$  was shifted up to a  $4'$  and part of the Positiv Cymbal IV was silenced—a wakeup call for young Walter’s high and mighty euphoria. In a later and final move of radicalism, he attempted to turn the company toward mechanical action instruments. He created a small one-manual portativ consisting of an  $8'$  Quintadena,  $4'$  Prestant, and Cornet III. The visual design was equally as striking, taking cues from contemporary architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright.

Towards the end of the 1930s, Walter grew eager to build larger and grander instruments. But it wasn’t until shortly before World War II that he built more significant instruments for places such as Baldwin Wallace College in Berea, and Fairmount Presbyterian in Cleveland. Fairmount was essentially the first large organ constructed and was the first to specify both an enclosed Choir and a Rückpositiv. The unique console was designed in French terrace style, similar to the work of Cavaillé-Coll. During World War II, some previously contracted instruments such as First Unitarian Church in Cleveland were completed. At the direction of church’s organist, Walter Holtkamp settled on a new incredibly simple console design that would become the benchmark of the firm. I have to believe that World War II came at the perfect time for Wal-

1. “Present Day Trends in Organ Building,” *Proceedings of the Music Teachers National Association* (Cleveland, 1940).

ter. A break from his experimentation proved to be fruitful reflection on his direction for the future.

The 1940s was a decade of equal excitement. Large installations at the prestigious Oberlin College and Syracuse University led to great friendships with scholars such as Arthur Poister, who described his first encounter with Holtkamp's work as "running into a brick wall." In 1946, Holtkamp carried out an extensive rebuild of the E.M. Skinner at the Cleveland Museum of Art, for which Albert Schweitzer famously said of him "We'll go on to fight for Truth. From heaven J.S. Bach and César Franck will look upon you with kindness!" The Cleveland Museum continued to be a vital playground for Walter until his death. Walter Holtkamp Jr. carried out more of his father's ideas there until the instrument was moved to the auditorium in 1971. Walter Holtkamp Sr. continued to design and build some of his most celebrated instruments, such as Battell Chapel at Yale, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, St John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, and many others. He provided guidance and vision through completion in all of his instruments, except his final instrument at Westwood Lutheran Church in Saint Louis Park, Minnesota. Walter Holtkamp Sr. died on February 11, 1962. Walter Holtkamp Jr., who had already well established himself in the firm prior to his father's death, took over leadership. Today the rich tradition of family organbuilding continues with the fourth generation, F. Christian Holtkamp.

There are many things to be said about simplicity and elegance, things tonal and sound, things visual and appealing. There are many things to be said about why a single pipe of a Wurlitzer Viole d'Orchestra contains more nicks than most 30-rank Holtkamp organs from the 1950s. Although it might be difficult for some to remember a time before cell phones or the internet, how can one imagine an organ without a principal chorus or the many other unofficial standards found in contemporary American instruments? Hindsight is a hindrance towards true appreciation of the past, just as much as it is also a benefit. Some may argue or question why the organ reform movement was even needed in the first place—Walter knew. He knew how to be bold, and create a legacy for his family and friends, for the many students of his practice, for the tradition of American organbuilding. While it might be disheartening at times to look back and wonder how the current generation can even begin to compare with the achievements of men such as Walter Holtkamp or G. Donald Harrison, it excites me for the future. We have so much to learn from our past. So, I would challenge all of you to be bold, in your building, playing, and throughout daily life that we might observe, continue, and renew these treasures that have been shared with us.

"Building pipe organs is an art, a business, and a passion. It is intellectual and emotional. It is the intersection of sci-



Albert Schweitzer (left) and Walter Holtkamp (right) in 1949 at the Holtkamp-rebuilt 1922 Skinner Organ Company organ in the Cleveland Museum of Art. Photo courtesy of the Joseph M. McCabe Collection.

ence and music. Like art on canvas or in stone, both of which tell one story, the pipe organ tells a different story with each playing. So, to honor each playing, each organ must be eloquent, faithful, and true, as the heart meets the mind."<sup>2</sup> Few people recognized these ideals as much as Walter Holtkamp Sr. I have no hesitation in saying that Walter made pipe organ culture in North America a much better place. As organists, organbuilders, scholars, and overall consumers of this fine craft, we owe to him, among many others who came before us, a great respect for never wavering as he carried out his ideas, that we now have to enjoy in admiration.

**RYAN MUELLER** has had a lifelong fascination with the pipe organ, its music, and its history; a passion further kindled as an OHS E. Power Biggs Scholar in 2014. He maintains an active career as an organbuilder, recitalist, scholar, and advocate. Ryan Mueller lives in Ogden, Iowa, with his wife Emily, where he works for Dobson Pipe Organ Builders Ltd. of Lake City, Iowa. Selections of this article are taken from his paper, "Walter Holtkamp Sr.: A Man Who Never Wavered," presented at the Syracuse Legacies Organ Conference 2019.

