

the **GRAND OPHICLEIDE**

Journal of the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc.

Issue 10

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*Journal of the
Atlantic City Convention Hall
Organ Society, Inc.*

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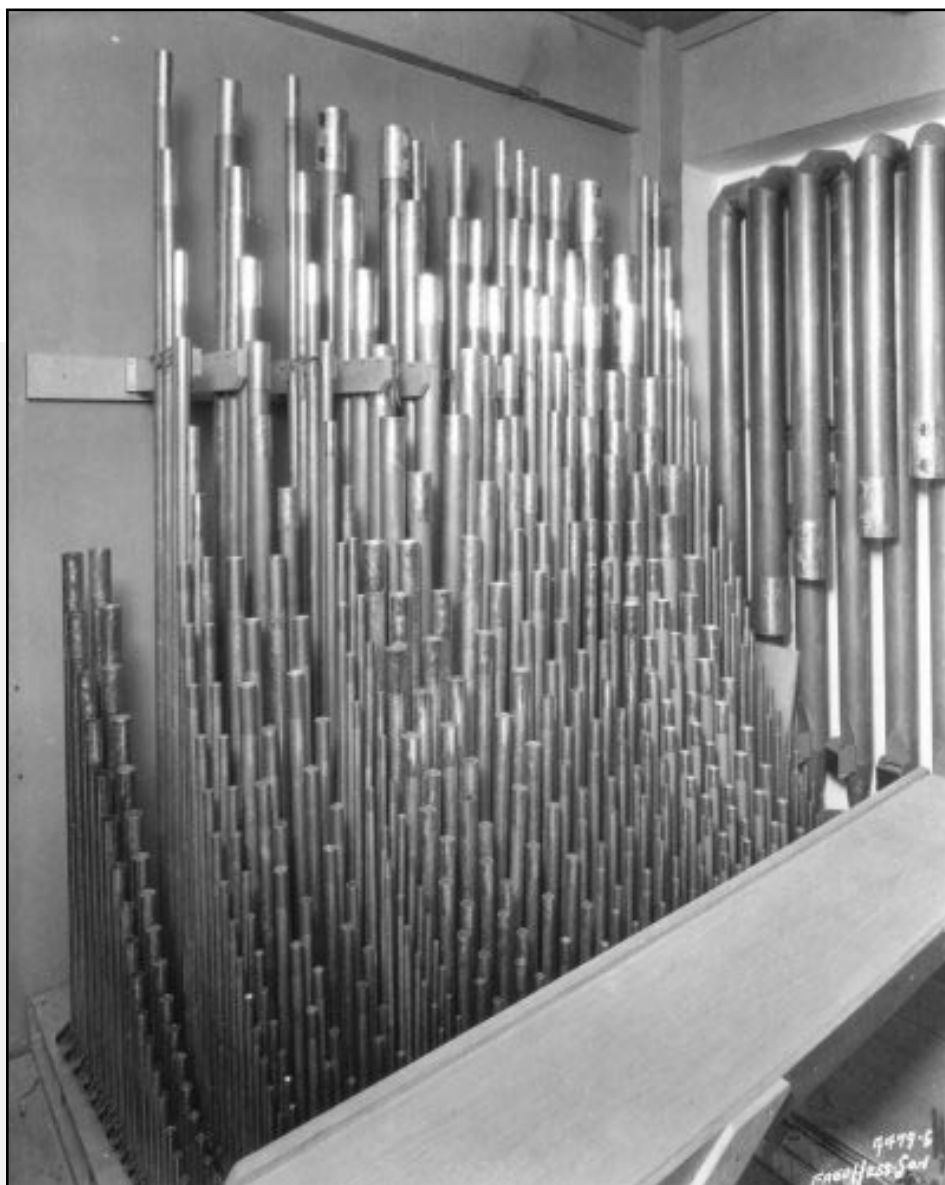
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On the Cover

A rare photograph of Senator Emerson L. Richards comparing beaters of large and small diaphone pipes in the Midmer-Losh organ taken during the construction of the instrument, circa 1930-1932.

