

PIPE NOTES

a publication of the Vermont Chapter
of The American Guild of Organists

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No. 224

February 2014

CHAPTER NOTES

The National AGO Convention will be held this June in Boston, Mass. and Vermont AGO member William Tortolano will be giving a "scholarly" talk at the convention on Thursday, June 26 from 10:15 to 10:40 in Regis, 3rd fl/70. The presentation is entitled Gregorian Chant Roots in the Music of J.S. Bach.

The two-manual, electric-action, 1940 Estey Organ Corp. instrument in Holy Family R.C. Church, Essex Junction, Vt., was replaced in January with an inexpensive, pipeless organ of unknown origin and size. The console of Estey's Op. 3116, an organ that contained two reed stops among its nine ranks of pre-1940 pipes, had already been dismembered when a concerned Chapter member contacted by cell phone church volunteers who were soon to be moving organ parts to a dumpster. The work was immediately halted and as a result of the late intervention, all of the pipes and a few pieces of the mechanism were removed for eventual recycling.

OUR CHAPTER MOURNS THE PASSING OF FORMER AGO MEMBER AND ORGANBUILDER JOHN WESSEL
(Several Vermont AGO members have sent information and news articles regarding John, and the following is a compilation of these.)

Organbuilder Johannes (John) Wessel of Brattleboro died there January 7, 2014 at age 91.

He was born in Zoeterwoude, Holland on November 15, 1922 to Willem and Aagje (van Vliet) Wessel. At age 13, he started working for van Leeuwen Orgelbouw, Leiden, in a profession that he enjoyed until his retirement in 2002. He was a former member of the Vermont Chapter, A.G.O.

During World War II, he spent years successfully evading the occupying German troops who were actively searching for young Dutch men to work in their factories.

In 1946, he married Sophia A. van Hoeven. The family emigrated to Brattleboro in 1954 after he was invited to work for the Estey Organ Company. After Estey closed he continued building, restoring, repairing, and maintaining pipe organs throughout Vermont, much of New England, and New York. In addition to maintaining most of the organs in Brattleboro, he moved Estey Opus 1 from its original home in the former Methodist Church on Elliott Street to the new church on Putney Road, and built the organ in St. Michael's Catholic Church.

He leaves his wife Sophia, a son Willem Wessel of West Chesterfield, N.H.; daughters Nellie Hamilton of Hinsdale, N.H., Trixie Stinebring of Spofford, N.H., Joy Trigg of Williston, Vt., and Rose Wessel of Cummington, Mass. He also leaves nine grandchildren, three great grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild.

According to the family's wishes there will be no public services.

Memorial contributions in Mr. Wessel's name may be made to Rescue Inc., P.O. Box 593, Brattleboro, Vt. 05302.

Mr. Wessel was an important Estey employee during the final years of the firm's existence, particularly as a specialist in tracker action and flue pipe voicing. Before he went into business for himself, he worked briefly for Schlicker and Austin as a voicer and tonal finisher, being "on the road" much of the time. For several years, Mr. Wessel was the only "legitimate" organ builder in Vermont, renovating, restoring, rebuilding, maintaining, and occasionally moving organs. He always recycled any worthy, "experienced" organ components. The two-manual, electric-action organs in St. Francis R.C. Church, Windsor, Vt., and the Congregational Church, Lyme, N.H., are examples of his new instruments. Many old, tubular-pneumatic Estey organs benefited from his careful releathering. Mr. Wessel voiced many hundreds of sets of pipes "for the trade," and that work includes the pipework of the Gallery Division in the famous organ in the Auditorium, Ocean Grove, N.J.

John Wessel was a restorer of reed organs, a careful guardian of papers and artifacts rescued when the Estey buildings were vacated in 1960, and a man always willing to help others in the organ business. A Chapter member who often worked with him during the past fifty years remembers John as an intelligent, kind, patient, gentle, generous, loyal, and "no-nonsense" friend who taught him much and even took him on a two-week trip to Holland. John's tales of his life during World War II, his recollections of "behind-the-scenes" activity at Estey, and his sense of humor will always be a pleasant memory for his many living friends.

A memorial organ recital may be held later this year. An illustrated biography of Mr. Wessel may be found in The Bicentennial of the Pipe Organ in Vermont, 1814-2014, published as the 2013 Atlas by the Organ Historical Society.

PHILIP STIMMEL NAMED TO DIRECTORSHIP OF THE ESTEY ORGAN MUSEUM

The Estey Organ Museum was organized about 11 years ago by a board of organ enthusiasts interested in preserving the legacy of the Esteys and their reed and pipe organ company. Jacob Estey, a Brattleboro resident, bought the Estey Organ Company in 1852 and developed an organbuilding operation that at one time was the largest reed organ company in the world, employing over 500 workers. At the turn of the century it added pipe organs to its output and shipped pipe and reed organs all over the world. It closed its doors in 1960.