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2. "Holtkamp Philosophy" The Holtkamp Organ Company.



## Scattered leaves ... from our Scrapbook

### *On the true rubato...*

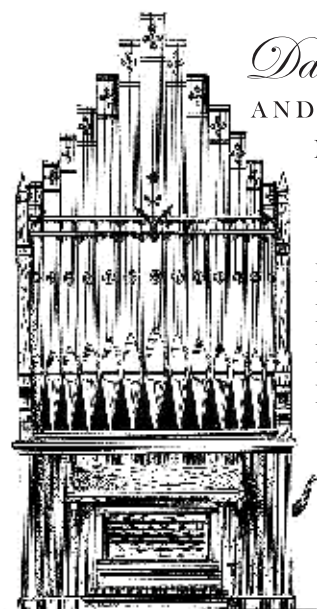
In the pianoforte introduction to the first of the *Harfenspieler* songs by Wolf ('*Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt*') the metronome and I would be at odds in the very first measure, for the third and fourth beats here take longer than the first two beats: the second bar is similarly shaped to the first; but the third bar—climbing in pitch to the fourth bar—is in a quicker tempo altogether; the fifth slow again. This is the shape as Fischer-Dieskau conceives it, a shape to be clothed by colour and feeling.

Gerald Moore

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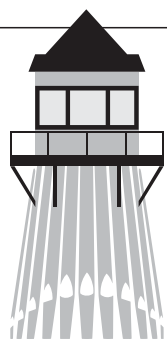
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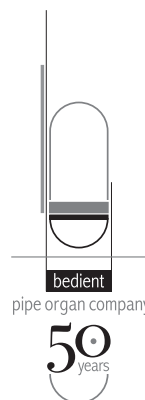
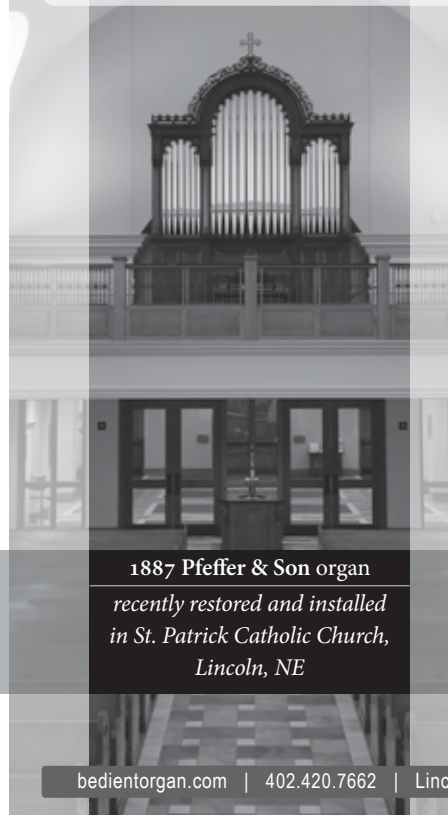
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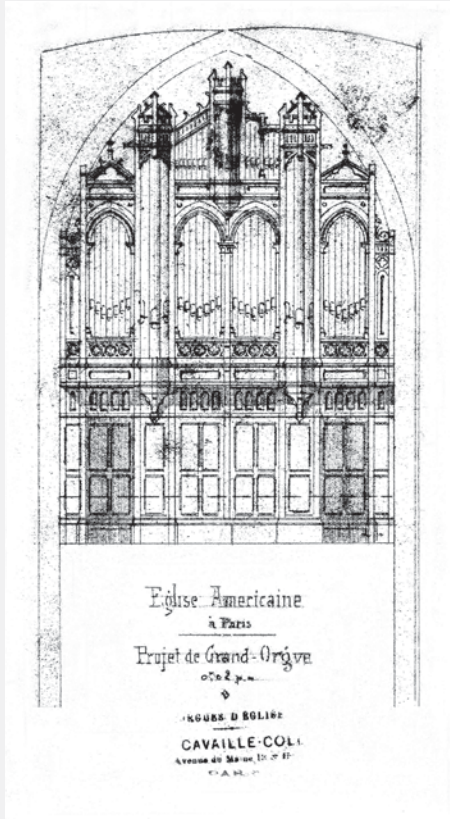
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## Our French Connection



### L'ART DU FACTEUR D'ORGUES.

Par D. FRANÇOIS BÉDOS DE CELLES, Bénédictin de la Congrégation de Saint-Maur, dans l'Abbaye de Saint-Denis en France; de l'Académie Royale des Sciences de Bordeaux.