String I organ *in situ*. On the left is the two-rank *Secundo Violins 4'*, with the mitered basses of the unified *Contra Basso* on the right. Between these two stops are the 17 unison ranks. One of the *Contra Basso* pipes was turned slightly for this photograph to show off its large ears and harmonic bridge. Its still in that position today, some 70 years later!



The String Organs

by Stephen D. Smith

In total, the Main Auditorium organ possesses 102 ranks of strings derived from 69 stops (this figure includes hybrids such as the *Geigen Principal*, *Violin Diapason*, *Fugara*, and the Gamba Tubas but excludes the several *Dulciana* ranks which, strictly speaking, are classed as diminutive foundations). Not surprisingly, the majority (70 ranks/40 stops) are accommodated in departments dedicated specifically to string tone. Here's some of what Emerson Richards had to say about these departments in the instrument's contract:

"The three String organs will be graduated in power and quality. The first shall be the most powerful and its stops will be voiced to give a broad, imitative tone, giving all possible power while preserving the quality and without permitting the division to become reedy. The ranks of the four Viol Celeste stops will be voiced to be imitative of the orchestral violin — the bigger scales sounding with more

continued on page 4

The String Organs *Continued*

of the wood quality, the thinner scales sounding with more of the string quality. The effect of the chorus is to approach as nearly as possible the effect of the orchestral violins when played fortissimo ... [String organ II] is the largest and most important ... it will be voiced to be as characteristic of the orchestral string choir as possible ... The third String organ will be the softest and voiced to

represent the muted strings. The effect sought to be produced will be that of the shimmer of the orchestral strings. For this reason, some of the scales are considerably smaller than those in other divisions, but the keenness should not be permitted to develop undesirable harmonics. The tone must be tender and agreeable while still producing the desired imitative effect."

In the "Original" scheme, the String organs were to be a little larger than at present but, like the rest of the instrument, their contents were reduced when Richards revised the design of the 43,641-pipe organ because it was too big and too costly.

"Original" Stops	"Original" Ranks	"Original" Pipes	Department	"Revised" Stops	"Revised" Ranks	"Revised" Pipes
20	34	2,542	String I	11	20	1,436
38	53	3,821	String II	24	36	2,658
15	25	1,789	String III	9	17	1,217
73	112	8,152	Total	44	73	5,311

Among the deletions was a 32-foot *String Diaphone* together with a *Contra Bass Celeste* and *Contra Salicional*, both at 16-foot pitch. Ten two-rank celestes were also disposed of. Fourteen ranks were cut from the String I organ, 17 from String II, and eight from String III. In total, 29 stops, 39 ranks, and 2,851 pipes were deleted from the String organs. Details of these departments *as built* are given below, although the compass of the various compound stops and their tuning patterns have yet to be confirmed (the information listed here is, primarily, that given in the contract). "DL" denotes Double Languid.

STRING I 25" wind

- 254 *Contra Basso* 16 & 4
(spotted metal DL, #44-40 scale*, 97 pipes)
- 255 *Cello* 8
(metal DL, #50-46 scale*, 73 pipes)
- 256 *Cello Celeste I* 8
(2 ranks, normal/sharp, both to CC) (metal, #53 scale, 146 pipes)
- 257 *Cello Celeste II* 8
(2 ranks, flat/normal, one to TC) (spotted metal, #55-51 scale*, 134 pipes)
- 258 *Violins I* 8
(2 ranks, both to CC) (tin, #64-60 scale*, 146 pipes)
- 259 *Violins II* 8
(2 ranks, one to TC) (tin, #72-68 scale*, 134 pipes)
- 260 *Violins III* 8
(2 ranks, normal/sharp, both to CC) (tin, #70-66 scale*, 146 pipes)
- 261 *Violins IV* 8
(2 ranks, flat/normal, one to TC) (tin, #74-70 scale*, 134 pipes)
- 262 *Secundo Violins I* 8
(2 ranks, both to CC) (spotted metal, #60-56 scale*, 146 pipes)

- 263 *Secundo Violins II* 8
(2 ranks, one to TC) (spotted metal, #62-58 scale*, 134 pipes)
 - 264 *Secundo Violins* 4
(2 ranks, both to CC) (tin, #68-64 scale*, 146 pipes)
- *Pipes flared to be four scales bigger at the top than at the mouth.

