



The Organ and Bells of Christ Church

Philadelphia

Music has adorned the worship of Christ Church since its earliest days in pre-Revolutionary America. The playing of its organs and the ringing of its bells were known and well-loved by parishioners and citizens of the growing colonial city over two centuries ago.



(Front Cover)
Organ Case,
Henry Erben, 1834.

Interior of sanctuary, facing the west wall. Considered one of the most outstanding examples of Colonial architecture in the Georgian spirit, 1727.



THE ORGANS

In all, there have been four different instruments housed in the sanctuary of Christ Church, now standing since the late 1720's. More than a century after this beginning, The Rev. Benjamin Dorr, D.D., then Rector, described the earliest organs of the church: *"In September, 1728, within a year after the present building was commenced, a new organ was purchased of Mr. Lodovig C. Sprogel for £200, and put up in the church. This remained there until it was thought expedient to purchase a larger one, in November, 1763, when £500 were subscribed for that object, and a committee is appointed to contract with Mr. Philip Feyring, who*

(Detail)

The symbolism of the ten-stringed instrument of the music of the Psalms combined with the Star of Bethlehem in a burst of new light, linking music of the Old and New Testaments.

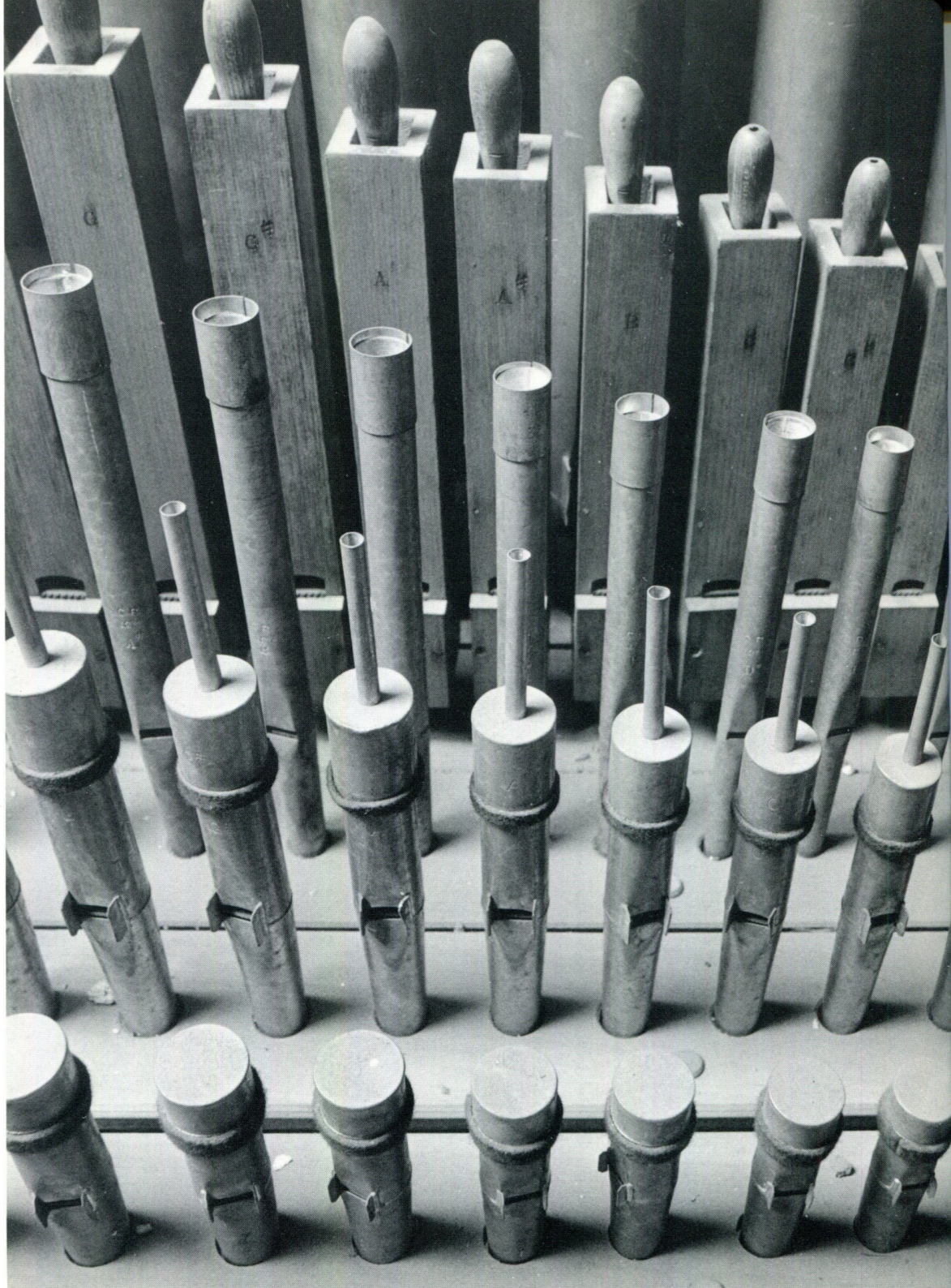
Solo Division of Ernest Skinner, showing English Horn 8' and French Horn 8'.

