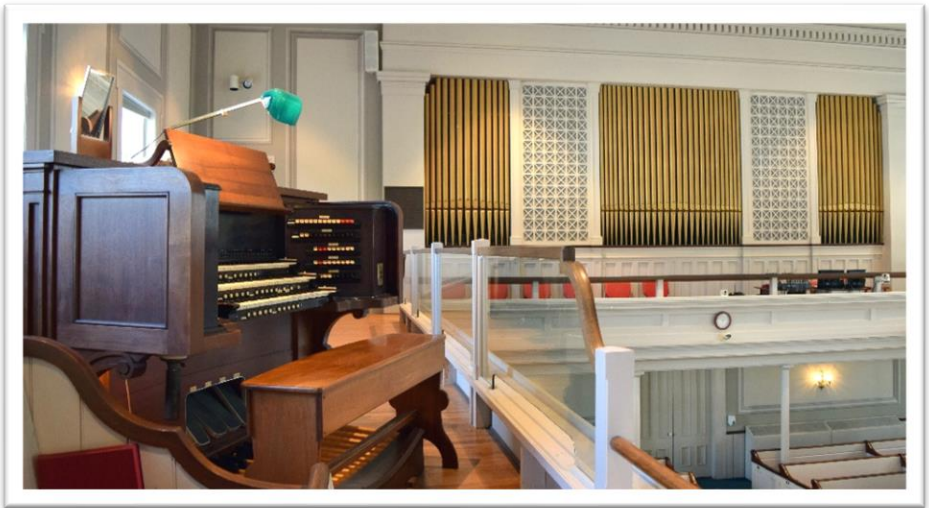

M. P. MÖLLER OPUS 5713

The remarkable history of the 1929 pipe organ at
The First Congregational Church of Madison
and its legacy as a symphonic instrument



Nathan J. Bayreuther

M. P. Möller Opus 5713

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First Congregational Church of Madison
Madison, Connecticut

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Preface

In the spring of 2019, I was completing my studies at Central Connecticut State University in pursuit of my degree in Organ Performance. During that semester, I wrote a research paper about the pipe organ at the First Congregational Church of Madison in part to satisfy a degree requirement but also for possible publication. I have made it available to anyone who might be interested in the history of this remarkable instrument.

I would like to thank Dr. Jacquelyn Sholes for her invaluable guidance during this project. Thanks also to church members Marcia Stone, Henry Robbins, and Marilyn Johnson for providing me with a great deal of information. Finally, many thanks to Bynum Petty at the Organ Historical Society for his help gathering a tremendous amount of material from the Society's archives in Villanova, Pennsylvania.

Introduction

As musical tastes have changed over time, organ designs have changed to meet new demands and desires. In the Romantic Era (approximately 1800-1850), organ builders began to embrace certain technological advancements that made it possible for pipe organs to sound more like large symphony orchestras. These developments in construction brought new power, fullness, richness, warmth, expression, and colors of sound, imitating an orchestra more closely than ever before. An increased number of stops including the addition of orchestral stops such as the clarinet, French and English horns, harp, and an abundance of string stops characterized the classic Romantic organ. These new concepts were later championed in the United States by Ernest M. Skinner who traveled to Europe to study these Romantic instruments and create developments of his own.¹ Other builders in the United States would also produce symphonic organs to keep up with the interest in Romantic music.

However, in the very early part of the twentieth century, organists became increasingly interested in performing early polyphonic (multiple-voice) music, most especially by Bach, as authentically as possible, something that could not be faithfully reproduced on a Romantic symphonic organ. In 1906, organist and music scholar Albert Schweitzer published a pamphlet entitled, “The Art of Organ Building and Organ Playing in Germany and France,” which encouraged the widespread return of eighteenth-century organ building techniques in order to meet this renewed interest. This marked the beginning of a movement known as the *Orgelbewegung*, or Organ Reform Movement, which began in earnest in the 1920s and 1930s and

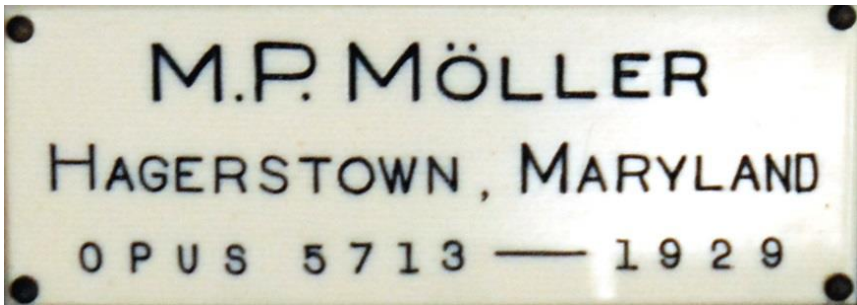
¹ James Gerber, “Ernest M. Skinner,” 12.

largely continues to this day.² After the *Orgelbewegung* began, many Romantic instruments were removed or altered beyond recognition with the re-introduction of mixture ranks and other stops common to older Baroque instruments.³ The mushy, full sounds of the symphonic organs were no longer desired; the pendulum of musical taste was swinging quite quickly back to the sounds and distinct tonal textures of the eighteenth century.

Despite the changing attitude toward Romantic instruments by the mid-1920s, symphonic organs were still being ordered by houses of worship and built by willing organ builders, including the M. P. Möller Organ Company in Hagerstown, Maryland. When the First Congregational Church of Madison, Connecticut – the church where I currently serve as organist and Director of Music Ministry – ordered and installed one from M. P. Möller during the winter of 1929-1930, it was lauded as a triumph for the congregation and community. The *Orgelbewegung*, meanwhile, was beginning to pick up steam, changing the face of organ construction across the country in favor of neo-Baroque instruments. As existing organs were modified through the subsequent decades to accommodate the Organ Reform Movement, the M. P. Möller instrument at the Madison Congregational Church – numbered Opus 5713 – continues to endure as a rare, unchanged example of a symphonic organ in the Romantic tradition.

² Michael Unsworth, “Composers of the Historical Organ,” in *The Organ: An Encyclopedia* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 120.

³ A mixture, as addressed later, is a multi-rank stop providing brilliance to the overall sound and was avoided in most symphonic organs.