STRING II 15" wind

- 265 *Double Bass* 16 & 4
(metal DL, #40 scale, 97 pipes)
- 266 *Contra Bass* 16 & 4
(wood, 5" x 5" scale, 97 pipes)
- 267 *Contra Viol* 16 & 4
(metal, #50 scale, 97 pipes)
- 268 *Viola Diapason* 8
(metal, #48 scale, 73 pipes)
- 269 *Violincello* 8
(wood, 2.75" x 4" scale, 73 pipes)
- 270 *Cello Phonon* 8
(metal DL, #52 scale, 73 pipes)
- 271 *Cello* 8
(metal DL, #58 scale, 73 pipes)
- 272 *Cello Celeste* 8
(2 ranks, flat/sharp, both to CC) (metal DL, #58 scale, 146 pipes)
- 273 *Viola Phonon* 8
(metal DL, #55 scale, 73 pipes)
- 274 *Viola Celeste* 8
(2 ranks, both to CC) (metal, #60 scale, 146 pipes)
- 275 *Viol Phonon* 8
(metal DL, #60 scale, 73 pipes)
- 276 *Violin* 8
(tin, #62 scale, 73 pipes)
- 277 *Viol Celeste I* 8
(2 ranks, normal/sharp, both to CC) (metal, #62 scale, 146 pipes)

- 278 *Viol Celeste II* 8
(2 ranks, normal/sharp, one to TC) (tin, #66 scale, 134 pipes)
- 279 *Viol Celeste III* 8
(2 ranks, flat/normal, one to TC) (metal DL, #72 scale, 134 pipes)
- 280 *Viol Celeste IV* 8
(2 ranks, normal/sharp, one to TC) (tin, #67 scale, 134 pipes)
- 281 *Viol Celeste V* 8
(2 ranks, flat/normal, one to TC) (metal, #67 scale, 134 pipes)
- 282 *Violin* 4
(2 ranks, both to CC) (metal, #68 scale, 146 pipes)
- 283 *Viola* 4
(2 ranks, both to CC) (metal, #68 scale, 146 pipes)
- 285 *String Mixture* 10-15-17-19-22
(metal, #68 base scale, 305 pipes)
- 286 *Tromba d'Amour* 8
(metal, 5" scale, 73 pipes)
- 287 *Stopped Flute* 5-1/3, 2-2/3, 2
(stopped wood, 3.75" x 3" scale, 78 pipes)
- 288 *Flute Twelfth* 2-2/3
(stopped wood, 2.5" x 3.5" scale, 73 pipes)

STRING III 15" wind

- 289 *Cello Celeste I* 8
(2 ranks, normal/sharp, both to CC) (tin/metal, 3.375" x 3.375 scale, 146 pipes)
- 290 *Cello Celeste II* 8
(2 ranks, flat/normal, both to CC) (metal, #58 scale, 146 pipes)
- 291 *Viola Celeste* 8
(2 ranks, both to CC) (metal, #62 scale, 146 pipes)
- 292 *Viol Celeste I* 8
(2 ranks, flat/normal, both to CC) (metal, #56 scale, 146 pipes)
- 293 *Viol Celeste II* 8
(2 ranks, normal/sharp, one to TC) (tin, 1-11/48" scale, 134 pipes)
- 294 *Viol Celeste III* 8
(2 ranks, flat/normal, both to CC) (metal, #66 scale, 146 pipes)
- 295 *Viol Celeste IV* 8
(2 ranks, normal/sharp, one to TC) (wood 1" x 1" scale/metal 1.96" scale, 134 pipes)
- 296 *Viol Celeste V* 8
(2 ranks, normal/sharp, both to CC) (tin, #64 scale, 146 pipes)
- 297 *Cor Anglais* 8
(metal, 4.5" scale, 73 pipes)

Celestes can be tuned to a variety of patterns, e.g. very flat, flat, sharp, very sharp. A particularly useful pattern for a compound celeste is flat/sharp, because an on-pitch rank can be added *in the middle* to create even more complex undulations, but this pattern is mentioned only once (stop 272) in the specifications for the String organs. Since no tuning pattern is indicated for some compound strings, the suggestion

is that both ranks were to be on-pitch, i.e. having no undulating rank, but it seems likely that, in some cases at least, Richards simply neglected to specify these patterns — perhaps because he had yet to decide which he wanted.