built the organ then in St. Peter's Church, to erect one in Christ Church. This new organ was finished and placed in the church September, 1766; and, after remaining there 70 years, was removed in June, 1836, to give place to this magnificent instrument. The organ built in 1766 contained three sets of keys and pedals and about 1,607 pipes.

"The present instrument is said to be 'of the first of its class, and perhaps a' chef d'oeuvre of Erben, to whom much credit is due for his ability, industry, and perseverance in such matters, as well as to Mr. J. C. B. Standbridge, the Organist, for the plan and details of the instrument."

From this same account, a complete stoplist remains in the parish records, with the added information that there was a total of 32 stops and 1,809 pipes. The Erben organ continued in use until the spring of 1935. On May 29 of that year, the Curtis Memorial Organ was dedicated.

Upper work pipes of the Great II Division.





A great gift was made to the glory of God and to Christ Church in memory of publisher Cyrus H. K. Curtis by his daughter, Mary Louise Curtis Bok Zimbalist. A splendid pipe organ, originally built by The Aeolian Organ Company of Boston, was installed in the residence of Mr. Curtis in Wyncote, Pennsylvania. It was relocated and built into the sanctuary of Christ Church under the supervision of the renowned organ builder Ernest M. Skinner. Of the installation, Mr. Skinner explained, *"The entire instrument has been carefully re-regulated and each stop modified in strength and character in order that the blends and balance may be as perfect as present-day skill in the art permits. For further impressions, the organ will speak for itself."*