The ivory nameplate and serial number of the organ is affixed to the console just above the swell manual (keyboard). While the parts of the organ were built at the Hagerstown factory at the end of 1929, the organ itself was not assembled and fully functional until the spring of 1930. Nevertheless, the Möller company designated the instrument as having been built in 1929.

While the vast majority of organ builders – both then and now – have a limited output of instruments whose installations are generally located in the region of their manufactory, Möller was the first to mass-produce their instruments (yet each installation was unique with no two organs being exactly the same) and cater to a national market. The organ completed just prior to the Madison instrument, Opus 5712, was installed in a church in North Little Rock, Arkansas; the organ following the Madison instrument, Opus 5714, would be installed at a church in Allentown, Pennsylvania. In 1930 alone, Möller built 407 pipe organs in 37 states from Rhode Island to Washington.

The Birth of M.P. Möller Opus 5713

Music has played an important part in the life of the First Congregational Church of Madison. After the current meetinghouse was constructed in 1838, congregational music was led by a gentleman playing the seraphine – a cross between an accordion and a reed organ – and then by a bass violist. It was not until 1869 that the church purchased a larger, two-manual Hook organ with bellows pumped by hand. This instrument served the Madison congregation for nearly sixty years and was even electrified in 1927 before it was deemed too inadequate to support the growing membership’s musical expectations. Furthermore, a bequest of \$5,400 from the daughter-in-law of the church’s fourth pastor and wife of New Haven organist Thomas G. Shepard was to be put toward the purchase of a new pipe organ.⁴ The hunt for a new instrument was on.

Given this unique opportunity to acquire a brand new instrument, a church committee was formed in the fall of 1928, and in January, 1929 they contacted the Hall Organ Company of New Haven and the Austin Organ Company of Hartford to obtain quotes.⁵ At the same time, the church welcomed Leon Beckwith as their new organist. A well-known recitalist in the New Haven area, Mr. Beckwith had recently stepped down from a twenty-five year organist position at the First Congregational Church of Guilford. He was being wooed by the Madison church at the same time they were looking for a new organ, and no doubt the promise of a new instrument helped influence his decision to become their organist. He took

⁴ Mary Scranton Evarts, *History of the First Congregational Church, 1707-1955*. Madison, CT: First Congregational Church of Madison, n.d. 67.

⁵ William Pendelton, “Special Meeting of the Prudential Committee,” January 11, 1929. First Congregational Church of Madison archives.

on an advisory role during the many deliberations of the church organ committee throughout the spring and summer of 1929, at which time the church was contacted by M. P. Möller, Incorporated.

By mid-1929, Danish pipe organ builder Mathias Peter Möller, at seventy-five years old, had been in business for over fifty years and had made a name for himself by building quality pipe organs as well as mass-producing smaller organs at affordable prices. Möller organs were in strong demand, and the company was currently in its prime; as many as 400 people were employed at the factory on North Prospect Street in Hagerstown, producing a complete organ every single day. While not known for being artistically ambitious or for establishing new styles, Möller nevertheless enjoyed the benefits of mass production, most especially that their factory workers became exceptionally accomplished craftsmen as they honed their skills with each instrument produced.⁶

Over five thousand organs had already been built across the country by Möller when the Madison church began discussions with the company, and they were eager to build one for the Madison congregation.⁷ They directed the church committee to visit and listen to two organs Möller had recently installed: a four-manual, thirty-three-rank instrument at the

⁶ Jonathan Ambrosino, "A Good Story with a Bad Ending: M. P. Möller 1875-1992." <https://jambrosino.neocities.org/paper-iso1993.html>. Accessed April 15, 2019.

⁷ Edward Luberoff to M. P. Möller Factory, October 16, 1929. Organ Historical Society Archives. Mr. Luberoff writes, "As the case design will help considerably in getting the contract, it is needless for me to state that you should exert every effort to make this attractive. The quicker I get the design, the quicker we can get the contract signed up. It is dangerous to leave this matter open any longer than is absolutely necessary as you know. They are favorable towards Möller Organ right now, and I would like to close it while they are in this mood."

Trinity Episcopal Church in Torrington, Connecticut built the year before; and a three-manual, twenty-one-rank instrument at the First Congregational Church in Riverhead, Long Island built that year. It was this organ in Riverhead that the Möller company proposed to duplicate for the Madison church.⁸ The stoplists of both organs indicate Möller's preference toward the symphonic sound at that time as 8' stops are most prevalent with limited 4' and 2' stops, and only the larger Torrington organ had a mixture.⁹ Furthermore, all pipes were enclosed on both instruments (behind special shutters that open and close for volume control, operated by the organist at the console), allowing for remarkable dynamic control, also indicative of the symphonic style.

The church committee went to observe and experience the organ in Torrington, but only Mr. Beckwith was able to make the trip to Riverhead. He was so impressed and smitten with the Riverhead organ that, upon his return in mid-September, he quickly convinced the rest of the committee that no other organ would be better for Madison.¹⁰ They immediately agreed to have the M. P. Möller Company build their new organ, requesting that it remain an almost exact copy of the one in Riverhead. Every stop was to be duplicated, and the instrument was to be finished and voiced by William Merritt, the same gentleman who finished the Riverhead

⁸ William Pendleton, "Special Meeting Prudential Committee," September 18, 1929. First Congregational Church of Madison archives.

⁹ "The OHS Pipe Organ Database." OHS Database: Instrument Details. <https://pipeorgandatabase.org/OrganDetails.php?OrganID=31599> and <https://pipeorgandatabase.org/OrganDetails.php?OrganID=31564>. Accessed April 10, 2019. 8' stops are unison pitch; 4' sounds an octave higher, with 2' two octaves higher.

¹⁰ William Pendleton, "Special Meeting."

organ.¹¹ Some small changes to the console were to be made according to Leon Beckwith, although they were minor and based upon his previous experience with the Austin Organ console at the Guilford Congregational Church.¹² A contract for a \$10,000, three-manual pipe organ was signed on Tuesday, October 29, 1929 – the very day the stock market crashed, heralding the beginning of the Great Depression.¹³ Nevertheless, the church went forward with the project, selling their old, Hook organ to a church in Plymouth, Connecticut and altering their balcony to accommodate the larger Möller organ. This was to be the company’s 5,713th instrument, known simply in their records as “Opus 5713.”¹⁴ The Madison congregation would name it the “Thomas G. Shepard Memorial Organ” in recognition of the generous bequest from Shepard’s wife that funded over half of the total cost.