The String II organ and the Brass Chorus, both located in the Right Forward chamber, were the first departments to be completed and Richards played them from a temporary three-manual console in July, 1929. However, some of the String II's ranks were later removed and converted to double languid format but, at present, it is unclear how many double languid ranks there are in the Auditorium organ. Originally, I reckoned there were about 50 such ranks but information recently brought to light has lead me to revise the figure to in excess of 70. Double languid stops are quite rare: the Wanamaker organ has one; Westminster Cathedral has one; and Liverpool Cathedral has about a dozen, but it is unheard of to find so many of these stops in one instrument (an instrument which, incidentally, Henry Willis III described as "the world's largest collection of pipes"). Seibert Losh, writing in an edition of a booklet about the Midmer-Losh firm entitled *Under the Sassafras Tree*, was probably correct when he claimed that the String II organ's double languid ranks were the first string stops in the world to be constructed in this manner.

(continued on page 6)



String III organ, a "formal" photograph showing tenor G pipes from each of the nine stops. The *Cor Anglais*, at right, replaced what was originally to be a *Vox Humana*.

In terms of the number of pipes, the String II organ is the instrument's fourth largest department (after the Great, Swell, and Choir), indicating the importance that Richards attached to string tone. Indeed, he seems to have had something of a passion for string choruses. The first manifestation of this passion was the Orchestral (Swell) department on the third manual of the Atlantic City High School organ where the string stops alone were provided with 73 notes each (so that the octave coupler wouldn't *run out of notes* when keys in the uppermost octave of the 61-note keyboard were played). Later, this instrument was also provided with a floating String organ. At the Convention Hall, the Swell department — with its 16-8-8-8-8-8-4 string registers — also had orchestral leanings and most of the instrument's string stops also have a 73-note compass. Even when, in later years, Richards had moved away from Romantic and Orchestral organs in favor of the Baroque and Classical, he still



String II organ. Plastic covers were placed over these two-rank celestes in an attempt to keep water off them. Even so, tuning collars are rusted and a few pipes are bent. On the passageboard, but barely visible, are some treble pipes from another chest which have been placed here for their protection.

had a tendency to specify more string stops than would usually be found on such instruments. This was especially true of the later organs installed in his Boardwalk home.

The String II organ also includes the *Tromba d'Amour* rank which was originally to be called *String Reed*. This stop, according to what Seibert Losh wrote in *Under the Sassafras Tree*, was to be "highly suggestive of large Gamba tone but adding a meaty richness to the ensemble". Incidentally, on the five-manual console, the stop-key is engraved *String Reed* and, in the original specifications, there were to be two stops of this name on the second String organ. It seems that some resonators in the *Tromba d'Amour* rank were originally part of the Brass Chorus's *Tromba Twelfth*, as the stop number 114 is stamped on them. The String II's *Stopped Flute* was originally to be a straight 8-foot rank but was later converted to its present unit format. In total, only five stops on the String organs are extended (one stop on String I and four on String II).

The String II organ is in rather a sorry state, having been subjected to water damage. Some ranks have been removed for their own protection and others have been damaged by workers who installed a new service pipe which passes through the chamber (the photographs in this article show some of the String II's *better* sections!). Consequently, it is currently impossible to establish some of the facts about this department's contents.

The String III organ, as mentioned in issue 8 of *the Grand Ophicleide*, was originally enclosed in its own swell box but its shades were removed when the decision was taken to enclose the Fanfare organ (inside which the String III is located) to avoid having a swell box within a swell box. This department contains some pencil-thin scales and other unusual details, e.g. *Viol Celeste IV* has a wooden rank and a metal one, while *Cello Celeste I* has two metal ranks with flat faces. [For a plan of the String III organ, see *The Grand Ophicleide*, issue 8, page 8, and photographs of the department *in situ* appear on page 15 of issue 2.]