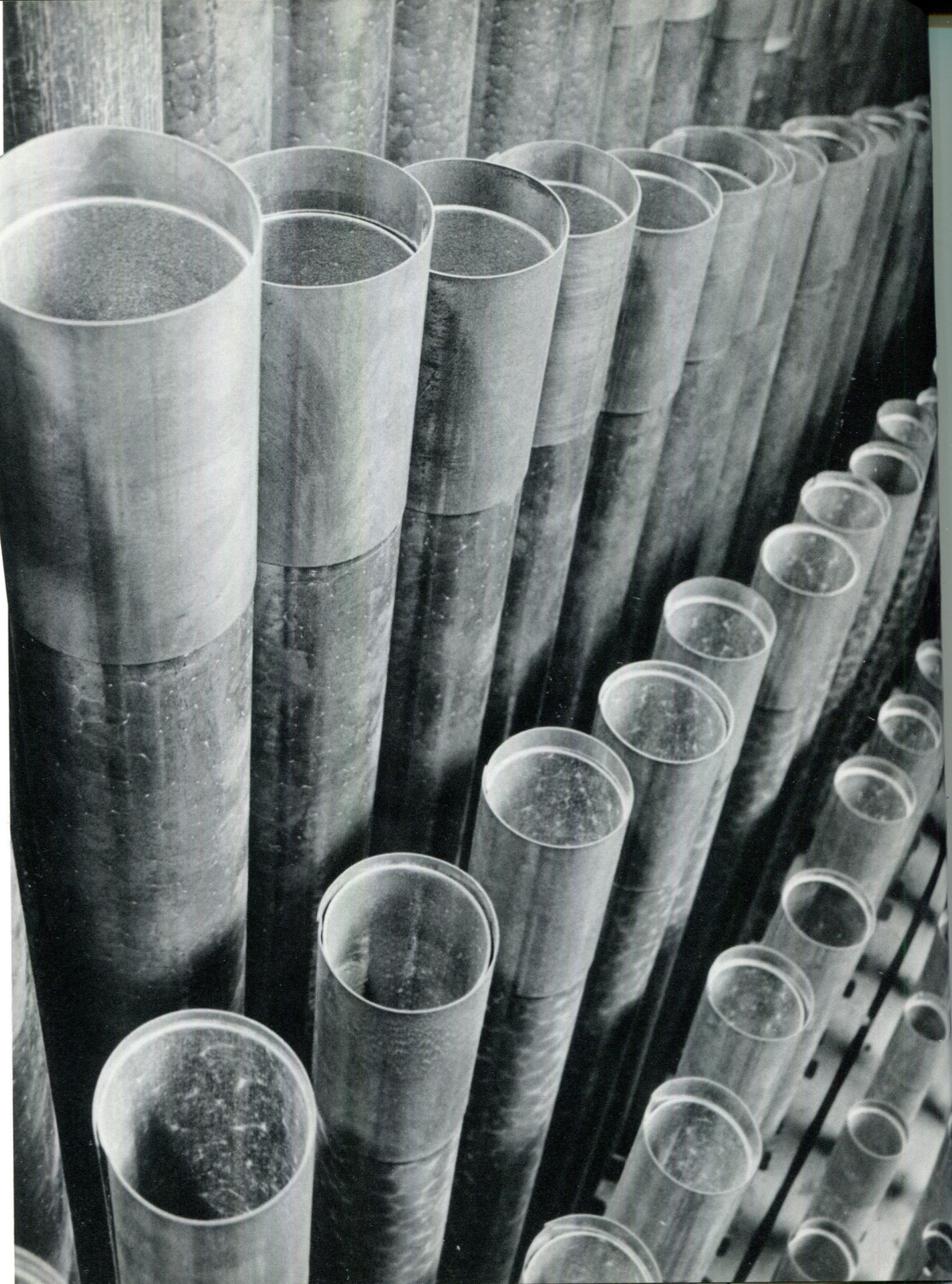
In 1957, The Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company made some minor changes and revisions to the Pedal and Great Divisions. Finally, due to the age of the mechanism...most of which was constructed in 1903 for the original house installation in Mr. Curtis' residence...the entire organ

Principal Chorus of the Great I Division.

was dismantled and all the mechanical parts, other than pipes and console, were replaced by Austin Organs, Hartford, Connecticut, under the supervision of Brantley Duddy, Inc., Cedars, Pennsylvania. Extensive tonal changes were made. A Positiv Division, part of the house installation but not included in the church installation, was added. These tonal changes were made to give the instrument a complete array of colors and ensembles, permitting an organist to perform music of all periods and styles with authenticity and beauty.

Recitalists from every part of the world have performed on The Curtis Memorial Organ. They include Anthony Newman, William Whitehead, John Weaver, Odile Pierre, Marie-Claire Alain, Carlo Curley, Nicholas Kynaston, Karl Richter and Virgil Fox.

Pipes of the main Pedal Division within the organ case.





The magnificent organ case, although publicized for many years as the 1766 Feyring facade, is now believed to be of the Henry Erben installation of 1834. Behind the facade, the present organ occupies over three floors in the tower and houses nearly 4,000 pipes. The Antiphonal Division, located over the chancel arch behind two grilles, includes the remaining pipes, totalling 6,310 speaking pipes in 112 ranks.



Pipes of the Antiphonal Division, housed over the chancel on the east wall.

(Detail)
Upper work pipes of the Vox Humana 8' within the Antiphonal Division.