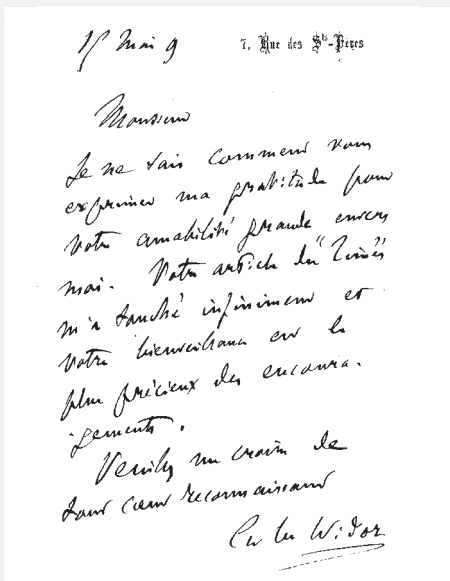
L'Orgue est un instrument de Musique à vent, le plus grand & le plus complet de tous par son étendue, le nombre de ses jeux & la variété de ses sons. Il est composé d'un grand nombre de tuyaux de différentes espèces, les uns d'étain, les autres de plomb, d'autres de bois; de quantité de machines nécessaires & propres à gouverner & à leur communiquer le vent qui leur donne le son, & d'un grand corps de menuiserie, où le tout est contenu, appelé le *Buffet*, accompagné pour l'ordinaire d'un autre plus petit sur le devant, de grands soufflets, séparés du corps de la machine, fournissant le vent qui va s'y rendre dans la principale-pièce; appelée le *Sommier*, d'où il se distribue à chaque tuyau au moyen du *Clavier* que l'Organiste fait mouvoir avec ses doigts. Il est assez ordinaire d'entendre nommer spécialement *Montre de l'Orgue*, cette façade qu'on voit au-dehors, & qui confit dans la partie du grand corps de menuiserie décorée d'ornements d'Architecture & de Sculpture, garnie dans ses vides extérieurs de grands tuyaux d'étain poli, qu'on doit proprement nommer la *Montre de l'Orgue*.

L'art de construire cet instrument se nomme la *Façon de l'Orgue*, celui qui l'exerce, *Facteur d'Orgues*, & *Organiste* celui qui joue de l'Orgue. Je me propose de traiter à fond ce qui concerne cet Art; & pour le faire avec ordre, je divise ce Traité en trois Parties: la première, qui doit donner la connoissance exacte de l'Orgue dans toutes ses parties, exposera aussi les principes mécaniques qui sont le fondement de la construction: la seconde, montrera en détail les opérations du Facteur construisant l'Orgue, & fera voir l'application des principes à son travail, & la nécessité *ORGUES.*

FOR MANY YEARS the OHS Archives was named the American Organ Archives; however, in recent years the name was changed to the OHS Library and Archives to reflect the international nature of our holdings, especially in the library. Apart from books published in the U.S., we have an abundance from the U.K., France, Japan, Russia, Poland, Italy, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, and Australia.

Among the hundreds of books from France on our shelves, the rarest is *L'Art du Facteur d'Orgues*, written by the 18th-century Benedictine monk, Dom François Bédos de Celles. Of equal importance is our collection of French ephemera, the oldest of which is a 16th-century woodcut of Tubal and Jubal in their workshop. In the fourth chapter of Genesis, the brothers Tubal and Jubal—descendants of Cain—are described as the inventors and manufacturers of musical instruments. Jubal is given credit as being the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. The print shows Jubal seated playing an organ, while Tubal works hammering metal, presumably for a musical instrument. A lyre, triangle, and flute are on the ground together with various tools. A fire blazes in the forge, while groups of people dance and feast in the background.

César Franck, the organist of Sainte-Clotilde, was appointed professor of organ at the Paris Conservatory in 1872. Among his students were Ernest Chausson, Henri Duparc, Vincent d'Indy, Charles Tournemire, and Louis Vierne. The OHS Library and Archives has a fine woodcut of Franck seated at the organ console. The artist,



Top left: Proposed case of the new Cavallé-Coll organ for the American Church, Paris.

Top right: A page from Dom Bédos's *L'Art du Facteur d'Orgues*

Bottom left: Autograph letter of Ch.-M. Widor

Bottom right: A 16th century woodcut of Tubal and Jubal in their workshop.

