

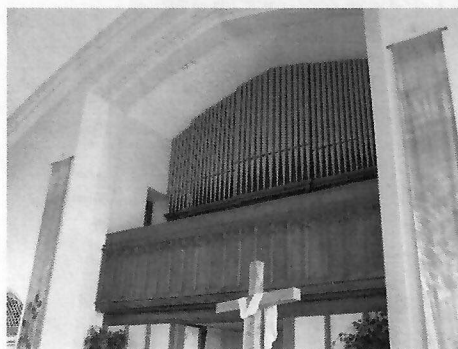
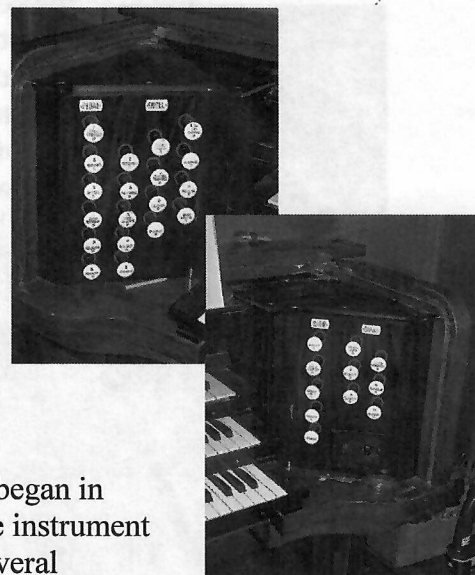
# **E.M. Skinner Op. 365**

## **Restored By Bradford Organ Company**

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The instrument was initially installed April of 1922 in the First United Baptist Church, Lewiston, Maine. Originally it was contracted to be a 25 stop three manual and pedal instrument of roughly 20 ranks. The completed instrument that was ultimately built was 30 stops and 23 ranks. It was confined to a 24' wide by 22' high by 9' depth balcony chamber behind the altar. The instrument was scaled and voiced to fill a 600 person sanctuary that was in essence a huge plaster box.

Opus 365 was built in the Westfield Massachusetts factory, formerly the Steere Organ Company. The Skinner Organ Company purchased the Steere Organ Company early in 1921 to enable them to keep up with the dramatic increase of work orders that were steadily coming in from all over the country. "According to the May 1921 issue of *The American Organist*, the Steere Organ Company's plant would make "standard Skinner parts" under Skinner specification, and "the entire personnel of the Steere Company would continue with the Skinner Company under this arrangement, each member having substantially the same responsibilities as before." (Holden pg.80)



The restoration project of Op. 365 began in Maine with the removal and packing of the instrument into two twenty-four foot box trucks by several volunteers from the church under the direction of Walter Bradford. By this time it was apparent that this was not your typical E.M. Skinner organ. All the reservoirs were complete boxes instead of the small square box with the oversized top that was produced at the Boston plant. The magnets are referred to as "lead pot cap" magnets, which were only used for a short period of time as the wooden and plastic capped magnets were cheaper

to make and more durable (they don't immediately melt when a soldering iron bumps them!). The magnets all have protective boxes covering the coils which not only protects, but keep them surprisingly clean. Due to this fact there was not a single magnet that needed to be replaced during the restoration. The main chests do not have removable toe boards which was common for a Boston Skinner. The great and choir main chests have single primaries not the standard Skinner double primaries. The one double primary in the organ controls the two main chests of the swell division. The construction of this primary has been simplified to great effect. There are not any lead tubes connecting the first primary to second primary, which means in the future if there's a dead note due to a blown



primary pouch, you can actually take the primary apart without having to replace all seventy-three tubes. The pedal board for this instrument is built in the style that most tracker organ pedal boards are built. It has large springs that run from the middle of the pedal to the front of the pedal board where they are anchored into greased holes along the base of the pedal board itself. The toe studs are made from nickel plated brass, which are very attractive and very sturdy but very different from the ebony toe studs that are standard on a Boston Skinner. Despite all of these peculiar details the speed of the action, reliability, voicing, balancing and finishing of the instrument are all characteristic of the quality of an E.M. Skinner Organ.

The new installation of the instrument in Lake Forest Church of the Covenants is far superior to the small, constricting box of the original installation. The space it now occupies is 27' wide 24' tall (at the peak) and 11'6" deep. This allows the instrument to



be accessible to service, tune and most importantly speak clearly. The Swell division has been restored and reinstalled exactly as it was in Maine, except it now runs front to back instead of side to side. The Choir division follows exactly as the swell, simply turned to fit front to back. The great and pedal divisions have been completely reconfigured to maximize accessibility and sound projection. The original installation had ten of the 16' pedal diapasons mounted horizontally on the ceiling. Those pipes were fitted with new toes and are now standing vertical on the back wall of the Great/Pedal division. The organ's combination action was changed to a hybrid system of SSL and Peterson parts sometime in the seventies or early eighties. This system



was removed and a Peterson I.C.S. 4000 operating system was installed. This greatly increases the flexibility and convenience of playing the organ from concert, recital, hymns and accompaniment of instrumentalists and the choir.

The expression boxes are built as complete rooms from floor to ceiling. The shades being built into the front of the boxes like windows on a house. The back wall of both boxes is the brick outside wall of the building which is eighteen inches thick and serves well for sound reflection. The rest of the interior walls of the expression boxes are made of plaster. This was the way the boxes were originally constructed in Maine, and due to the exceptional sound projection the church proposed that plaster should be used in the newly built expression boxes. This has greatly increased the dynamic range for both the swell and choir divisions.



The original façade wall and pipe fence are tentatively put in place and will be completed at a later date. The pipes have been stripped of their multiple coats of gold paint and await their new assignment. The console has been completely refinished. All the original ivory of the keyboards, drawknobs and labels have been retained. The addition of a 32' Resultant, Chimes and a Swell to Pedal 4' coupler were the extent of additions to this vintage organ. The chimes are located in the chamber on the south-east side of the altar and are not playing at this present time. Blank knobs have been added to accommodate any future additions. A mechanism for the pedal board is currently being



engineered and built allowing the pedals to be lowered as much as three inches from the standard position.

It has been a true joy and honor to be able to restore this magnificent instrument. But more importantly this instrument has been placed in a setting where it is appreciated, used constantly and held in high regard by the entire congregation. Bradford Organ Company would like to thank the pastors, Arthur R. Brueggeman, David E. Brueggeman and Ruth Brueggeman for their consistent support and dedication to this project. Bradford would also like to thank long time friend and supporter David Hiatt, who has been the organist at Lake Forest Church of the Covenants since 1971. It was David Hiatt who found the instrument at The Organ Clearing House and enquired about the possibility of purchasing, restoring and installing it in the church. David has been a willing helper and a very patient organist throughout the long process of installation. His patience is truly appreciated by all at Bradford Organ Company. We would also like to thank the church's carpenter, Dave Cordell, for his many hours of work on the platforms, floor, and erection of the façade wall and installation of the console. Bradford Organ Company is grateful to the many members of the congregation who donated their time and energy to this project; we could not have done it without you.