The stoplist of Opus 5713 reveals the instrument’s symphonic nature. The whole instrument, providing twenty-two different sounds utilizing over fifteen hundred pipes, clearly ignores the clarion call of the *Orgelbewegung* and remains firmly seated in the Romantic tradition. (See the Appendix for a complete stoplist of Opus 5713.) Besides the unusual fact that the entire organ is under expression, allowing an astonishing degree of nuance in registration, most of the instrument’s power is centered on unison pitch. A Harmonic Flute, first invented by the famous French Romantic organ builder Aristide Cavallé-Coll, is present as is a woody Clarinet,

¹¹ Edward Luberoff to M. P. Möller Factory, November 1, 1929. Organ Historical Society Archives.

¹² Luberoff to Möller Factory.

¹³ M. P. Möller, Inc., “Contract and Specifications of Three Manual Pipe Organ for Cong’l Church, Madison, Conn.,” October 29, 1929. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

¹⁴ Organ builders use different methods of numbering their instruments for reference, and using “Opus” was and still is a common practice.

a very successful imitation of its orchestral counterpart. The rich Melodia and Doppel Flöte complement the Harmonic Flute, and an ensemble of a First Open Diapason, Second Open Diapason, and English Open Diapason provide thick yet pleasing foundations. The Tuba Mirabilis, first seen in England in the mid-nineteenth century, has a very dark and powerful tone, while the Cornopean imitates the orchestral cornet. The Vox Celeste, whose name was coined in France also during the mid-nineteenth century, resembles an orchestral string section, and the ethereal Unda Maris is the softest stop on the organ.

Fifty-six boxes of organ parts were shipped by rail from Hagerstown, Maryland in the middle of January 1930, and Opus 5713 was fully assembled by the end of March.¹⁵ It was dedicated during the Sunday morning service on April 6 with 423 people in attendance, and organist Leon Beckwith played music by French composers Léon Boëllmann, Alexandre Guilmant, and César Franck among others to show off the organ's symphonic attributes.¹⁶ Less than a month later, on May 1, Mr. Beckwith performed an inaugural recital which filled the church, and the organ's installation, dedication, and inaugural recital received local and national publicity.¹⁷ *The Shoreline Times* of Guilford proclaimed the dedication a "musical feast" while Everett Hill, native of Madison and editorial writer for the Ansonia Sentinel, wrote in the same paper, "Never have I been prouder of the town of my birth. I know of no such organ outside the larger cities, and it seems to

¹⁵ "Bill of Lading," The Pennsylvania Railroad Company, January 20, 1930. Organ Historical Society Archives.

¹⁶ Helen Marsh, personal diary entry, April 6, 1930. Charlotte Evarts Archives, Madison, Connecticut.

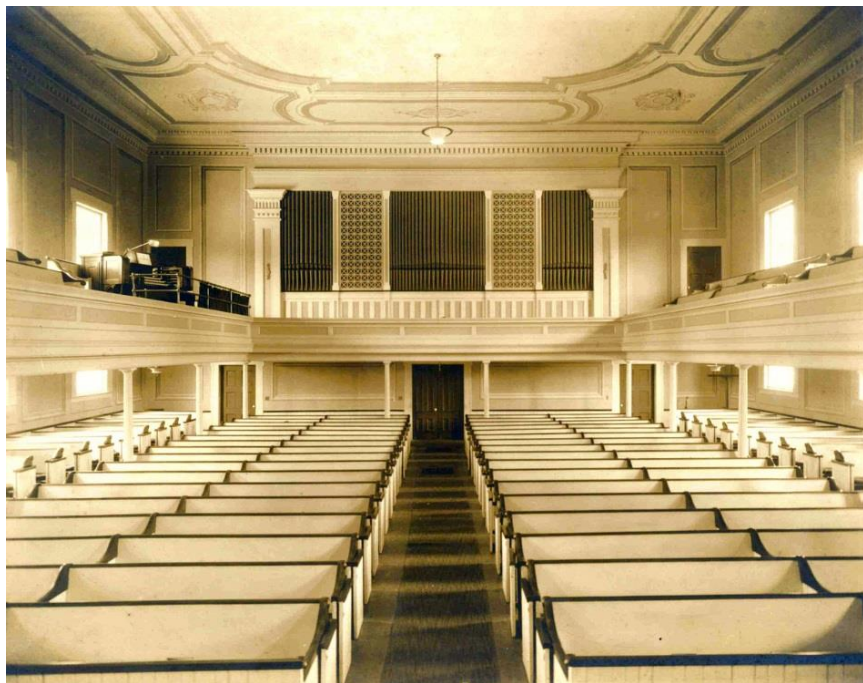
¹⁷ See Appendix II for a listing of pieces performed at the Dedication Recital on May 1, 1930.

me that I have never heard a finer-toned one anywhere.”¹⁸ The June 1930 edition of *The Diapason Magazine* devoted two full columns to the installation, publishing a complete stoplist of the organ, listing the pieces performed at the May 1 dedicatory recital, and writing a lengthy biography of Leon Beckwith.¹⁹

The First Congregational Church of Madison had chosen well in two regards. M. P. Möller Opus 5713, the Thomas G. Shepard Memorial Organ, would prove to be extremely versatile as the primary instrument to lead worship services as well as a superb instrument for recitals. The decision to hire Leon Beckwith was another excellent investment; obviously happy with the organ, he remained the church’s organist for an unprecedented forty-two years, retiring in 1972 at the age of eighty-three. His beloved Opus 5713 served the church faithfully during his tenure receiving only regular maintenance, and it would be another decade after his retirement before the organ faced not only a full restoration but a serious threat of removal.

¹⁸ “Madison Organ Dedication,” *The Shoreline Times*, April 10, 1930. Photocopy of original source. Page numbers unavailable. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

¹⁹ “Opening at Madison, Conn.,” *The Diapason Magazine*, June 1, 1930. Photocopy of original source. Page numbers unavailable. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.



This picture was taken in April, 1930, only a week after the organ was completed. Not much has changed in the sanctuary between then and now, although keen-eyed observers may notice that the organ console is in a slightly different position than where it is today; here, it is several feet closer to the back of the church. The console was moved to its current position – one set of pews farther away from the pipes – in the late-1980s to allow the organist to better hear the balance of the organ when played.