In summary, it could be said that, to Richards, the String departments were just

as much an integral part of the Auditorium organ's scheme as the diapasons and chorus reeds, and it is worth noting that one of the four crescendo pedal settings on the instrument was allocated solely to string-toned stops. Although the String organs have their own character, purpose, and location, they can also be considered part of the main instrument; with String I being the ancillary to the Swell and Choir and String II belonging to the Great and Solo. String III being the only true *stand-alone* department. In my opinion, the fact that this multitude of departments with their multitude of stops can serve a multitude of purposes is further testimony to the ingenuity of Richards' design rationale. ♪



String II organ. This upper level chest contains, from left to right, the *Tromba d'Amour*, *String Mixture*, and *Flute Twelfth*. Their pipes are peppered with bits of plaster and off-cuts of insulation left behind when a new service pipe was installed in the chamber.

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Atlantic City Update

Reconstruction work continues at a feverish pace in Boardwalk Hall. The new ceiling system is now completely installed. It looks wonderful and there is now no doubt that the Hall will be a very remarkable restoration achievement when all is said and done. The photograph below shows part of the new pre-cast concrete balcony seating areas under construction at the far end of the Hall. Portions of the new ceiling can be seen as well. The black trusses near the ceiling are temporary and were used during the ceiling installation. The new ceiling computer-controlled color lighting system is in place. Removal of the remaining old balcony areas continues and the new pre-cast sections will go in place once this work is completed.

Reconstruction and restoration work will continue through the year 2001. Plans call for a completion and re-dedication ceremony late next year.

The ACCHOS has submitted a 77-page report to the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority (NJSEA) outlining a plan for the complete restoration of the Midmer-Losh organ over a ten year period. A detailed report on the condition of the organ and its restoration needs prepared by Jack Bethards and Douglass Hunt was included in the full report. Estimated costs for restoration are in the range of \$11-13 million. There are recommendations to relocate the seven blowers from the basement area to an area above the organ work room and another area on the opposite side of the building to avoid moisture and flooding problems in the rather inhospitable basement area. This work accounts for \$2 million in the estimate.

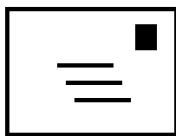
Plans to retain the services of a professional fund-raising consultant are nearly complete. Mr. Charles Webb of the Charles Webb Company in Pittsfield, Massachusetts has been selected to undertake an initial feasibility study for the ACCHOS. For the past 25 years, Charles Webb has enjoyed a great deal of success in fund-raising activities for museums, cultural centers, and performing arts centers around the nation.

A number of Atlantic City residents, friends, and business have come forward as Advocates of the Boardwalk Hall Organ



Restoration and will be listed in this and future issues of *the Grand Ophicleide*. Their support and enthusiasm is most welcome.

As reported in the last issue of *the Grand Ophicleide*, the 55-rank Ballroom Organ built by the W.W. Kimball Company in 1932 was made unplayable when the relay and high pressure blower were removed in February to make way for a stairway. The NJSEA will fund a new initiative by the Society to prepare a restoration plan and budget for this historic instrument. Leading the effort will be Brandtly Duddy, a well-respected restoration consultant and Kimball organ expert. The work will begin in early December with a complete examination of the instrument and assessment of potential new locations for the blower. In all probability a solid state relay system will replace the original Kimball relay.



we get mail

(Editor's note: The caption for the photo of organist Lois Miller on the cover of Issue 7, Spring 2000 incorrectly stated that she played on the Million Dollar Pier. Here an eyewitness sets the record straight.)



Senator Emerson Richards showed incredible vision in designing the Convention Hall organs. His hearing ability must also have been awesome to be able to hear Lois Miller on the Million Dollar Pier while she was playing the Hammond Organ on Heinz Ocean Pier more than a mile to the north! To the best of my recollection the Million Dollar Pier never had an organ as the Hippodrome featured its own minstrel troupe (as did Steel Pier) plus vaudeville.

Lois Miller, "The Singing Organist", became famous playing at Pittsburgh movie palaces and had a long running organ program on KDKA, Pittsburgh, called "The House of Jacks", which advertised a line of industrial jacks.