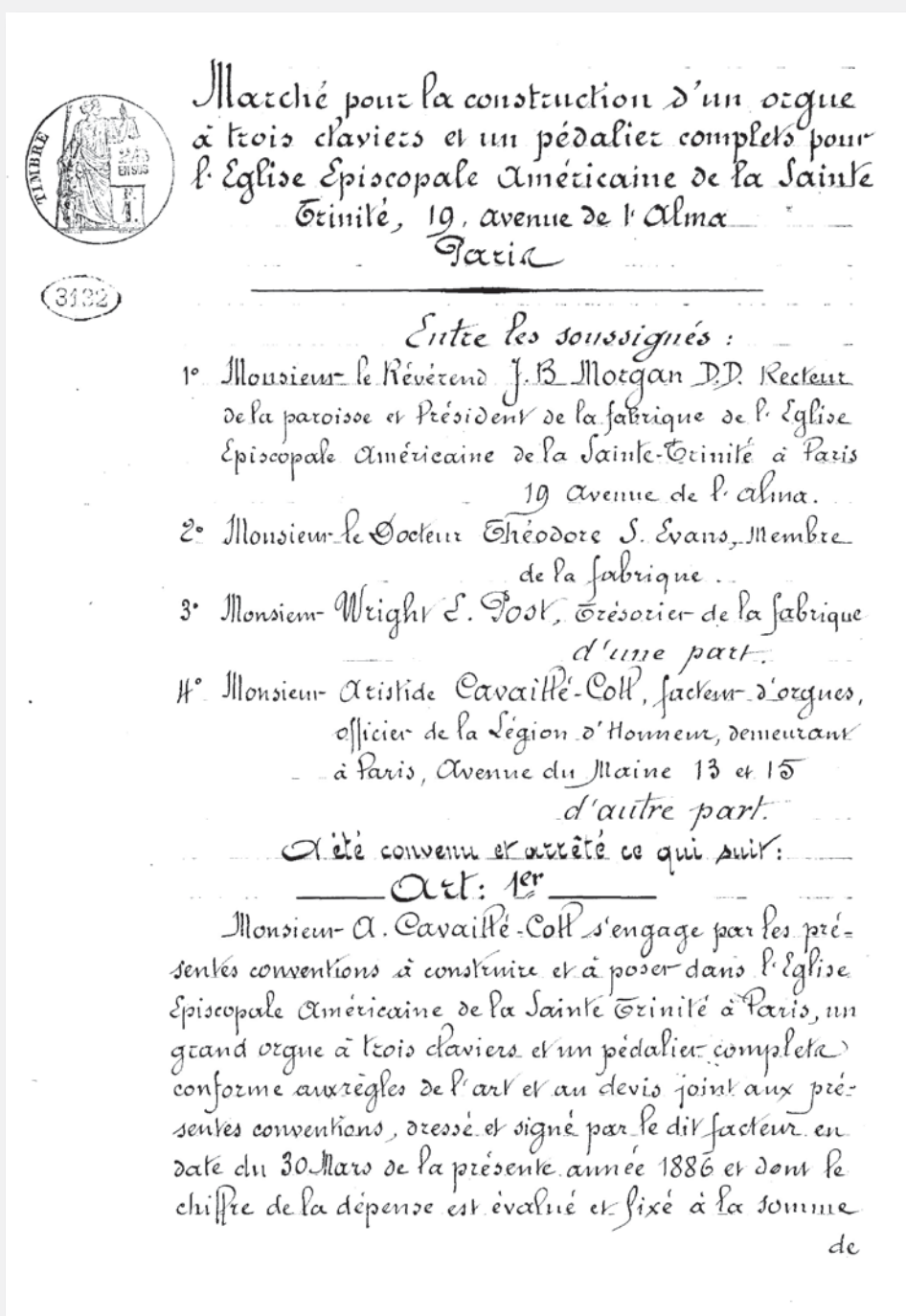


Jean-Paul Dubray (1888–1943), chose as his source for this engraving the well known portrait of Franck painted by Jeanne Rongier in 1885.

Camille Saint-Saëns is another French organist, composer, and teacher represented graphically in our collection. Achille Jacquet's etching shows Saint-Saëns seated at what appears to be a two-manual harmonium. In the upper right-hand corner of the etching is "Saint-Saëns 1898." The work is signed by Jacquet in pencil and also on the plate.

Continuing with contemporary organists, we have several letters of Charles-Marie Widor, a signature of Louis Vierne, and a photo of Vierne playing the Kilgen organ at Saint Francis Xavier Church, Saint Louis, Missouri. One of Widor's letters is written to the author of an article that appeared in the "Times" (of London), thanking him for his favorable review: "I don't know how to tell you how grateful I am for your great kindness towards me. Your article in the Times touched me greatly and your benevolence is the most precious encouragement."

This survey of our French holdings concludes with three documents from the firm of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll concerning his instrument at L'Église Américaine de la Sainte Trinité, Paris. Dated March 30, 1886, the organbuilder agrees to build a three-manual and pedal organ for the cost of 55,000 francs. The contract was signed by Cavaillé-Coll and church officials on June 24, 1886. The other two documents include a pencil drawing of the organ facade and a pipemaker's plan for the Plein jeu on the Grand-Orgue.