Specifications of the
Curtis Memorial Organ at
Christ Church in
Philadelphia installed
in 1935 by Ernest Skinner of
Boston and renovated in
1972 by Brantley Duddy, Inc.

GREAT I

Quintaton	16
Prinzipal	8
Rohr Bourdon	8
Oktav	4
Fifteenth	2
Fournitur	IV
Sharf	III

GREAT II

Diapason I	8
Diapason II	8
Bourdon	4
Flute Couvert	4
Nazard	2 2/3
Super Octave	2
Gedeckt Flute	2
Sesquialtera	II
Unison, Super, Sub	

POSITIV

Holz Gedeckt	8
Prinzipal	4
Koppel Flute	4
Prinzipal	2
Larigot	1 1/3
Cymbal	III
Kromhorn	8

SOLO

Gamba Celeste (2 ranks)	8
Doppel Flute	4
Mixture	IV
French Horn	8
English Horn	8
Tubasson	16
Tuba	8
Clarion	4
Unison, Super, Sub	
Tremulant	

SWELL

Gedeckt	16
Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Flute Celeste	8
Viole	8
Viole Celeste II	8
Octave	4
Harmonic Flute	4
Unda Maris	4
Nazard	2 2/3
Doublette	2
Tierce	1 3/5
Sifflute	1
Plein Jeu	III-IV
Mixtur	III
Fagotto	16
Trumpet	8
Clarion	4
Oboe	8
Vox Humana	8
Unison, Super, Sub	
Tremulant	

ANTIPHONAL

Bourdon	16
Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Hohl Flute	4
Octave	4
Nazard	2 2/3
Tierce	1 3/5
Mixture	III
Flageolette	2
Dulciana	8
Dulciana Celeste	8
Aeoline	8
Erzahler	8
Erzahler Celeste	8
Viol	8
Dolce	8
Flute Celeste (prepared)	8
Vox Humana	8
Rohr Shalmal (prepared)	4
Trumpet en Chamade (under expression)	8
Zimbelstern	
Chimes	
Unison, Super, Sub	
Tremulant	

PEDAL

Double Diapason	32
Diapason	16
Principal	16
Wood Bourdon	16
Metal Bourdon	16
Violone	16
Soft Bourdon (Ant.)	16
Gedeckt (Swell)	16
Bourdon Quint	10 2/3
Principal	8
Metal Bourdon	8
Soft Bourdon (Ant.)	8
Principal	4
Bourdon	4
Bourdon	2
Principal	2
Mixture	II
Mixture	II
Harmonics	IV
Tubasson	16
Tuba	8
Clarion	4
Bombarde	32
Bombarde	16

PISTONS

General: 12 (duplicated by toe studs)
Coupler: 4
Solo: 5
Positiv: 3
Swell-Great-Antiphonal: 8
Pedal: 8 (duplicated by toe studs)

REVERSIBLES

Bombarde	32
Bombarde	16
Harmonics	IV
Diapason	32
Bordon	32
Zimbelstern	
Sforzando	
Great to Pedal	I, II
Solo to Pedal	8,4
Swell to Pedal	8,4
Antiphonal to Pedal	

THE BELLS

The history of Christ Church's bells is a fascinating one, allied as it is with our country's most famous symbol of revolution and freedom, The Liberty Bell.

Originally, funds for building the tower at Christ Church, and for purchasing bells to be installed therein, were raised through subscriptions and two lotteries, supervised by Benjamin Franklin. He also contributed the sum of £10 to the project. In the fall of 1754, a peal of eight bells, cast by the same bell founder who cast the first Pennsylvania State House Bell, arrived from London and was hung in the tower. The largest bell weighed 2,040 lbs., the smallest about 500 lbs.

The following appeared in a Philadelphia newspaper of that day: "*The bells*) attracted great attention, and when put in the steeple, were rung for some time for the gratification of the 'natives'. In order to afford the country people an opportunity of hearing these wonderful sounds, it was agreed to have the bells

Console designed by John Binsfeld, built by Austin
Organs in 1967, containing 7 divisions, 4 manuals,
126 drawknobs, 33 couplers, and 110 controls.