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S.L. HUNTINGTON & CO. • STONINGTON, CONNECTICUT

BY SCOT L. HUNTINGTON



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THE SECOND TIME AROUND

S.L. HUNTINGTON & CO. • STONINGTON, CONNECTICUT

BY SCOT L. HUNTINGTON

IN 1816, A TWO-MANUAL ORGAN BUILT IN 1680 by Arp Schnitger—the most celebrated organbuilder of the Baroque era—was moved to the remote North Sea village of Cappel on the North Sea. This organ is now a mecca for builders and organists alike. In America, Hook & Hastings maintained an ever-changing catalog of second-hand instruments. William Johnson moved one of his early organs when he replaced it in 1874—it in turn being moved a third time in 1914. This month's cover story features legacy instruments given a new lease on life in new and appreciative homes, acquired for a fraction of the cost of a new, purpose-built organ.

When New Haven's St. Casimir's Lithuanian Catholic Church closed in 2003, its organ needed a miracle. The organ, E. & G.G. Hook No. 750, found a home just blocks away at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in the Fairhaven section of New Haven, through the eleventh-hour efforts of organists Ezequiel Menendez and Britt Wheeler, and the pastor, the Rev. Dan McClearn.

The St. Francis gallery contained a modest 1950s Möller installed in an equally diminutive antique case, all dwarfed by the building's vast scale and splendid acoustics. The Hook components were returned to our shop in Stonington, Conn., for restoration following OHS Restoration Guidelines, while the case pieces were treated in-situ by parish members. The original facade stenciling was faithfully replicated by decorative arts specialist Marylou Davis.

As can happen with things destined by the Fates, the physical size of the organ looks as if it were built for the place, with the top of the longest front pipe bisecting exactly the center rosette of the ornate rose window. The ensemble of instrument and place combine in a moment of impressive architectural drama that at long last befits this historic space. The instrument was dedicated at the Festive High Mass celebrating the parish's 135th anniversary, played by organist Britt Wheeler.

Noted for a massive voice in its original home, this is tempered a bit in a new home over three times the size, ideally complementing the mysticism of the Catholic liturgy. It is at once both noble and grand, elegantly suave in the beauty of its individual *piano* and *mezzo* color registers, the reeds ringing with the famed Hook *éclat*, and all having an unexpected sweetness gifted by the church's luxuriant acoustics. The congregational participation improved noticeably under the embracing breadth of the full ensemble,

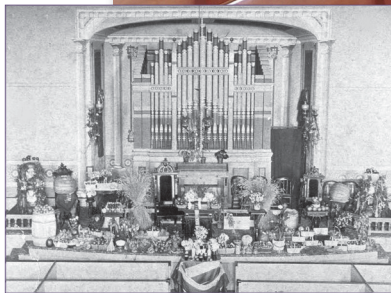


St. Francis of Assisi, New Haven, Conn.

ble, undergirded by the floor-shaking ability of the wooden Pedal Diapason—the largest-scale stop of its age and type in the state. This magnificent organ was treasured in its original home and now begins a second century of service in a majestic historic space just blocks away.

Valparaiso, Indiana, is renowned for two things: it is home to one of the country's premier Lutheran universities, and some of the best popcorn in the U.S. is grown here. St. Andrew's Episcopal Church had outgrown its historic downtown chapel and built a new contemporary church under the leadership of their energetic rector, the Rev. Patrick Ormos. His vision for the new church included an affordable pipe organ, and the "green" concept of recycling a legacy instrument appealed to him. Deeply appreciative of the rich Anglican choral tradition and conversant in organ construction, he was a builder's ideal client. His wish list included only three requirements: an enclosed division, a chorus mixture for leading singing, and a Trumpet stop for playing wedding voluntaries. An anonymous parishioner stepped forward with a \$200,000 gift, but tied to a time restriction.

It rains organs when you don't have a place to put one, but when you need something specific, the well goes dry. Possible candidates, none ideal, came and went. With the clock ticking on the gift, an organ on Cape Cod was located through the Organ Clearing House. It lacked the wish list stops, but its excellent condition allowed spending limited funds on a slight enlargement. While carefully restored under OHS Guidelines, its slight alteration would properly characterize it as a rebuild. The new Mixture and Trumpet (with custom-crafted shallots) were exactly copied from extant 1890s Hook examples. Now having a displaced Oboe on our hands, I elected to repitch it as a 16' stop with a new bass in order to provide a traditional English "Full Swell"—a luxury in



1889 dedication
West Harwich, Mass.

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

an organ this size. This was added above the contract as our gift for the good of the cause. The painted and widened case was stripped and restored to its original finish and proportions. A photo of the organ taken the year it was built along with bits of color found under layers of paint guided the restoration of the facade to its original design and colors. It was total serendipity that these hues harmonized perfectly with those present in the new space.

The tone of the 1889 organ is redolent of cigars and brandy—dark, lush, and foundational. The colorful flutes and strings speak with a German accent, the diapasons are warm and rich with era-appropriate understated upperwork, and the

new reed chorus transforms the ensemble with the legendary refined fire of Hook reeds—a singularly thrilling sound unfortunately no longer available from modern reed makers. Modest at 16 stops, this is an instrument of unexpected color and musical versatility. The dedication concert was played by international artist Wolfgang Rübsam, whose perspicacious mother-in-law, Ann Walton, was chair of the organ committee.