A tiny chandelier hangs down from the ornate ceiling as the 1838 Meetinghouse relies on its large windows to provide natural light. Notice also the absence of a railing around the entire balcony. There is, however, a brass railing surrounding the organ console with a dark curtain, which, I was told by an organ colleague, was most likely to “provide modesty for any female organists getting on or off the organ bench.”

The First Restoration (1982-1987)

After over fifty years of nearly daily use, Opus 5713 was beginning to show signs of deterioration. Considering the millions of times that the organ's thousands of valves had moved back and forth during that time, the numerous leather components – used to provide airtight seals for moving parts of the organ – had become worn out and brittle. The A. Thompson-Allen Organ Company, founded in New Haven by Aubrey Thompson-Allen and now co-owned by son Nicholas Thompson-Allen and business partner Joseph Dzeda, had been maintaining the instrument since 1952 and were making more frequent visits to the church to make repairs.²⁰ Additionally, an accumulation of dust and dirt was beginning to seriously affect the organ's operation and sound, and the salt air blowing off of nearby Long Island Sound had also undoubtedly contributed to its decline. An Organ Committee was formed within the church in 1982 to investigate the condition of the organ and to determine both how to proceed with a rebuild or repair and who would complete it.

Two consultants were contacted by the Committee: Thomas Murray, head of the organ department at Yale University in New Haven; and David Hurd, Professor of Church Music and Organist at the General Theological Seminary in New York.²¹ As curators of the organs at Yale, the A. Thompson-Allen Company was enthusiastically recommended by Professor Murray, who reminded the Committee of the benefits of having the company located within relatively close proximity to the church. His unreserved

²⁰ Elsie White. "Summary Organ Repairs & Servicing, 1970-1985." July 15, 1985. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

²¹ Joel Fairfax. "Final Report." January 14, 1985. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

appreciation for the Madison organ and its versatility as a symphonic instrument was undoubtedly influenced by his own experience at the helm of the Newberry Memorial Organ at Yale, one of the most renowned Romantic organs in the world.²²

Professor Hurd, on the other hand, took quite a different view. He encouraged the Organ Committee to take a more objective look at the situation and consider quite carefully whether or not Opus 5713 was still suitable for the church. While admitting to not having direct, personal knowledge of the instrument, he believed the organ's range was too limited, and that it "effectively precludes the responsible performance of the main body of organ literature."²³ He questioned its durability as organs with electro-pneumatic action "are documentably shorter lived and more expensive to maintain than organs built according to the traditional principles of mechanical action."²⁴ He doubted the organ's suitability for worship use, believing the symphonic nature of the instrument "insufficient in articulation and definition of speech to impart any rhythmic sturdiness, an essential component of effective hymn playing."²⁵ With regard to the organ's performance aspect, he believed it would be "impossible to play a recital of major organ pieces" as it "cannot faithfully interpret the organ literature."²⁶ While stopping just shy of recommending that the Organ Committee replace the instrument altogether, he ended his letter with the question, "Can an orchestral organ of the

²² The Newberry Memorial Organ at Yale University's Woolsey Hall was constructed by E. M. Skinner in 1928 and boasts over 12,000 pipes and four manuals.

²³ David Hurd to the Reverend Winthrop E. Stone, May 3, 1985. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

late 1920s serve the musical needs of the First Congregational Church now and into the twenty-first century?”²⁷

At the same time, the church’s recently-hired organist, Leon Burrows, did, in fact, take that step not taken by Professor Hurd and advocated for the Möller’s removal and the installation of a brand new organ. As a Yale organ student pursuing his Master of Music degree at the time, he did not share Professor Murray’s view and instead repeated Professor Hurd’s doubt of the organ’s unsuitability, implying there was no “room for musical growth” as a purely orchestral instrument.²⁸ He echoed Professor Hurd’s sentiment of longevity with a mechanical action organ instead of electro-pneumatic, claiming the lifespan of the former to be “three times greater” than that of the latter.²⁹ He suggested that the Organ Committee consider a new, mechanical J. W. Walter & Sons pipe organ, and that they should travel to the Pakachoag United Church of Christ in Auburn, Massachusetts in order to hear one recently installed.³⁰

It was a difficult sell. The Möller organ was cherished by the congregation, and when they heard rumors of the organ’s possible removal and replacement, they jumped to the instrument’s defense. A petition was signed by eighty-six church members – including some members of the Organ Committee – requesting a special meeting “in order to express our deep feelings and strong convictions as to the resolution of the question of the repair or replacement of the Thomas B.

²⁷ David Hurd to the Reverend Winthrop E. Stone, May 3, 1985. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

²⁸ Leon Burrows to Henry Robbins, February 27, 1985. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

²⁹ Leon Burrows to Henry Robbins.

³⁰ Leon Burrows to Henry Robbins.

Shepard Memorial Organ.”³¹ The petition signers also requested that “no action dealing in any way with the repair or replacement of the... organ be taken without the approval by majority vote of the Congregation at large.”³² Richard Irving, a highly respected and influential member of the church, wrote an impassioned letter to the chairmen of all the committees within the Madison parish, extolling the virtues of Opus 5713:

In my view, the need for a new organ for the Meeting House can only be construed as an irresponsible extravagance. A new organ is not needed for any identifiable reason. Our present instrument is of excellent quality both in tone and with respect to its versatility. I have listened to church organs in many parts of the world... Our Meeting House organ, with its elegance of tone and range of stops, compares favorably with the best I have heard. For my part I will contribute nothing to the purchase of a new organ but I will cooperate in any way I can to rehabilitate and maintain our present instrument.³³

In the meantime, the M. P. Möller company wrote to the Church Council expressing interest in refurbishing Opus 5713. Their proposal was to remove the organ and ship it back to their factory in Hagerstown, Maryland for a complete reconstruction with new parts. They quoted a price of

³¹ Petition to the Church Council of the First Congregational Church of Madison, CT, 1985. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives. The Petition erroneously refers to the organ as the Thomas B. Shepard Memorial Organ when it is actually the Thomas G. Shepard Memorial Organ.

³² Petition to the Church Council.

³³ Richard Irving to Chairmen of Church Committees, June 1, 1985. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

\$109,800, emphasizing that, “as the original builder of the present instrument, and especially in the role of rebuilder of hundreds of quality instruments, the Möller Company is eminently well suited to this type of work.”³⁴ Moreover, and for an extra fee, they recommended rebuilding it with a complete tonal revision; this would include the addition of many new pipes on 4’ and 2’ pitches as well as mixtures for a more up-to-date sound and increased versatility.