Page from the contract for the 1886 Cavaillé-Coll organ for the American Church, Paris

# MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH



## Herbert John Sisson

AGNES ARMSTRONG

IT HAS OFTEN BEEN SAID that a picture is worth a thousand words. In 1912, a certain theater organist was so taken by a particular photograph that he brought it home and put it up on his bedroom dresser. But what may have seem to have been a harmless gesture at the time suddenly became front page news for the *New York Times*.

That organist was Herbert John Sisson, of Cleveland, Ohio. Born in Cumberland, England on September 21, 1878, he was brought by his parents to the United States as a child. Although accounts of his career and personal life are found in numerous sources of the day, Sisson remains a somewhat enigmatic figure. The earliest articles identify him as a teenage musician in Kansas City, where in 1896 he accompanied at the piano, sang with the Apollo Club chorus under the direction of Edward Kreiser,<sup>1</sup> and rendered occasional organ solos at the Independence Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church. Within a few years he had become organist at the First Christian Church and Trinity Episcopal Church in Kansas City.

In 1903, Herbert Sisson married Florence Dutton, daughter of Cleveland industrialist William A. Dutton, and they went to France, where Herbert studied organ with Alexandre Guilmant. Upon the couple's return to Cleveland, Sisson took the post of organist at the Epworth Methodist Episcopal Church, where he remained until 1907, when he went to the East End Baptist Church. His farewell recital at the Epworth Church was devoted exclusively to works of Guilmant. In 1906, he again spent the summer in Paris with Guilmant, and upon his return, established a series of Tuesday evening organ recitals at the Epworth M.E. Church.

Advertisements in 1912 announced the opening of Cleveland's new Olympia Theatre, promoted as one of the largest exclusive and most extravagant motion picture theaters in the

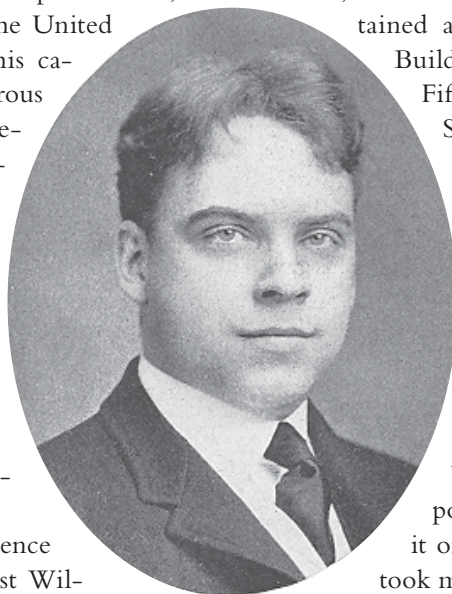
United States. Seating 2,000 persons, it was completely fire-proof, and contained a brand new \$10,000 Möller pipe organ with Chimes (Opus 1299, 24 ranks on 2 manuals and pedal). The organist in charge was Herbert Sisson, simultaneously employed at the nearby Alhambra Theatre, under the same management.

Sisson went on to become a virtuoso recitalist and one of the most prominent theater organists in America. In June 1916, he inaugurated a Sunday afternoon series of municipal organ recitals for the Cincinnati Music Hall with a program that included such varied numbers as the Bach D-minor *Toccata* and *Fugue*, the Widor *Toccata*, a *March* by Guilmant, Elgar's first *Pomp and Circumstance March*, *The Hunt* by Fumagalli, and *The Cuckoo* and *The Bee* by Edwin H. Lemare. By

1917, he had moved to New York City, where he maintained a teaching studio in the Canadian Pacific Building on Madison Avenue, was organist at the Fifth Church of Christ Scientist on East 43rd Street, and played at the Strand Theater at Broadway and 47th Street. In 1922, he was a charter member of the Society of Theater Organists.

His name first became widely known from that news item on the front page of the June 29, 1912 edition of the *New York Times*. Under the headline, "Photograph Parts Them," the story reported that Florence had obtained a divorce after Herbert brought home a photograph of an actress posing at the Alhambra Theatre, and placed it on the bedroom bureau next to her own. "I took my picture away, and when he asked me why I told him I would not have my picture on the dresser beside that of the actress," Mrs. Sisson said. "My husband packed his grip that night, left the house, and never returned."

There is not much more to tell of this story. Mr. Sisson might have been better off setting up that photo to admire on his theatre organ console instead of in the bedroom he shared with his wife. Nothing more is known of Florence after the divorce. She seems to have simply disappeared into the mists of history. Herbert married again the following year, this time to Miss Bertha Garver, a young singer whom he had served as accompanist on several occasions. In 1925, according to the New York State Census Bureau, Herbert and Bertha were still married and living in New York City, where she was employed as a singer and he as organist at the Strand. The whereabouts of the infamous photograph remain unknown.