In 1936 Heinz did a complete make-over of the pier and I was hired as projectionist of their advertising film and announcer. The Hammond was rolled onto the deck and plugged into a huge sound system and Lois played several concerts daily al fresco, ending with a community sing at 9 PM. Attendance was nine to twelve thousand nightly.

About 1937 or 1938, Lois started playing prelude music for the Miss America Beauty Contest. I would rush her to the Convention Hall for her recital and then back to the pier for the 9 PM community sing and then back to the hall to play "exit" music. One year she accompanied a contestant, Miss Minnesota, who sang "By the Waters of the Minniconka", -- possibly the only time the organ was used to accompany a contestant. I believe that one or more contestants have performed on the organ in the talent contest in the intervening years.

Sadly, the Hammond went down with Heinz Pier in the 1944 Hurricane.

I applaud your efforts to have the convention hall organs restored and pray for your success.

Sincerely,
Herbert B. Stockinger

Dear Sirs,

My name is Christopher Paraskevopoulos and I am a Greek organist. It was my dream from 1981 (when I was 12 years old) to listen at the World's Biggest Organ. Last week I ordered the CD of the Auditorium Organ and today in the morning it came to my home. I was so happy for this that I am still listening to it from the midday (now it is 22.50). I could imagine this sound but I could not hear it and now I can.

It is a very special sound. I think that it can be compared with the better orchestra that exists and I can imagine what will be its sound when it will be completely restored. It is my life's dream to come to Atlantic City and listen at this ORGAN lively.

Thank you very much for the opportunity you give to us, the organists that live so far away from this magnificent sound that this instrument produces. Please let me know more things about this ORGAN, if there is something that you can inform me more about that.

I want to tell you something else, about this magnificent organ. As you know I live in Greece, and this country has only 14 organs. The biggest is the Klais organ in Athens Concert Hall with 4 manuals, 76 stops and 6080 pipes. It is a very good instrument. But it is a very rare occasion for a Greek to listen to real organs because they are so few in this country. So if a Greek has the chance to listen to one of them, then it is a very good time. At my concerts the church is full of people, even there are a lot of people standing in the foyer of the church.

So when my friends today at the morning listened at this CD with the World's Biggest they were excited. They liked so much this symphonic sound, but the feelings I have, are not described with words. When I was walking this morning I was listening at the CD on my discman and I really felt my tears being at my eyes.

Thank you so much for this experience, my dear friends. I really want to encourage you to continue this big work, to restore this instrument. By the way I want to ask you, if there are other CDs with the World's Biggest. I want to have more music from it, if this is possible.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

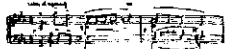
Christopher Paraskevopoulos
Concert Organist

Organist of the German Church of Athens
Vice-President of the Greek Association of the Friends of the Organ

An ACCHOS First!

Here's one for the record: An ACCHOS member has just made arrangements with his Company to have \$25 per week deducted from his paycheck and automatically sent to the ACCHOS. His \$1300 a year contribution to be sent in small amounts is most welcome indeed, and we thank him most sincerely! He writes: "This will make it easier for me to budget and trim out the excesses that really get wasted in a week! What better way?"

L O I S M I L L E R



BARCLAY COURT
NINE SOUTH PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE
ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY

April 14, 1955.

Dear Mr Kennedy:

Your letter was forwarded to me from the Hall and I am happy to answer it and tell you some things about the Big Organ.

I have been Official Organist there for the past thirteen years and enjoy the work very much. Right now we are in the midst of a huge Catholic Educational Convention and the town is full of Priests and Nuns....mostly Nuns. Yesterday when I left the Big Organ to go up to play for a session in the Ballroom on the 4 manual Kimball we have there, I told Mother that I was in a sea of black! I had a yellow coat on and all around me were Nuns.

Each convention is different. One week I will play for the American Bankers, with the men at night in white tie and tails and the women in fine furs and gowns and you can imagine the type of music I play for them. Then the next week we may have a C.I.O. Steelworkers convention and the music is very different. That is what has made the past years so exciting for me.

