

1989

Church Organ History; 1989

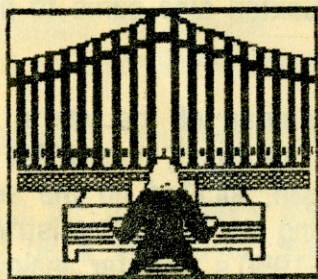
First Baptist Church of Niagara Falls

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**THE ORGAN AT
FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH,
NIAGARA FALLS**

**AN HISTORICAL
LOOK AT
OUR ORGAN
AND
ITS NEEDS**

The organ at First Baptist Church was constructed and installed in March/April, 1939, by the Hall Organ Company of West Haven, Connecticut. The organ was designed by Stanley Saxton of Skidmore College. Mr. Saxton also came to play the dedicatory recital.

Over the course of the years, several accidents have befallen the organ, mainly due to water damage. The Choir Organ, located on the second floor of the educational wing above the Baptistry, was damaged by water in the 1950's. Water leakage into the Swell Chamber (on the left side of the sanctuary) ruined most of the mechanisms in that chamber during the 1960's and 1970's. After almost fifty years of service the console mechanisms and keyboards were wearing out.

Mr. Stanley Saxton, the original designer of the organ, is still alive, and your Director of Music has had considerable correspondence with him regarding the organ: its design, purpose, and construction. The basic details of construction and pipe design (called "scaling") were modelled after the ideas and designs of Ernest M. Skinner, considered to be the foremost organ designer in this country in his day. Mr. Skinner has left details regarding his tonal ideas and development and it is interesting to note how our organ reflects these thoughts. In discussing the organ with Stanley Saxton, several points became apparent. First, due to budgetary limitations, several stops were "borrowed" from other stops, especially in the Choir and Pedal divisions. Some judicious "duplexing" of important stops is very useful; however, the use of too much borrowing is detrimental to the ensemble of the organ.

and serves to limit the flexibility of the instrument as well. Several other stops, e.g., the Oboe, were left out entirely. Secondly, thinking on design has undergone various changes. Even Ernest Skinner's ideas developed over a long period of time. All our plans for eliminating borrowing and additions are within the intent of the original design.

PROGRESS AND ACTIVITY TO DATE

As mentioned above, work has been done on the organ from time to time, and within the past few years, the restoration and completion of the organ has been started. In 1986 the Swell Chamber, the Console, and the Chimes were all renewed.

Within the last year and a half many other items have been repaired, renewed or rebuilt. With the help of Paul Einstein, the bass pipes of the Choir Division were resoldered and made to speak again. Also, with Paul's help, the bass pipes in the Great Chamber on the right side of the sanctuary were provided with their own reservoir and wind supply so they could speak properly as they did when the organ was new. The wind pressure in the Swell Chamber was, after much experimentation, reregulated to where it was as originally installed. A dozen other items of repair and rewiring to correct earlier mistakes have been completed by Jim Flood, many times with the assistance Andy Baxter and others.

The combination action (the mechanism that remembers and recalls different stop combinations for the organist) has been totally computerized and

enlarged to provide greater capacity for services, concert work, and teaching. The addition of the four rank Mixture in the Great, given in memory of the late Rev. Ernest C. Flood, significantly improves the ensemble of sound, especially for hymn playing. In the Choir Organ relay, the replacement with all new switches corrects many problems and make it much more reliable and paves the way for future work in elimination of "borrowing" in that division.

Over the past year the pipes in the Great and Swell divisions have been gone over to bring them back to proper speech and balance. This, by the way, in addition to some piano work and tuning, was budgeted and financed with the help of our grants from the Council On the Arts in relation to our concert series.

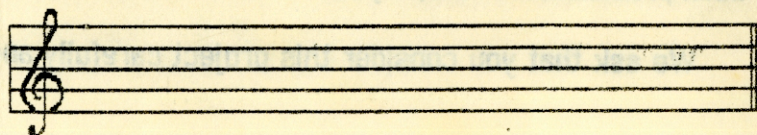
All in all, these items mentioned, plus numerous other small projects, have brought the restoration of the organ to about 60% completion. We now are at the point where funds are necessary to complete the work, which involves the following:

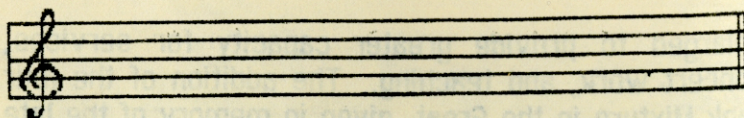
>Addition of the Oboe with a Mixture in the Swell.

>Addition of a Pedal and Great Trumpet to round out the specifications.

>Addition of pipes to Choir and Pedal Divisions so that two or more stops will not have to share the same pipes.

>Renewal/rebuild of all Choir chestwork to eliminate all dead notes and make the division





completely stable and reliable.

>Rebuild of tremulants and pneumatic expression motors.

>Completion of regulation and voicing of organ.

The cost for the balance of the work as outlined above will be a little over \$20,000.00. When the appropriate chestwork is built/rebuilt, a large number of the required pipes will be supplied without cost from those owned and stored by Mr. Flood. Some pipes will have to be new, however. The project, once the raising of the required funds is well under way, should take about two years, with Mr. Flood and, from time to time, various members of the congregation, doing the physical installation. For the final voicing and regulating Mr. Flood will require professional help.

FUTURE PROJECTIONS AND FUND RAISING

We will raise the necessary funds in several ways. First, this brochure is being sent to all church members and interested parties to set forth our need and to announce the re-establishment of our organ fund. Already the Chancel Choir has earned some funds by presenting a program to the Buffalo Church Women United on December 1, 1989, at First Shiloh Baptist Church in Buffalo, and also other gifts have been presented for the project.

We ask that you consider this project carefully and

support it with your gifts, your prayers, and your interest. The enclosed card may be used for your gift(s) and/or your pledge to this project. It may be returned to the church anytime, or dropped in any morning's offering plate.

Especially, we would like to encourage gifts as memorials. It is possible to provide a specific stop for the organ. Please contact Mr. Flood for more details. He can be reached most mornings at the church, or at 688-7490 in the evenings. Any member of the Worship Committee will be most willing to talk with you about this great and significant project. The Choir and Worship Committee will be having some projects to aid the organ fund: one of which we feel is rather exciting.

The benefits to the congregation and the community at large are numerous with the completion of the restoration of the organ. The role of the organ in our concert series can be expanded further as well as providing greater flexibility and reliability for our worship services for the next fifty years.
