

M. L. BIGELOW & COMPANY INC., ORGAN BUILDERS

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History of M. L. Bigelow & Co.'s Opus 1

On 19 February 1978, Dr. David Rothe, Professor of Organ at California State University, Chico, first approached Mike Bigelow about building an organ for his home. Bigelow had been recommended by John Brombaugh, a respected organ builder with whom Bigelow had recently completed an apprenticeship. Bigelow was working for a furniture maker in Provo, Utah, at the time. Bigelow agreed to take on the job, a basic design was worked up, and on 1 April 1978 a contract was finalized for an instrument of 11 stops costing \$35,000. (In the end, total cash paid, including freight and travel expenses, was \$38,607.23.) Bigelow bought out his employer, and proceeded to convert the furniture shop to build pipe organs.

By the time the instrument was completed in late 1979, there were a few changes, the most significant of which was the change of venue from Rothe's home in the remote town of Forest Ranch to St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church on the corner of 3rd and Salem in Chico, where Rothe was organist. Rothe loaned it to the church where it could better serve the community. Other changes altered the original stop list a little. The Vox Humana 8' was deleted from the top manual, and the Dulcian 8' was made playable on both manuals. Also an independent Fagott 16'- 8' was added to the pedal, which had been originally designed to borrow the Dulcian 8' from the manuals. Finally, the Subbass 16' was extended to make it playable at both 16' and 8' pitches. (See final stop list below).

Opus 1 resided at St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church for almost two years. However, the congregation moved to the suburbs, and the lovely old church was abandoned. At the urging of Sally Stoner, organist at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Rothe agreed to let the instrument be moved, and on 23 October 1981 Rev. Thomas Dermody signed a contract agreeing to reimburse time and materials to move the organ to St. John the Baptist Catholic Church. During the move, the organ received a new penetrating oil finish. (Previously the finish was wax on bare wood.) A platform was built locally to give the organ more height. Much of the labor and all of the equipment to move the organ were provided by St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, including a motorized platform lift to raise the organ into the gallery. On 10 November 1981 the work was completed, and Bigelow received \$3,940.73 as reimbursement. Ultimately Rothe sold the instrument to St. John the Baptist Catholic Church where it has resided ever since.

Written by Mike Bigelow, 24 December 2007

M. L. BIGELOW & Co., Inc., ORGAN BUILDERS
AMERICAN FORK, UTAH

OPUS 1 - 1979

**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
CHICO, CALIFORNIA**

Two manuals and pedal: 56/26 notes
15 Ranks: 11 Ind. Registers + 2 Extensions = 13 Stops.

	<u>Manual I</u>	<u>Manual II</u>	<u>Pedal</u>
1) Praestant	8	-	-
2) Gedackt	8	8	-
3) Octave	4	4	-
4) Rohrfloete	4	4	-
5) Quinte	3	3	-
6) Octave	2	2	-
7) Tierce	1 3/5	1 3/5	-
8) Mixture	III	-	-
9) Dulcian	8	8	-
10) Pedal Subbass	-	-	16
11) Bass (Extension)	-	-	8
12) Fagott	-	-	16
13) Fagott (Extension)	-	-	8

Coupler: I/Ped
Tremulant.

"Suspended" mechanical key action. Keys of bone and ebony.

Mechanical stop action. Stops with pitches listed under two divisions are registered on one OR the other division by means of a three position stop knob, e.g.:

Knob fully pushed in = OFF
Knob half drawn = Man. II
Knob fully drawn = Man. I

Case of solid white oak, hand planed, fumed, and oiled, 15' tall. Bellows located in its own oak case behind the lower case. Silent electric blower.