Now to answer some of your questions. The 5 manual console has only about half of the stops as the Big Organ but of course you have to turn on the 9 motors of the Big Organ to use the other one. Unfortunately we haven't been called upon to use the 5 manual one for years. Everyone wants to see and hear the Big one. I play the one in the Ballroom much more than the Big Organ. We have business meetings there and huge banquets etc.

Mr Brooks has been dead for years and was never the City Organist. He helped to install the organs at the Hall and played them once in a while, long years before I came here from Pittsburgh but he never played for any conventions. I never heard of any book he was writing but there is a book on a number of world famous organs written by a Dr Barnes. It was published years ago and I have it but I can't find it now. I have such a large library. In it he has some fine photographs of both organs and a very fine description of them. I hope you will be able to get it somewhere.

I don't know how far you are from Regina, but I have a very dear friend there and I'll...

you two to meet. He is Justice Percy Gordon of the Court of Appeal in Saskatchewan. His address is 2424 College Avenue. How happy he would be to hear from you and to know that you and I had been writing to each other. He is a wonderful man.

I am enclosing a book about the organ and also my picture at the console.

I hope that you may come down this way sometime and can see and hear the organs. Atlantic City is a fine place. We seldom have snow because the Gulf Stream is getting nearer each year. We had a good snowfall right after Christmas and the children went crazy and they let the schools out, so they could enjoy it before it all melted.

Kindest Regards,

Lois Miller



Lois Miller plays for the
1952 Miss America
Pageant



Lois Miller

ROBERT ELMORE
130 WALNUT AVENUE, WAYNE, PENNSYLVANIA

October 8, 1957

Dear Mr. Kennedy,

Thank so much for your very gracious letter regarding my two Atlantic City recordings. I am so glad you are enjoying them.

I am awfully sorry that I have forgotten the answers to most of your interesting questions. The recordings were made last November, and I have played many organs since then, so that I must confess to having forgotten in the main what registration I used.

Actually, the only definite answer I can give is that in the WAGHET AUF I used the Ophicleide on 100" pressure for the cantus. For the "big" passages in the Bach I used everything that was working at the moment. But this varied, and possibly the reason that you enjoyed the C major Fugue and the IN DULCI JUBILO most was because some of the organ was not working when those two pieces were recorded!

You see, the problem was that the motors kept dying, and with them of course great portions of the instrument would get. The last piece of all to be recorded on the big organ was the ADAGIO, then finally the little interlude (an Scholze diaphanoso) between the Adagio and the Fugue. We saved the softest till the last for reasons of necessity.

I don't know the book by Arthur Scott Breck to which you refer. I wonder if it was ever published. Perhaps Senator Richards would know.

I'm awfully sorry not to be able to tell you more than this.

Sincerely,

Robert Elmore

Yes, the large console was used.



The letters from Lois Miller (p. 9) and Robert Elmore (left) are provided courtesy of ACCHOS member D. Stuart Kennedy, Calgary, Ontario, Canada.

This article stems from the memory of a sixteen-year-old would-be organist between 1950 and 1953, when he had the opportunity to work at the Convention Hall as assistant to Lois Miller, organist, and Roscoe Evans, organ curator. Since then, Jack Goodman spent 34 years in public education, 50 years as church organist, and 30 years as house organist of the Hershey Theatre in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

Turn on the Blowers! Full Steam Ahead!

My heart skipped a beat when Lois Miller invited me to sit down at that 7-manual console in the kiosk of the largest organ in the world, and spend the next two hours in this “organist’s paradise.” Mr. Evans set the stop tabs, turned on all the blowers, and turned me loose to wander through the symphonic classics, show tunes, marches, and the myriad musical colors of which this giant instrument was capable. I was challenged and charged with what I was hearing as the music echoed and reverberated throughout the great auditorium. As I increased the tempo, I had to “listen in my head”, since the music I was hearing was a few beats behind what I was playing.