1. See "Matters of Life and Death," *The Tracker* (January 2019): 31–33.



# A. & J. Pipe & Reed Organ Service



A. & J. PIPE & REED ORGAN SERVICE was a partnership of Archie Marchi and Joseph A. Corkedale in Newburgh, New York. According to David Fox,<sup>1</sup> they were active 1979–1995, although a news article in the local paper indicates they were active from 1968.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps they did the work informally at first, and opened their shop in 1979. The shop apparently closed about the time Corkedale died in November of 2000.<sup>3</sup>

Archie Marchi first became interested in the work (pipe and reed organ repair and restoration) in 1968.<sup>4</sup> Local organist Joseph Corkedale had loaned him a small reed organ. When the instrument developed a problem, Marchi took it apart and repaired it. The incident launched Marchi into studying on organbuilding. The two men started their service work together shortly thereafter. They set up shop on Johnston Street in Newburgh, moved to Poughkeepsie briefly in the mid-1980s when the original shop was vandalized, and returned

to Newburgh in 1985 to set up a new shop on Carter Street in the former Reale Glass Co. building.

The firm repaired the Hall & Labagh organ built in 1856 for Saint George's Episcopal Church in Newburgh. In 1886, the organ had been acquired by the Masons for their lodge in Newburgh. The organ moved again in 1915 when the Masons donated it to the Associated Reform Church which had been located at Grand and First Street in Newburgh. Marchi and Corkedale purchased the instrument in 1980 when the church closed. It had been sitting silent in the gallery since the church had installed a Hinners organ in 1922. Joseph Corkedale gave a final concert on it at the church before they moved it to their shop. The only change the pair made to the instrument was to move the pump handle from the rear to the side. The facade pipes were half-round wooden dummy pipes, the manuals were 56 note with a 17 note pedalboard. The instrument was intended to be placed eventually in the New York State Museum in Albany. The firm also worked on an 1894 Felgemaker organ for Pine Bush United Methodist Church, adding an “electronic[!] pedal division” to the tracker organ.<sup>5</sup> The account was written by a newspaper columnist, not an organist. It is likely that this meant a free-standing pedal division of one or two ranks on electrical key action.

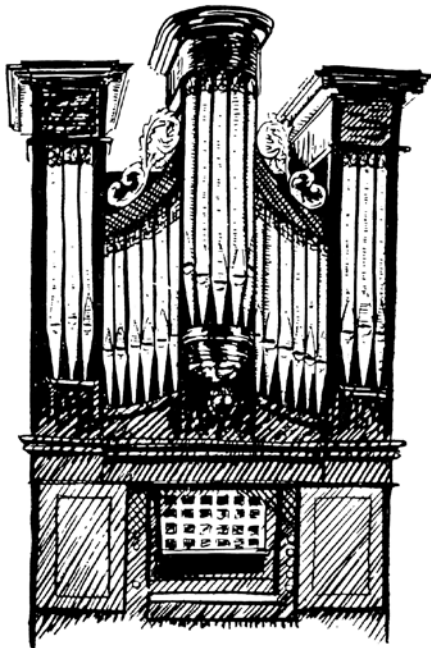
1. David H. Fox, “A. & J. Pipe & Reed Organ Service,” *A Guide to North American Organbuilders* (Richmond: Organ Historical Society, 1991), 51.

2. Ruth Valenti, “Organ Repairing Team Returns,” *Evening News*, Middletown, New York, (Aug 6, 1985).

3. “Obituary: Joseph Corkedale,” (*Middletown, N.Y.*) *Times Herald-Record* (Nov. 3, 2005).

4. “Obituary: Archangelo ‘Archie’ Marchi,” (*Middletown, N.Y.*) *Times Herald-Record* (Dec. 5, 2011).

5. Valenti, “Organ Repair Team Returns.”



## In THE TRACKER *50 Years Ago*

SCOT L. HUNTINGTON

VOL. 13, NO. 4, SUMMER 1969

**B**ETWEEN JUNE 25 AND 27, 50 of the more intrepid members of the Society returned to the site of its founding for the OHS 14th annual convention. The headquarters was the grand old Commodore Hotel, directly across the street from Grand Central Station. The Commodore is long gone, closed and absorbed by Hyatt in 1980, gutted and wrapped in glass, only its skeletal outline is still recognizable. The convention made use of an air-conditioned coach, but this luxury was marred on the last day by a driver who apparently had never seen the city before and got so hopelessly lost and behind schedule that the conventioners had to wait while the bus company sent a replacement driver by subway. The reviewer complained repeatedly that the specially-printed hymn booklet had no recognizable hymns as all were by musicians once residents of Brooklyn and Manhattan (or the tunes were unsingable), and the fast track of New York City apparently tested those from distant lands more accustomed to life at a snail's pace.