The organ the fledgling organbuilder William A. Johnson installed in the Haydenville Congregational Church and Society (Haydenville, Massachusetts) was begun on speculation in 1848. Replacing it with a larger instrument

St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church New Haven, Connecticut

E. & G.G. Hook & Hastings, No. 750 (1874)

GREAT	PEDALE
16 Open Diapason	16 Open Diapason
8 Open Diapason	16 Bourdon
8 Melodia	8 Violoncello
8 Dulciana	
4 Octave	Swell to Great
4 Flute d'Amour	Great to Pedal
3 Twelfth	Swell to Pedal
2 Fifteenth	Bellows Signal
Mixture III	
8 Trumpet	Compasses: 58/27
SWELL	
16 Bourdon (Treble and Bass)	
8 Open Diapason	
8 Stopped Diapason	
8 Viola	
4 Flauto Traverso	
4 Violina	
Mixture II	
8 Cornopean	
8 Oboe (TC)	
8 Bassoon (Bass)	
Tremolo	

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Valparaiso, Indiana

Hook & Hastings, No. 1417 (1889)

GREAT	PEDAL
16 Bourdon (TC)	16 Bourdon
8 Open Diapason	8 Flöte
8 Melodia	
8 Dulciana	Sw. to Gt.
4 Octave	Gt. to Ped.
3 Twelfth	Sw. to Ped.
2 Fifteenth	Bellows Signal
*Mixture III	
	Compasses: 58/27
SWELL	
8 Viola (TC)	*new
8 Stopped Diapason	
4 Harmonic Flute	
4 Violina	
16 *Contra Fagotto	
8 *Trumpet	
Tremolo	



Johnson Opus 16, Heath, Mass., with artist's conception of new carvings

in 1874, he took the organ in trade and moved it to the Congregational Church in neighboring Whatley with a new case and one stop change. When Whatley bought a new Estey in 1914, the Johnson was sold for \$100 to the Union Evangelical Church in Heath where it replaced a small reed organ, and



Opus 16 with new 1874 case, Whatley, Mass.

it was transported up the mountain by ox cart. Playable but in poor condition for many years, it was the dream of life-long member Ruth Johnson to see the organ restored. The church is small, and the project would have been beyond their means without outside help. The local Heath Agricultural Fair pledged one year's proceeds to the cause, and a local resident pledged a one-for-one matching grant up to \$75,000. A local newspaper ran a story about the project which, prompted donations from as far as 40 miles away.

The organ was restored as closely as possible to its original condition—the first in the country restored under the 2010 OHS Revised Guidelines for Conservation. The original speaking facade pipes were found inside the case and the original Greek Revival case was reconstructed using the proportions of the golden mean—the exact design gleaned from forensic clues found within the organ, the lengths of original facade pipes, and the dimensions of the original gallery. The case was regained under the tutelage of specialist Marylou Davis, following faux-graining extant in the original church and under layers of paint on the surviving case pieces. The missing Great 8' Flute was reconstructed based on extant examples, as were the missing parts of the original hand pumping system.

With the reestablishment of the original pitch and pressure, the organ again revealed the elegant and silvery Diapason tone for which Johnson was justifiably famous. The organ is decidedly Classical English in its deportment, and in the quiet of its mountain-top location, transports the listener back in time. The instrument was turned to face the congregation and the carpeted pulpit platform was rebuilt with a wood floor, greatly enhancing the organ's presence in the room. The astounding dedication concert was played by Nathan Laube to an SRO audience that not only filled the foyer but spilled out onto the lawn. Laube played a surprisingly diverse program that showed that even an organ of this size and range is only limited by one's imagination.

Money is now being raised to provide the carvings needed to complete the case restoration ([Gofundme.com/heath-johnson-carvings](https://www.gofundme.com/heath-johnson-carvings)).

These three situations represent widely contrasting requirements and spaces—all now being served by organs representing the best of America's rich organ heritage—instruments of enduring quality and classically inspired tone that have been given a new lease on life (one of these now entering a second century in its third home!). For further details on these instruments and more like them, please visit our website, [Slhorgans.com](https://www.slhorgans.com).

Scot L. Huntington is a member of the American Institute of Organbuilders and is currently serving as chair of the AIO Editorial Journal Review Committee. His organbuilding firm, S.L. Huntington & Co., is a member of the International Society of Organbuilders.

Union Evangelical Church Heath, Massachusetts

William A. Johnson, Opus 16 (1850)

GREAT

- 8 Open Diapason
- 8 *Stopped Diapason Treble (TC)
- 8 Stopped Diapason Bass
- 8 Dulciana (TC)
- 4 Principal
- 4 Flute (TC)
- 2 2/3 Twelfth
- 2 Fifteenth

SWELL (from tenor f)

- 8 Open Diapason
- 8 Stopped Diapason
- 4 Principal
- 8 Hautboy
- 8 Stopped Diapason Bass (1-17)

PEDAL

- 16 Double Open Diapason (Bourdon)
- Coupler Gt. & Sw.
- Pedal Coupler (Great to Pedal)
- Bellows Signal
- Compasses: 58/17

*new