

On an unassuming day in the summer of 1973, the steeple of Chicago's St. Joseph's Church let go of its moorings and collapsed. Stone and debris from tower and roof landed inside the organ case, which was centered in the church's rear gallery. The Great wind chest was broken in two, nearly all the manual pipework was destroyed, and 11 of the organ's 47 facade pipes were toppled to the floor of the nave.

On October 18, 1998, thanks largely to the beneficence of a former student of the church's pastor, the congregation celebrated the 'resurrection' of its organ. Roger Fisher, a retired businessman of Ivanhoe, Illinois had attended a Founder's Day Mass in the parish a few years earlier. As he was going forward to take communion, he happened to look at the rear gallery and saw the remains of the organ. He later commented, "When you look at that organ you know that it belongs in that church. I wanted to help save that pipe organ."

Mr. Fisher presented his offer to Fr. Sebastian Lewis, O.S.B., pastor of the congregation since 1960, who in turn contacted Bradford Organ Company of Evanston, Illinois. Coincidentally, in 1984 just before the Chicago OHS convention, Dr. William Aylesworth had phoned Walter Bradford to discuss the organ at St. Joseph's. They had traveled to the parish and inspected the damage, which Mr. Bradford had recalled to be extensive.

On further inspection in the spring of 1997, it became clear that the irreparably damaged organ inside the Victorian case was not original to the parish. The destroyed instrument was likely built by Charles Wiener in the 1930's. Mr. Wiener had retained the low octave of the wood 16' Pedal Open Diapason from an earlier organ and had supplied new actions to much of the facade, 43 of which were originally speaking pipes; all other pipework, as well as wind chests and console looked to be of his own workmanship.

Thanks to the research of Mr. Michael Friesen, it now looks as though the Victorian case and the original instrument which it housed had been built by Lancashire-Marshall and installed in 1900. The date accords with the church's historical records. Mr. Michael Mollett, the parish's business manager, noted that shortly before the turn of the century, the congregation sold some of its land to the new Chicago elevated rail system; a branch of the 'El' still runs over one corner of the church parking lot. It is likely that some of the money received from the sale was used to purchase the new Lancashire-Marshall organ.

St. Joseph's is the third oldest parish in the Archdiocese of Chicago. It was established by Bishop Quarter in 1846 to care for the spiritual needs of the German immigrants; its tower still houses a large bell given by a parish in Germany to the new congregation in Chicago. The first structure, on the northwest corner of Cass (Wabash) and Chicago Avenues, was destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. In 1872, the Bishop directed its relocation to Market (Orleans) and Hill Streets, and shortly thereafter the congregation began to erect the magnificent, basilica-like Gothic church which was completed in 1878. This building, with its German stained-glass windows and carved marble altar, continues to serve the congregation.

Given that the 1900 Lancashire-Marshall was largely gone and the 1930's Wiener was irreparable, Bradford Organ Company began to search for an appropriate new instrument for St. Joseph's. With the help of Alan Laufman of the Organ Clearing House, an 1892 Hutchings (Opus 269) was chosen to become St. Joseph's new organ. The mechanical action Hutchings had been built for Prospect Street Congregational Church of Cambridge (then Cambridgeport), MA, Hutchings's home town, and had been installed freestanding behind the pulpit. Shortly after the turn of the century, the building was enlarged. The organ's mechanical action windchests were given electro-pneumatic pulldowns (perhaps by Hutchings) and raised into a chamber to the left of the dais. The casework and facade pipes were reconfigured to fit the chamber opening.

In the summer of 1997, Bradford Organ Company removed the instrument from its chamber with the help of a crew from the Organ Clearing House and loaded it onto a truck for transport to Bradford's Evanston, IL shop. The facade pipes and remaining casework continue to reside in Prospect Street Church. The organ's remote console was poorly built, of uncertain origin and in badly dilapidated condition; it was left in Massachusetts.

At the time of its removal from Prospect Street it appeared that no tonal alteration had been done to the organ since its installation. In the course of restoration, it became clear that one alteration had been made: the original Swell Dolce Cornet had become a Mixture II. The pipes used in this alteration looked to be of the same vintage and manufacture as the balance of the Hutchings pipework, and the change appeared to have been done very early in the organ's history; the stop remains a Mixture today. In all respects the pipework looks and sounds to be from 1892. The Hutchings pipes and wind chests were restored in the Bradford shop.

The requirement to leave the Hutchings facade in Cambridge posed some problems, since it contains portions of the original 16' and 8' Open Diapasons. Fortunately, within the Lancashire-Marshall facade were pipes of scaling and cutup nearly identical to the Hutchings 8' Open Diapason. Seventeen of these pipes were used as C-d of the Great 8' Open, being played by conductors off the Great windchest. The 16' Open lacked FF-e, the lowest five pipes of the stop being "monkey quints", which remain in the organ. Again, Lancashire-Marshall facade pipes were used, in this instance for the 17 pipes FFx-a. For the seven pipes between a and the main wind chest, the Organ Clearing House located pipes from another broken-up Hutchings of the same vintage; these were purchased, restored and placed on a toeboard inside the organ case.