The group finally got in to see the famous 1841 Erben at Sea and Land Presbyterian Church, closed during their initial visit years before. Organs of note included the monumental 62-stop Geo. S. Hutchings in Brooklyn's Union Methodist Church, played by none less than our esteemed TRACKER editor; the only extant three-manual tracker J.H. & C.S. Odell in original condition, the only intact three-manual Erben, and one of two remaining three-manual Roosevelts in the city at Schermerhorn Street German Evangelical Church (in almost unusable condition; the church closed that year, and the pipework was salvaged barely ahead of the wrecking ball by

Glück Orgelbau before the church was demolished in 2009). The final recital was eagerly awaited by both conventioners and New York City's musical elite alike, with a large audience attending in the cavernous church. The organ was E. & G.G. Hook & Hastings No. 576 (electrified by the firm in 1925) at Saint Alphonsus. Saved at the eleventh hour by the Organ Clearing House when the magnificent church was demolished in 1980, it was installed at Saint Mary's Hillhouse in New Haven, Conn., the home church of the donors—Knights of Columbus. The organ was renovated by a consortium and re-trackerized by Mann & Trupiano. While the organ was inexplicably loudened by the tonal finisher, it is hoped that one day this remarkable instrument will see its original sonority restored. Of all the monumental 19th-century organs in America, this is the one that comes closest to a Parisian-style instrument for which the great French-Romantic literature was composed. In one grand gesture, Frank Hastings's fame as a nationally-recognized organbuilder was secured.

The church was built for and by an affluent congregation of Manhattan German Catholics, with art, relics, and architectural embellishments imported from Europe. The organ's nameplate was the first to note Frank Hastings as a corporate partner. Besides being Hastings's coming out, under the very noses of a regional organ empire surely out of joint, the organ was constructed on a grand cathedral scale and marked a new tonal direction for the Hook firm: large scales, Great reeds imported from Paris, a grand walnut case built of American wood shipped to German woodcarvers and then shipped back, and a truly eclectic mix of English, French, and Ger-



man tonal ideas. The first truly American eclectic organ had been born, and the style still reigns today. The evening's organist was Jack Fisher, (organist of Boston's Church of the Immaculate Conception and largely responsible for its preservation), who was a spectacularly gifted organist.

At the Annual Meeting, it was recorded the Society enjoyed a membership of 460 and growing. Several future convention proposals were discussed, including those from Northern New York, Vermont, Baltimore, and Western Pennsylvania. It was announced that the 1970 convention would be held in Canton, New York, chaired by Tom Finch—at the time considered the leading authority on the organbuilding history of upstate New York. The 1971 convention would be held in Central Vermont, chaired by the inimitable Ed Boadway and headquartered in the picture-postcard-perfect town of Woodstock. The Society's first formally organized chapter, New York City, received its charter. Outgoing president Ken Simmons, the Society's third, was recognized for the membership growth under his leadership, and THE TRACKER publisher Thomas Cunningham was elected the fourth president. In his first editorial, he asked how the expansion under his term might unfold: establish a headquarters; hire an executive manager to staff said office, manage the sale of Society items, and oversee its daily affairs—the first such mention of hiring a regular employee (this wouldn't happen for another eleven years, and then not without some membership discontent); establish themselves as a non-profit foundation in order to develop an organ museum; create a recording and publication series. Dues remained at \$5, with contributing categories up to \$100 a year (minimum wage was \$1.30 and \$90 a week could support a family; a pack of cigarettes was 50¢ in a machine; and the Big Mac was just marketed and cost 49¢.

A short biography of the second-hand Appleton organ in the Methodist church on Nantucket island was printed in a document by the Nantucket Historical Trust. It was believed to be the oldest intact Appleton. The organ was purchased second-hand from E. & G.G. Hook in 1859 and already in its second home. A detailed history of the famous Brattle Organ and the early organists who played it was reprinted from *The New England Magazine*, 1902–1903. Long erroneously believed to be the first organ in America, this is probably the most complete history of this organ to be found in a single place. A new continuing serial feature was “Olden-Time Music,” a multi-volume book series noting diverse items of interest compiled by Henry Brooks from old newspapers and books in 1888.

Hook & Hastings No. 1049, an original 1881 installation in the Church of Our Savior, Episcopal, in Cincinnati was described in detail following its recent renovation by the Steiner Organ Company of Louisville, which included a great deal of tonal modification in Baroque style. Currently (2019), the

organ is being restored by Cincinnati organbuilder Michael Rathke and includes a reversal of the Baroque tonal changes with either legacy pipework or exacting reconstructions of existing Hook pipework appropriate to the period. What goes around, comes around.