What a sense of power! When the 64 and 32 “footers” were added to Bach’s *D-Minor*, guards said they could feel the hall vibrate. During the finale of the *1812 Overture*, no one could carry on a conversation inside, and when the cymbals, snare and bass drum from the multiple “toy counters” were added to the *Stars and Stripes*, it sounded like a dozen drum corps “whooping it up”. To a sixteen year old “coal-cracker” from eastern Pennsylvania, who thought the 3-manual Skinner in the 2nd Presbyterian Church, Pottsville, was the last word in organs, this was an unbelievable experience.

As I look back at what turned out to be three summers of working on the organs under Mr. Evans, and playing various “gigs” around the city as Lois’s “unofficial” assistant, I certainly felt very honored and privileged to “soak up” much from those two wonderful people. Lois was a great “talker”, and would reminisce about her start in Pittsburgh theaters, and later, at Atlantic City’s Million Dollar Pier, before coming to Convention Hall. She told stories of the war years, when the Hall was used for soldier drills, and the organs were used like marching bands. During one of the hurricanes, the Ballroom was used as an evacuation center, and at the height of the storm, a lady gave birth in one of the organ chambers. Lois marveled at some of the conventions held there. During a railroad convention, they laid tracks around the inside of the Hall, and a diesel locomotive pulled cars around the perimeter.

Lois was married to Bryon McGill, an executive at Westinghouse Corp. Since he did a lot of traveling, Lois and her mother would spend most of their time at Barclay Court, their apartment on Pennsylvania Avenue. When Byron and Lois could get away in summer during “slack time”, I was given the opportunity to “pinch hit” for her at the Morton Hotel’s Quarterdeck Theater, and at the Hall. Frank Imhoff, the “dinner” organist at the Morton also had me play quite often when he was busy as set designer for the Miss America Pageant.

During the summers, the Ice Capades were in residence at the Hall, and Lois played prior to many of the performances. One of my duties was to be ready to play when she was not available. When I was not playing, Mr. Evans had me assist him in keeping the 33,112 pipes in some semblance of tune --- a gargantuan task. Since there were tuning keyboards in each chamber, communication between us was not too difficult. After one of the hurricanes (I believe it might have been *Hazel*), part of the roof of the hall began to leak, and the Swell relay chamber was flooded. Needless to say, we spent a great deal of time re-leathering the entire chamber.

As the time for the Miss America Pageant arrived, Lois would always return to be fitted with her pageant gowns, and prepare for her rousing organ preludes at each night of the pageant. Those were the “good ol’ days”, when the organ was used as an integral part of the festivities, along with a ‘live’ orchestra. My job during the pageant was to trouble-shoot any ciphers which might occur. I even had the honor to show Mimi Smith (Miss Pennsylvania 1952) around the organ console, since she played “Tico Tico” in the talent competition. With Lois and Mr. Evans, we were thrilled to show Marilyn Monroe, Grand Marshall in 1952, the multitude of pipes located throughout the organ chamber directly off his workshop.

Now, fifty years have come and gone. The glamour and glitz of Convention Hall seems to have dimmed. But, thanks to the dedication of the folks of the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, this great instrument will see a new beginning within the magnificent Boardwalk Convention Center. Thanks for keeping the “old girl” alive and well!

— Jack Goodman

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Statement of Purpose

The Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc. was formed in 1997 and exists to:

- Create a greater public awareness of and interest in the Convention Hall's organs, especially in terms of their future use.
- Promote both instruments through newsletters, magazine articles, and recordings; both audio and video.
- Arrange periodic organ recitals, and organize regular meetings of ACCHOS members.
- Encourage ongoing maintenance of the instruments, and seek funding for crucial restoration at local, state, federal, and international levels.

Membership benefits include: **the Grand Ophicleide**, published four times a year containing the latest news and developments concerning both the great Auditorium Midmer-Losh and the Kimball in the Ballroom, and the chance to help support the efforts of the Society in fulfilling the Statement of Purpose printed above.

Yearly ACCHOS membership dues are:

Regular - \$20	Seniors & Students \$15
Contributor - \$40	Donor - \$75
Supporter - \$100	Benefactor - \$250
Sponsor - \$500	LIFE MEMBERSHIP - \$1,000

Enclosed is \$ _____ for membership in the ACCHOS.

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The ACCHOS is a 501 (c)(3) organization incorporated in the State of Maryland.

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