The organ's facade posed its own set of issues. The pipes destroyed in 1973 were simply missing, and the entire facade and case were severely dilapidated. Bradford decided that the best route was to repair, strip and restencil all remaining Lancashire-Marshall facade pipes, and to have the 11 missing pipes built. Eight of the missing pipes were replicated by Jerome B. Meyer's Sons of Milwaukee, and the three largest (CC, DD and EE), which were no longer needed as playing pipes and were of enormous scale, were replicated out of aluminum by Matters, Inc. of Hermosa, SD. The lovely restenciling work on all 47 pipes was done by a Lake Forest, IL firm, "Top to Bottom".

While the facade pipes were removed for restoration, the case was reinforced with steel and wood bracing, and its finish cleaned and renewed. The opening in the case for the Wiener console was altered to accommodate its placement on a small platform, for ease of access and sight lines. The console shell and keyboards were restored and reused, with new stop jambs for Harris drawknobs, a pedal board by Organ Supply Industries and a 32-level Peterson combination action and multiplex relay. The organ is winded by a Meidinger blower.

Bradford made additions to the organ's Pedal division. A Trombone from the Wiener organ, which had been protected from destruction by its location underneath the Swell chest, was revoiced, placed on a new wind chest and extended to 56 notes. The 30-note Hutchings Pedal Open and Pedal Bourdon stops were extended to 56 and 44 notes, respectively. A 32' Resultant was added to the stoplist.

The organ's original stoplist, as found in an 1892 issue of The Organ, is reproduced on the left side of the following page; the present stoplist is on the right. With the exceptions of the Cornet and Pedal division, noted above, only the nomenclature has been altered. While at the moment the organ is used only for select services, St. Joseph's Church is an active congregation in a revitalized neighborhood of Chicago, and hopes to use the organ for its regular worship services in the near future.

- Ronald J. Damholt, Bradford Organ Company

(Sources: web site, PipeOrgans.Com, "St. Joseph's Church, Chicago, Illinois"; a pamphlet published by the parish, "Old St. Joseph's...A Frontier Parish on the 'Cutting Edge'"; an 1892 issue of The Organ, supplied by Alan Laufman; unpublished research by Michael Friesen; and Michael Mollett and Fr. Sebastian Lewis of St. Joseph's Church.)

Organ Specification
St. Joseph's Church, Chicago, IL
Bradford Organ Company, Evanston, IL

Original builder: George S. Hutchings
Date: 1892, Opus 269
Rebuilt: 1930's, pipework unaltered
Restoration: Bradford Organ Company, 1998

Great division

16' Open Diapason
8' Open Diapason
8' Melodia
8' Viol d' Gamba
8' Dulciana
4' Octave
4' Flute d' Amour
2 2/3' Octave Quint
2' Super Octave
Mixture III
8' Trumpet

Swell Division

16' Bourdon
8' Violin Diapason
8' Stopped Diapason
8' Salicional
8' Aeoline
4' Violina
4' Flute Harmonique
2' Flautino
Mixture II
8' Cornopean
8' Oboe
Tremolo

Pedal Division

32' Resultant (from Bourdon)
16' Open Diapason (unified at 8' and 4')
16' Bourdon (unified at 8')
16' Trombone (addition, from previous organ at St. Joseph's, unified at 8' and 4')

Great Organ

16' Open Diapason
8' Open Diapason
8' Dolcissimo
8' Viola di Gamba
8' Melodia
4' Octave
4' Flute d' Amour
2 2/3' Octave Quint
2' Super Octave
Mixture III
8' Trumpet

Swell Organ

16' Bourdon Bass
16' Bourdon Treble
8' Violin Diapason
8' Salicional
8' Aeoline
8' Stopped Diapason
4' Flute Harmonique
4' Violina
2' Flautina
Dolce Cornet II
8' Cornopean
8' Oboe (notes 1-12)
8' Bassoon (notes 13-61)
Tremolo

Pedal Organ

16' Open Diapason (30 n.)
16' Bourdon (30 n.)

Great Division

16' Open Diapason
8' Open Diapason
8' Dulciana
8' Viol di Gamba
8' Melodia
4' Octave
4' Flute d' Amour
2 2/3' Octave Quint
2' Super Octave
Mixture III
8' Trumpet

Swell Division

16' Bourdon

8' Violin Diapason
8' Salicional
8' Aeoline
8' Stopped Diapason
4' Flute Harmonique
4' Violina
2' Flautino
Mixture II
8' Cornopean
8' Oboe (notes 1-61)

Tremolo

Pedal Division

32' Resultant
16' Open Diapason, unified at 8' and 4' (56 n.)
16' Bourdon, unified at 8' (44 n.)
16' Trombone, unified at 8' and 4' (56 n.)