The New Organ section made note of a two-manual Gebrüder Spaeth of Einnentach-Mengen, Germany; Fritz Noack's first three-manual in Trinity Lutheran, Worcester, Mass., and the large Casavant designed by Lawrence Phelps in the French Classic style for the chapel of the Choate-Rosemary Hall in Wallingford, Conn. This 66-rank organ was a destination for visiting organists and, for many years into the 1980s, was the site of a Choate Summer Organ Academy led by Bernard and Mireille Lagacé. Two years ago the organ was restored by the builder. Regular chapel services with mandatory attendance were discontinued some time ago and the chapel now serves as an assembly and lecture hall, very popular for alumni weddings; the organ is rarely used, but still maintained.

A small notice was posted, of the wanton vandalism destruction by church authorities of the last three-manual 1876 John Standbridge organ in Philadelphia's Old Pine Street Presbyterian Church. The gory account of its tragic demise will be the cover story in the January issue.



*The Choate School, Wallingford, Connecticut*

### CALL FOR 2020 OHS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD NOMINATIONS

NOMINATIONS for the 2020 OHS Distinguished Service Award are now open. The DSA Committee will gladly accept submissions until the first of April 2020. Submissions can be made online or via a downloadable mail-in form. Complete information about the award, plus nomination requirements and guidelines can be found on the DSA page of the OHS web site: <https://organhistoricalsociety.org/dsa>

DSA nominations may be made by any OHS member or by a non-member organization (church, school, historical society, etc.). Nominations should include a summary of each nominee's qualifications, including information such as:

National-level offices or positions held (e.g. board, committees, etc.) including specific years of service.

OHS projects such as conventions, outreach, documentation, membership, research, publishing, etc.

Work in any area of organ history, including writing, scholarship, preservation, advocacy, fund raising, organ playing, organ restoration/maintenance, teaching, promotion, membership recruitment, etc. that directly benefits the OHS.

Chapter-level involvement, offices held, projects, etc.

### OTHER GUIDELINES

NOMINEES must be members of the Organ Historical Society.

Past recipients of the DSA are not eligible to receive the award again.

Current DSA committee members are not eligible to be nominated for the award.

Paid employees or independent contractors working for the OHS are ineligible to receive the award based on work compensated by the OHS (e.g. paid coordinators, consultants, executive directors, recording engineers, etc.). This does not apply to people who receive one-time or occasional

stipends for service as convention recitalists or lecturers, as committee chairs, or research grants, or other similar non-pecuniary payments. OHS employees, contractors, or paid coordinators are eligible for nomination based on volunteer work occurring before or after the term of paid service.

Nominees who are not selected for the award may be nominated in future years but will not be automatically reconsidered.

Members of the DSA Committee may make nominations.

Nominations will remain confidential.

Please help us honor a member who has given of his or her talents to support the Society. Through the years the OHS has prospered with an ongoing stream of financial gifts, but these would not always be put to good use without the dedicated stewardship of individuals who invest of themselves directly and tangibly in our many special programs.

### ROSALIND MOHNSEN 2018 DSA RECIPIENT

ROSALIND MOHNSEN is a longtime member of the OHS, and has been music director of Immaculate Conception Church in Malden/Medford, Mass., for nearly 30 years. Holding college degrees in music education and organ, she studied under notable teachers including Myron Roberts and Jean Langlais. She has often played recitals in major Boston area churches on organs old and new and is a favorite performer at the Methuen Music Hall. Her recital programs are always well tailored to show off the unique characteristics of any given organ.

Rosalind has frequently volunteered to take part in fund-raising recitals for the restoration of historic organs such as the 1875 Hook & Hastings in Boston's Holy Cross Cathedral and the 1852 E. & G.G. Hook in St. Thomas's Church. Her advice has been sought with regard to the restoration or relo-



*Rosalind Mohnsen receives the OHS Distinguished Service Award.*

**Left to right:** Dan Clayton, Rosalind Mohnsen, Michael Quimby

cation of historic organs. A long-time AGO member, she has held offices in the Boston Chapter, and played at AGO national and regional conventions.

Mohnsen's convention record with the OHS is impressive: she has played recitals at more than 23, and attended 44 consecutive conventions. In recital, she is noted for sensitively displaying the character of historic organs, undaunted by strange key compasses and non-standard pedalboards. In addition, Rosalind has served on planning committees for conventions of both AGO and OHS, most recently our 2015 Pioneer Valley gathering in Springfield, Mass.

Rosalind Mohnsen has uniquely served the mission of the OHS from the organ bench, through her commitment to bring out the best musical points of historic organs in well-chosen and flawlessly performed recitals, especially those that have been enjoyed by so many of us at past conventions, and which we eagerly anticipate in the years to come.

### FOR THE DSA COMMITTEE:

Dan Clayton, CHAIR

Barbara Owen and Randall Wagner,  
past DSA recipients (and OHS  
founding members)

Jeffrey Dexter and Cherie Wescott,  
members at large





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