The Museum's board of directors has ably taken on the task of preserving the Estey legacy but was in need of a director to spearhead the work envisioned. When they recently approached Phil Stimmel about taking on the directorship, he readily agreed.

For the past 50 years Phil has been an organist at churches in New Jersey, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. He is a former Dean of the Vermont AGO Chapter. Recently retiring from his church organist job and reducing his hours of accounting work that he did on the side, he is in a good position to take on this new appointment. A Mid-western road trip this summer allowed him to personally visit some Estey organ enthusiasts that he has met online.

Stimmel has his own personal collection of Estey organ memorabilia and several Estey organs in his home in West Brattleboro. This past December he played a circa-1880 Vermont-made Estey reed pump organ as part of a holiday concert series at the Brattleboro Savings and Loan Association. As voluntary director of the Museum Stimmel envisions outreach in educational programs that emphasize the company's technical and creative achievements, their promotional and marketing strategies in the 18th and 19th century advertising, and their civic responsibility in changing world economies. There is no shortage of issues to explore, according to Stimmel, whose energy and enthusiasm bode well for the future of the Estey Organ Museum.

NEWS FROM HEADQUARTERS

The American Guild of Organists announces five Pipe Organ Encounters (POEs) and one POE (Advanced) for students aged 13-18; one POE (Technical) for students aged 16-23; and two POE+ programs for adult students in 2014. Generous funding from the Associated Pipe Organ Builders of America (APOBA) and the American Institute of Organbuilders (AIO) will support the summer programs, which will be held from coast to coast. Complete contact information for each Pipe Organ Encounter can be found in The American Organist Magazine and online at Agohq.org. The summer schedule follows:

POE for ages 13-18		POE(Technical) for ages 16-23	
June 8-13	Fort Collins, Colo.	June 8-13	Stowe, Pa.
June 9-14	Indianapolis, Ind.		
June 29-July 4	Wilmington, Del.	POE+ for adults	
July 7-11	Manhattan, Kans.	June 8-13	Rockford, Ill.
July 13-18	Easton, Mass.	July 13-17	Seattle, Wash.
POE (Advanced) for ages 13-18			
June 29-July 4	Ann Arbor, Mich.		

The American Guild of Organists (AGO) is spearheading three major initiatives that have been made possible by the largest bequest in Guild history. Totalling more than \$1.5 million in cash and assets including a tracker pipe organ, the bequest from the estate of Ronald G. Pogozelski and Lester D. Yankee was first announced at the 2010 AGO National Convention in Washington, D.C.

With the gradual distribution of the assets over the last three and a half years, the Guild has worked diligently and faithfully to honor the donors' intentions by establishing (1) an endowment to provide college scholarships to dedicated organ students with financial needs, (2) an endowment to provide for the relocation and ongoing maintenance of the donors' tracker organ, and (3) an

endowment to support an annual organ composition competition for that instrument. Two of these endowments are now fully funded, with the third nearing completion.

The American Guild of Organists (AGO) has been awarded a grant by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to support the 2014 National Convention in Boston, Mass., June 23-27, 2014. The \$15,000 NEA "Art Works" grant is directed to support performances, educational workshops, publication of the Boston Organ Book, and new music premieres. The grant carries a mandate that it be matched dollar for dollar from other funding sources. The 2014 AGO National Convention is the fifth consecutive AGO National Convention that has garnered funding from the arts endowment.

MUSIC DIRECTOR POSITION AVAILABLE

The Charlotte Congregational Church, UCC is seeking a new Director of Music Ministry. We are an Open and Affirming congregation that values and upholds music as an integral part of worship and extended ministry. Our congregation loves to sing and is blessed with many musicians who contribute to worship. We have a refurbished Estey organ, a grand piano, and an occasional group of folk-instrument players who lead worship. Primary responsibilities would be accompanying congregational singing and rehearsing and conducting the adult choir for our Sunday morning worship services at 10 a.m. and for other occasional services like Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday, and Maundy Thursday. In addition we also offer a Saturday Evening Worship Service once-a-month at 4:30 p.m., and have a children's choir that meets on occasion. This part-time position, roughly 10 hours a week, could be staffed by one or two people and would be available starting March 2nd, 2014.

Please send a cover letter and resume to: charlotteucc@cmavt.net, attention: Music Search. Or to The Charlotte Congregational Church, 403 Church Hill Road, Charlotte, Vt. 05445. Church office: 802-425-3176.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for the March issue of **Pipe Notes** will be February 20.