The A. Thompson-Allen Company also submitted a bid for \$124,340 to refurbish the entire organ (roughly equivalent to \$294,000 in 2019).³⁵ This would include washing all metal pipes, repairing any and all damaged pipes, shellacking all wood pipes, regulating all pipework for correct speech, releathering all leather components, rebuilding all pneumatic components in the console, and cleaning and refinishing all structural parts of the organ chamber.³⁶ Although their bid was substantially higher than that of the Möller company, the Church Council looked more favorably upon this proposal for several reasons. They appreciated that A. Thompson-Allen had maintained the instrument for more than thirty years “at a very minimum annual figure,” and that the organ had been very reliable.³⁷ They took to heart Professor Murray’s comment regarding availability given the company was located only twenty minutes away. Finally, they recognized the dedication

³⁴ John Tyrrell to Henry Robbins, October 22, 1985. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

³⁵ “US Inflation Calculator,” <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com>. Accessed April 26, 2019.

³⁶ A. Thompson-Allen Organ Company. “Agreement For Rebuilding Möller Organ, Opus 5713.” 1985. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

³⁷ Henry Robbins. “Summary of Organ Deliberations.” January 20, 1986. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

of the A. Thompson-Allen personnel to Opus 5713 and that they were “uncommonly interested in its restoration.”³⁸

But organist Leon Burrows still believed a brand new organ would better serve the congregation. In mid-July, 1985, he met with Donald H. Olson, Vice-President of the Andover Organ Company in Methuen, Massachusetts to discuss the situation in Madison. Mr. Olson, keen to secure a contract, wrote to Mr. Burrows shortly after their appointment: “In thinking about an instrument for you, I am more and more convinced that a new instrument is the best choice.”³⁹ He enclosed particulars for installing a new, three-manual Andover organ with mechanical key action, electro-pneumatic stop action, and solid state combination action, all for \$380,000.⁴⁰ It was an impressive instrument, to be sure, a hybrid of sorts by subscribing to the *Orgelbewegung* movement with neo-Baroque stops while incorporating a number of Romantic stops specifically to “satisfy all members of [the Madison Congregational] church.”⁴¹ However, and despite his best intentions, the price tag was deemed too high when Mr. Burrows presented this information to the Committee.⁴² The Committee had, by that time, already moved past any consideration of a new instrument and was firmly behind employing the A. Thompson-Allen Company to refurbish the Möller. Moreover, they were exploring the possibility of adding a mixture stop, perhaps to appease Mr. Burrows and any others who might find the orchestral instrument lacking in brightness.

³⁸ Robbins, “Summary.”

³⁹ Donald Olson to Leon Burrows, July 23, 1985. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

⁴⁰ Donald Olson to Leon Burrows. According to “US Inflation Calculator,” this would be nearly \$900,000 in 2019 dollars.

⁴¹ Donald Olson to Leon Burrows.

⁴² Robbins, “Summary.”

A multiple-rank stop sounding the upper harmonics of each note of the keyboard, a mixture is meant to be played with other stops for a complete chorus of sound, with the mixture adding brilliance and volume. A standard for organs in the Baroque period, they were widely shunned with the advent of Romantic organ music, deemed too loud and shrill. The *Orgelbewegung* saw a return of the mixture in neo-Baroque instruments, and in an effort to modernize the symphonic Opus 5713, members of the Organ Committee enquired into the prospect of installing one. They visited two organs with Mixtures to see how they sounded: the Christ and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Westport, and the Second Church of Christ Scientist in Hartford. Bruce Barber, organist at the Westport church, demonstrated his instrument yet “spent some time cautioning against the careless design and installation of a mixture whose character was incompatible with the basic organ” and to “caution against the willy-nilly addition of these ranks just for the sake of doing something.”⁴³ They met with further resistance talking to Hartford organist Gordon Ramsey who “also counselled against the careless addition of a mixture and on the same grounds as Mr. Barber.”⁴⁴ Perhaps the most persuasive argument against a mixture addition came from Joseph Dzeda from A. Thompson-Allen. He argued that there was limited room in the pipe chambers and that the mixture would have to be mounted several feet above the existing pipes, putting its pipework in a different temperature stratum and causing tuning stability issues. Furthermore, the mixture and chest would be

⁴³ Richard Ramsey to Organ Committee, October 20, 1986. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives. Mr. Ramsey, unrelated to Hartford organist Gordon Ramsey, was a member of the First Congregational Church of Madison’s Organ Committee.

⁴⁴ Richard Ramsey to Organ Committee.

considerable in size, blocking other pipework and muffling their sound; access to these pipes would also become problematic. A mixture installation, while possible if the church absolutely wanted it, would not be inexpensive. Finally, he wrote, “we should remember that the builder of the organ considered the organ complete without a mixture.”⁴⁵

The A. Thompson-Allen Organ Company sent a separate contract to install a three-rank mixture stop for \$14,250, but the Organ Committee was sufficiently swayed against the idea, and the contract was never signed.⁴⁶ They did, however, decisively recommend to proceed with A. Thompson-Allen’s first contract to refurbish the entire instrument, and it was signed November 30, 1987 by Board of Trustees Chairman Henry Robbins following robust fundraising efforts.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, Madison church organist Leon Burrows, thwarted in his attempts to procure a new instrument and having concluded his studies at Yale, resigned and moved away. Opus 5713 would receive a new lease on life with other organists at the console and would remain intact and unaltered as a prime example of the symphonic instrument M. P. Möller had installed five decades before.

⁴⁵ Joseph Dzeda to Richard Ramsey, October 25, 1986. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

⁴⁶ “Agreement For Adding a Mixture Stop to Möller Organ, Opus 5713.” 1986. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

⁴⁷ “Agreement For Rebuilding Moller Organ, Opus 5713.” November 30, 1987. First Congregational Church of Madison Archives.

