

The Ross King Company

Fort Worth, Texas

To: Mr. William Reynolds

From: Ross King

Date: December 27, 1984

Subject: the organ at Gambrell Street Baptist

We would know more about the history of the organ if we talked to Dr. Markham, which I have not done. I assume the history, from seeing the components, to be something like this: Dr. Robert Markham from Baylor used pipes from a Pilcher organ built around 1904. The Spitzflute, which played at the several pitches indicated by the asterisks below, was supplied new by Dr. Markham. The chests and console were built by someone close around, I assume Dr. Markham. The manual keys are from a Hilgreen-Lane or a pre-electric action organ, either tracker or tubular-pneumatic, and have had electric contacts screwed on. At the time I came to the instrument in 1969, the stoplist was:

Great

Spitzflute	16'	*
Open Diapason	8'	
Gross Flute	8'	
Spitzflute	8'	*
Gamba	8'	
Dulciana	8'	
Octave	4'	
Spitzflute	4'	*
Nazard	2 2/3'	*
Spitzflute	2'	*

Swell

Bourdon	16'	extension of Stopped Diapason
Open Diapason	8'	
Stopped Diapason	8'	
Salicional	8'	
Aeoline	8'	
Voix Celeste	8'	
Harmonic Flute	4'	
Violina	4'	wired from Aeoline
Nazard	2 2/3'	wired from Stopped Diapason
Piccolo	2'	wired from Harmonic Flute
Cornopean	8'	
Oboe	4'	

Pedal

Bourdon	16'	
Lieblich Gedeckt	16'	wired from Swell Bourdon
Open Diapason	8'	

Spitzflute 8' wired from Great Spitzflute
(I don't remember what else. No other independent stops.)

Temperature balance between the chambers was a problem because the furnace flue pipe on the Great side ran through the chamber and heated it 10 or 15 degrees hotter than the Swell. Around 1971, in conjunction with alterations then being made to the building, we did quite a bit of work on the organ, including enclosing and insulating the flue pipe and making the following alterations to the console and pipes:

Supplied new pedalboard. The console was too narrow for the pedalboard, and the pedalboard sat too far under the bench. You can see at the base of the console where we relocated the kneeboard so that the pedals could sit farther under the console, and you can also see where we notched out the sides to gain width for the pedalboard.

Great Diapason brightened in tone and tuning slides added. Gedeckt made from old Swell Stopped Diapason. Old Gross Flute removed. Gamba and Spitzflute retained as they were. Flute Celeste made from old Swell Aeoline. (I wish someone would play those 2 voices--Spitzflute and Flute Celeste--together without anything else occasionally for quiet music.) Octave 4' brightened. Fifteenth 2' borrowed from Diapason rather than from Spitzflute. Shutters, which I contributed, added in the wall facing the congregation.

Swell Bourdon 16' pipes 1-12 removed to gain space. New Gedeckt made by stoppering and rescaling old Great Gross Flute. I contributed the Principal 4' as a gift. The Cornopean was replaced by a 1941 Moeller Trumpet which I had in stock. Oboe moved to 8' pitch. Principal 2' made from old Salicional pipes. Viola made from old Great Dulciana and a few Aeoline bass pipes. Voix Celeste rescaled larger.

Pedal New Bourdon chest.

At that time the console was located in the front center of the choir. On the inaugural Sunday, the organ blew a fuse during the prelude played by Mary Ann Glasscock, who was then the organist, because the console had been moved around during construction work on the choir platform in a way that rubbed through insulation of the blower switch wires. Wow. Several years later during another building renovation process the console was moved to its present location. Except for adding toestuds last year, there has been no significant work since 1971.

Miscellaneous information Pistons can be changed by moving the safety-pin looking switches in the top back of the console from *off* to *on* or vice versa. Vertical rows correspond to stops, horizontal rows correspond to pistons.

It may look primitive and scary, but it is safe. It is also primitive, of course.

The chests, which I suppose were made by Dr. Markham, have a couple of problems. One is that the method of construction does not allow for expansion and contraction of the wood with changes of humidity during the year. The result is that there are some valves which open far enough part of the time but do not let enough wind pass to blow the pipes up to proper pitch at other times. You will notice pipes occasionally which are unusually soft and flat. The cause lies in the chests, not in the pipes. The second problem is that the holes on top of the chests for the pipes tend to be small, with the result that some of the pipes do not fit well. If those pipes leak a little bit, they will also be out of tune.

The Oboe has problems which are beyond the scope of simple repair. It is not wise to spend money on those pipes.

Mechanically, the obvious problems are: (1) The leather on the reservoirs (also called *regulators* or *bellows*) has deteriorated. We have tacked rags across the holes. Repair will not be easy, and I don't mind the rags. The reservoirs are not of terribly high quality, and access to them, particularly in the Swell, is difficult. (2) The chests have the inherent problems described earlier. (3) The console...

I am cautious about emphasizing the limitations of the instrument. To start with, I think it is all of a piece--the console is not any worse than the chests, than the pipework, than the wind supply, etc. The organ is a lot better than a lot of the alternatives. Better to have what is there than what a lot of other churches have. Several of the sounds are quite fine. I especially like the Swell Viola and Celeste. (Again--they must be heard alone to be appreciated. We should say, rather, they must be heard alone to be heard.) Both of the stopped flutes are clear and cheerful. The principals are solid and clear, not scratchy.

Please share this with the new organist, whom I hope to meet soon.