M. P. Möller

M. P. MÖLLER, INC.

403 North Prospect Street ■ P.O. Box 149 ■ Hagerstown, Maryland 21740 ■ 301 — 733-9000

John J. Tyrrell
208 Hastings Court
Doylestown, Pa. 18901

(215) 345-8076

December 19, 1985

Mr. Henry Robbins
157 Five Fields Road
Madison, CT 06443

Dear Henry:

I appreciated your meeting with me on Tuesday evening to discuss plans for renovation of the organ in First Congregational Church, and will be interested in hearing of progress and decisions that you hope to have made in the month of January. Please be assured of our interest in this major program of renovation; let me know if you have questions.

With every good wish of the Season,


John J. Tyrrell
M. P. MÖLLER, INC.

The M.P. Möller company, while not involved with the restoration of Opus 5713, was still interested and no doubt pleased to see one of its instruments being restored instead of removed. The company was, by this time, beginning to experience financial difficulties that would ultimately force it to declare bankruptcy seven years later. Over its 117-year lifespan, Möller had built over 12,000 organs, an astounding figure unmatched by any other organ builder in history.

The tools used to build Opus 5713 and so many others were auctioned off, and the 70,000 square-foot factory in Hagerstown, Maryland remained largely vacant, housing several small companies yet falling into disrepair and suffering from fire damage from arsonists. In 2018, however, developers announced plans to renovate the old factory and create commercial and residential space. Visible progress had been made on one wing of the building by June, 2019, and the project is expected to be completed and ready for renters by early 2021.

The Second Restoration (2014-2019)

Opus 5713 continued to perform for the Madison congregation for almost thirty more years, outlasting its builder, the M. P. Möller Company, which went bankrupt and shuttered its doors in 1992. The organ required only regular maintenance and even narrowly escaped destruction when the church sanctuary's ceiling collapsed in 2004 due to water damage. By 2014, however, it was apparent that the organ was once again facing another re-leathering project. Leather used in the 1987 repair, while of the best quality at the time, was found to be inferior to the original 1930 leather, and it was failing much sooner. Repairs of brittle, blown-out leather valves and membranes were becoming more and more frequent, and the patches themselves were beginning to lose their grip as the remaining leather would tear apart. As Director of Music Ministry and Organist of the church, I was informed by Joe Dzeda and Nick Thompson-Allen – still the co-owners of A. Thompson-Allen Organ Company and the caretakers of Möller Opus 5713 – that a “major undertaking of a scope similar to that done in 1987” was on the horizon, and their “best guess would be that the complete re-leathering is some five to ten years away.”⁴⁸ By late 2017, the organ had noticeably deteriorated further; upon my request, a letter from Nick Thompson-Allen outlined in detail the components needing attention, including the chassis, console, and pipework, and their price to complete this restoration was \$281,850.00.⁴⁹ Fortunately, the leather currently available to

⁴⁸ Joseph Dzeda, personal communication with the author, October 7, 2014.

⁴⁹ Nicholas Thompson-Allen, personal communication with the author, December 7, 2017.

organ builders is superior to that available in 1987 with an expected lifespan of fifty years or more.⁵⁰

Many factors needed to be considered, especially the feasibility of raising funds to restore a 1930 pipe organ equivalent to the price of a house. Over the next five months, I wrestled with many anticipated questions coming from the congregation and church leadership. Is it really possible to raise this amount of money? What happens if we fall short of our goal? How will funds be solicited? Why not purchase a less-expensive electronic replacement? Why should such an enormous amount of money be raised to restore an old pipe organ when it could be used for many other worthy projects? Are not pipe organs out of fashion, anyway?

Yale University Organist Professor Thomas Murray once again offered his support for the organ, just as he had over thirty years prior. Upon hearing of this next restoration, he wrote a heartfelt e-mail to be used for fundraising purposes:

The M. P. Moller instrument in First Congregational Church of Madison is a fine example of this firm's work and a rare survivor in our time. As a noted Boston restorer has written: "Changes of fashion have worn out more organs than playing ever will!" Fortunately, wise minds were in charge in Madison some thirty years ago to champion late Romantic instruments such as yours when the choice of replacement or renovation came under consideration. Nicholas Thompson-Allen and Joseph Dzeda, dedicated preservation-minded restoration artists who have

⁵⁰ Nicholas Thompson-Allen, personal communication with the author, October 9, 2018.

long been entrusted with the care of our organistic treasure in Woolsey Hall at Yale, saw to it that the Madison instrument received a new lease on life. It has superb “voicing”, a rich expressive vocabulary and is “at one” with its setting. For the work of leading worship, choral accompaniment and leading congregational song, it is perfectly suited, and as an organ for concert use it is treasured by players, offering young organists a rare artistic experience not easily found today. Bravo to you for being the advocate and champion of its renovation!⁵¹

Further help came in the form of a publication produced by the Associated Pipe Organ Builders of America suggesting steps toward raising funds for organs.⁵² While the booklet is primarily designed to assist fund-raisers for new pipe organs, there are many similar aspects with raising funds for the restoration of existing instruments. With this guidance in hand, an Organ Fundraising Team was formed, and the case was made as to why the organ’s restoration was worth the cost. It was determined that the depth and power of a real pipe organ; this particular organ’s historical significance as an unaltered, symphonic instrument; its own, unique beauty; and its ability to act not only as the primary instrument for congregational worship but also for performance were compelling reasons to raise the necessary funds. In May 2018, the Leadership Board of the church voted to pursue the restoration for the full amount and, upon recommendation by the Fundraising Team, to use the A. Thompson-Allen

⁵¹ Thomas Murray, personal communication with the author, September 10, 2018.

⁵² Stephen F. Brannon, *The Successful Funding of a New Pipe Organ* (Chicago: The Associated Pipe Organ Builders of America, 2018).

Company to complete the restoration. In response, Nick Thompson-Allen affirmed in an e-mail to me, “this organ is historically important now and we will be sure to keep it that way.”⁵³

Active fund-raising began at the end of August. Through newspaper articles, social media, meetings with Nick Thompson-Allen and Joe Dzeda, special concerts and events, all the necessary funds were raised within an astounding two months. Clearly, the Madison congregation and community recognized the value of saving Opus 5713 even more emphatically than they did thirty years prior. Work began the first week of January, 2019, and the second restoration was officially completed at the end of October. The organ was rededicated during the November 17 church service, and a special rededication concert was performed on January 17, 2020 featuring none other than organist Thomas Murray.⁵⁴

In December, 2019, the Organ Historical Society, a nationally-based organization dedicated to celebrating and preserving historic pipe organs in America, voted to bestow the prestigious Historic Pipe Organ Award to Opus 5713 and the church. This award recognizes specific, unaltered pipe organs as having historical, cultural, and musical significance. A plaque, officially presented during Thomas Murray’s January concert, was placed near a bronze tablet from 1930 that lists the names of those who originally donated to have M. P. Möller build Opus 5713 almost a century ago. It is the perfect capstone to the successful restoration and acknowledges the organ’s enduring legacy as a special and worthy instrument.

⁵³ Nicholas Thompson-Allen, communication with the author, May 16, 2018.

⁵⁴ See Appendix III for a listing of pieces performed at the Rededication Recital on January 17, 2020.



Nicholas Thompson-Allen inside the Great/Choir chamber, putting pipes back into place following the completion of extensive mechanical testing in October, 2019. Nick's father, Aubrey, founded the A. Thompson-Allen Organ Company in New Haven and retired in 1972, whereupon Nick and business partner Joseph Dzeda took over the company.

The contract for Opus 5713's first restoration in 1987 was signed by Nick and Joe as well as Henry Robbins, Chairman of the Church Board of Trustees. It is an amusing historical tidbit that the 2018 contract was again signed by Nick and Joe, and once more signed by Henry Robbins, this time in his capacity as Church Treasurer!

Conclusion

In an age where industries manufacture goods with planned obsolescence and products of all kinds are discarded at alarming rates in favor of newer, more modern variations, pipe organs are intended to withstand the test of time. An integral part of designing a pipe organ is allowing access to parts that wear out so they may be replaced when needed. As such, they can last indefinitely as long as the instrument receives proper maintenance, something Opus 5713 has enjoyed for nearly ninety years.

History also plays an important role in the longevity of Opus 5713. Despite the habitual and commonplace disposal of obsolete material, there seems to be a distinct desire within today's society to conserve the past; evidence of this can be found simply by observing popular television shows. "Antiques Roadshow" and "American Pickers" encourage the preservation of historic artifacts, and period dramas such as "Downton Abbey" and any number of feature films based on historical events strive for only the highest levels of authenticity and historical accuracy. Perhaps it is this current mindset that enabled the successful and rapid fundraising for Opus 5713's second restoration compared to the lengthy deliberations made during the first restoration in the mid-1980s when the organ was not perceived as the historic treasure it is today.

As a symphonic organ, Opus 5713 remains a shining example of the sound and versatility first demonstrated by the French instruments of the mid-nineteenth century, eventually emulated by American organ builders of the early-twentieth century. There are very few unaltered symphonic organs in the region, and this instrument, untouched by the sweeping Organ Reform Movement, continues to meet the needs and desires

for congregational worship as well as for performance. Recent studies have shown the pendulum of musical tastes seems to be swinging back as the sound of Romantic organs is once again sought after.⁵⁵ This renewed interest in symphonic organs all but assures that M. P. Möller Opus 5713, the Thomas G. Shepard Memorial Organ, has a very bright and lasting future at the First Congregational Church of Madison.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Jack M. Bethards, “A Brief for the Symphonic Organ,” *The British Institute of Organ Studies*, Vol. 26 (Oxford: Positif Press, 2002).
https://www.schoenstein.com/pdfs/A_Brief_for_the_Symphonic_Organ.pdf.
Accessed April 28, 2019.

Appendix I: Stoplist of the Thomas G. Shepard Memorial Organ

Three manuals and pedal; 47 registers, 22 ranks, 1,548 pipes

Great:	Swell:	Choir:
16' Dbl. Open Diapason	16' Bourdon	8' English Open Diapason
8' First Open Diapason	8' Violin Diapason	8' Flute Harmonic
8' Second Open Diapason	8' Gedeckt	8' Doppelle Floete
8' Melodia	8' Viole	8' Gemshorn
8' Doppelle Floete	d'Orchestre	8' Viole de Gambe
8' Gemshorn	8' Salicional	8' Dulciana
8' Viole de Gambe	8' Vox Celeste	8' Unda Maris
4' Octave	4' Orchestral Flute	4' Flauto Traverso
4' Flute Harmonic	4' Salicet	4' Dulcet
16' Tuba Profunda	2 2/3' Flute	8' Clarinet
8' Tuba Mirabilis	Twelfth	Chimes
4' Tuba Clarion	2' Flautino	Harp
Chimes	8' Cornopean	Tremulant
Harp	8' Oboe	
Tremulant	8' Vox Humana	
	Tremulant	

Pedal:	Couplers:	Reversibles:
32' Resultant	Sw. to Gt. 16', 8', 4'	Great to Pedal
16' First Open Diapason	Sw. to Ch. 16', 8', 4'	Swell to Pedal
16' Second Open Diapason	Sw. to Ped. 8', 4'	Choir to Pedal
16' Bourdon	Sw. to Sw. 16', 4'	Full Organ
16' Lieblich Gedeckt	Sw. Unison Off	
8' Octave	Ch. to Gt. 16', 8', 4'	
8' Flute	Ch. to Sw. 16', 8', 4'	
8' Violoncello	Ch. to Ped. 8'	
16' Tuba Profunda	Ch. to Ch. 16', 4'	
8' Tuba Mirabilis	Ch. Unison Off	
4' Tuba Clarion	Gt. to Ped. 8', 4'	
	Gt. to Gt. 16', 4'	
	Gt. Unison Off	

Appendix II: Dedication Recital Program

May 1, 1930 – Leon Beckwith, organist

<i>Hosanna! (Chorus Magnus)</i>	Théodore Dubois (1837-1924)
<i>Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde</i>	Richard Wagner (1813-1883)
<i>Gavotte from Mignon</i>	Ambroise Thomas (1811-1896)
<i>Pièce Héroïque</i>	César Franck (1822-1890)
<hr/>	
<i>I Love My God</i>	Ernest Bullock (1890-1979)
<i>The Knight of Bethlehem</i>	David Thomson (1900-1980)
<i>People Victorious from Hora Novissima</i>	Horatio Parker (1863-1919)
<hr/>	
<i>Grand March from Aida</i>	Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)
<i>Largo from New World Symphony</i>	Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)
<i>Toccata in G Minor</i>	René Louis Becker (1882-1956)
<hr/>	
<i>May Day Carol</i>	Deems Taylor (1885-1966)
<i>April, My April</i>	Harold Milligan (1888-1951)
<i>Loveliest of Trees</i>	Graham Peel (1878-1937)
<i>The Time for Making Songs</i>	James Rogers (1857-1940)
<hr/>	
<i>Spring Song</i>	Alfred Hollins (1865-1942)
<i>Harmonies du Soir</i>	Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877-1933)
<i>Folk Song</i>	Edwin Lemare (1865-1934)
<i>Finlandia</i>	Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Appendix III: Rededication Recital Program

January 17, 2020 – Thomas Murray, organist

Introduction

<i>Sinfonia from Cantata #29</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
<i>Three Pieces, Op. 29</i>	Gabriel Pierné (1863-1937)
<i>Prelude</i>	
<i>Cantilène</i>	
<i>Scherzando</i>	
from <i>Taiwanese Suite</i>	Chelsea Chen (b. 1983)
<i>Moonlight Blue</i>	
<i>Hills in Springtime</i>	

Intermission

Acknowledgements

<i>Harmonies du Soir</i> *	Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1879-1933)
<i>Prelude in G minor</i>	Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)
from <i>Five Choral Paraphrases</i>	Homer Whitford (1892-1930)
<i>Where cross the crowded ways of life</i>	
<i>Now thank we all our God</i>	

Award Presentation & Closing Remarks

from <i>Symphonie II, Op. 13</i>	Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)
<i>Pastorale</i>	
<i>Finale</i>	

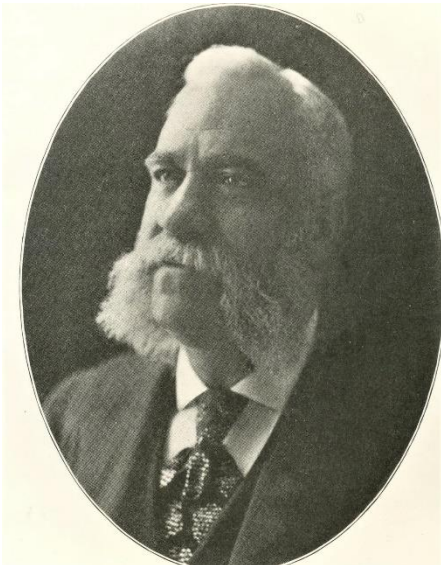
**This piece was played at the original Dedication Recital on May 1, 1930.*

Appendix IV: Images



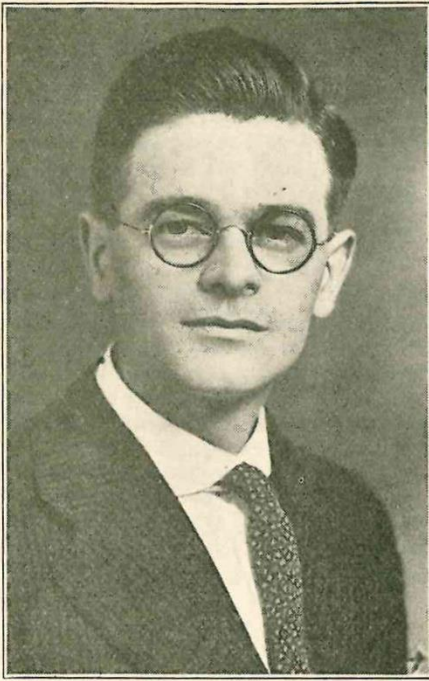
Mathias Peter Möller

Danish pipe organ builder Mathias Peter Möller (1854-1937) emigrated to the United States in 1872 and established his business in Hagerstown, Maryland in 1881. While famous for his organs, he also built a luxury hotel (named the “Dagmar” after his daughter) and even manufactured the “Dagmar” sports roadster in the 1920s. He is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery in Hagerstown.



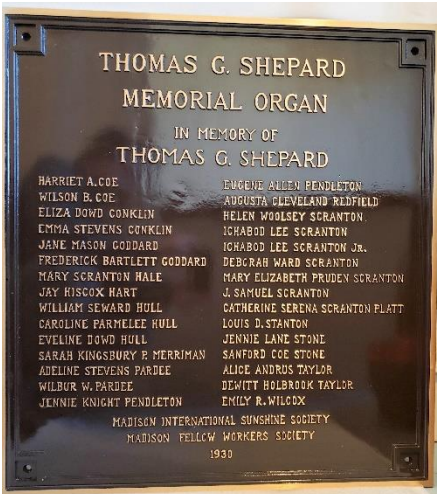
Thomas G. Shepard

M. P. Möller Opus 5713 is dedicated to the memory of Thomas G. Shepard (1848-1905), son of the Madison Church’s fourth pastor, Reverend Samuel Shepard. A well-known New Haven organist and composer, he directed the Yale Glee Club for over thirty years and taught theory, organ, and vocal style. He cherished his home town of Madison and is buried at West Cemetery, only a mile from the church.



Leon P. Beckwith

Organist Leon P. Beckwith (1889-1972) was a resident of Guilford his entire life and is buried at the historic Alder Brook Cemetery. A superb musician, he also co-owned the Dudley and Beckwith print shop on Water Street, served as a Trustee of the Guilford Savings Bank, and acted as Town Clerk among other pursuits. Although he was organist in Madison for forty-two years, he was named organist emeritus at the Guilford Congregational Church for his twenty-five years of service there.



The bronze plaque installed on the left column of the pipe façade lists the names of all those who contributed funds for the organ in 1930. In December of 2019, it was refurbished and reinstalled prior to the January, 2020 rededication concert. It is important to look to the future while paying tribute and giving thanks to those who came before.

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Nathan J. Bayreuther has been the Director of Music Ministry and organist at the First Congregational Church of Madison since 2005. He has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Music and Organ Performance from Central Connecticut State University; instructors have included Ezequiel Menéndez, Godfrey Tomanek and Judith Mack.



The recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, including the Roberta Bitgood Organ Scholarship, the Cynthia Wheeler Carr Scholarship and the American Guild of Organists Colleague Certification, Nathan is signed to the Arabesque Records music label in New York. Performance venues have included Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, Yale University's Woolsey Hall and St. Joseph's Cathedral in Hartford. He also serves as organist for the New England Chamber Choir and Orchestra. He lives with his wife and son in Northford and can frequently be found sailing the waters of Long Island Sound in his spare time.

M. P. Möller Opus 5713

First Congregational Church of Madison
Madison, Connecticut

January, 2020