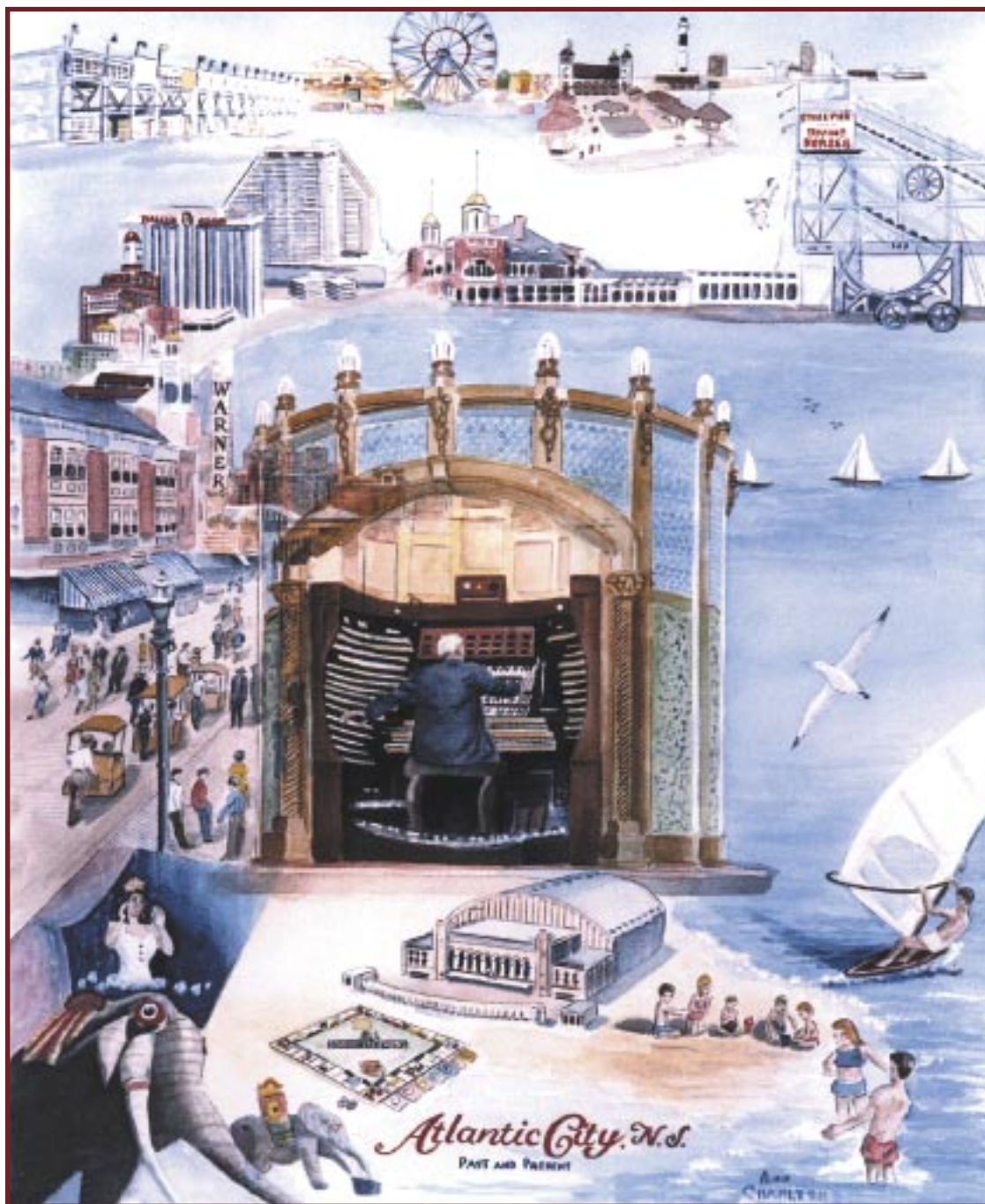


the GRAND OPHICLEIDE

Journal of the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc.

Issue 12

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ATLANTIC
CITY
CONVENTION
HALL
ORGAN
SOCIETY
INC.

1009 BAY RIDGE AVENUE, PMB 108, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21403, U.S.A.

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Atlantic City Convention Hall
Organ Society, Inc.*

1009 Bay Ridge Avenue, PMB 108, Annapolis, Maryland 21403
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On the Cover — Atlantic City, New Jersey – Past and Present

A whimsical watercolor by Ann Charlton. Framable 8 × 10 prints are available for \$15. Poster size prints 24 × 30 are available for \$50. Write the ACCHOS to order.

A New Book

THE ATLANTIC CITY CONVENTION HALL ORGAN

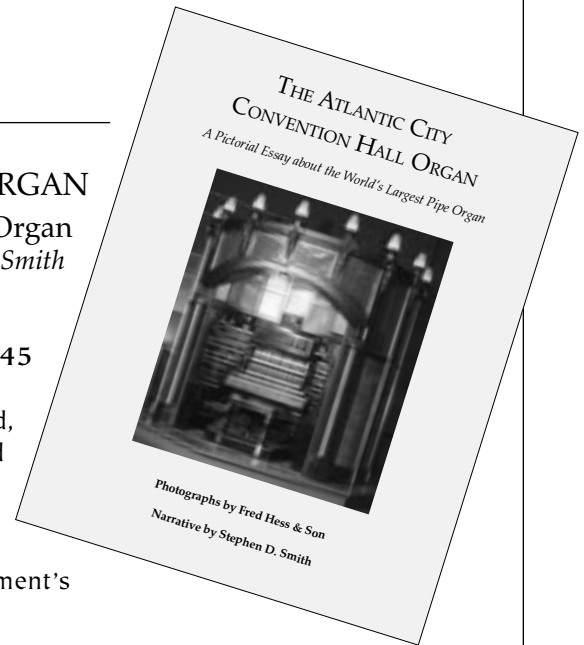
*A Pictorial Essay about the World's Largest Pipe Organ
Photographs by Fred Hess & Son • Narrative by Stephen D. Smith*

Price: \$45

The ACCHOS is pleased to announce the publication of a cloth bound, large-format book (11.5" x 13") containing 94 of the legendary black and white 8" x 10" photographs taken by Fred Hess & Son between 1929 and 1932, documenting the construction of the famous Midmer-Losh pipe organ with its 449 ranks and 33,114 pipes. These photographs are beautifully reproduced in their exact original size. The instrument's historian, Stephen Smith, has captioned each photograph in detail.

Among the many powerful images in this limited edition publication are: building and installing the Pedal organ's 64-foot rank; views inside of all eight pipe chambers; the three versions of the portable five-manual console; assembling the seven-manual console; individual exotic pipes from various stops; blower and relay rooms; plus many other intriguing scenes of this extraordinary pipe organ.

Readers will better understand why author Patrick Burns wrote: "I regard this instrument as the eighth wonder of the world." And why Reginald Foort said: "The Full Organ...was the most fantastically glorious sound I ever heard."



ONLINE & PHONE ORDERING SERVICE

Effective immediately all ACCHOS Books and Records may be ordered online via credit card in the "store" at www.acchos.org — or by calling 1-800-813-6655.

ATLANTIC CITY UPDATE

The \$90,000,000 renovation project continues vigorously at the Boardwalk Convention Hall. The Midmer-Losh organ won't be accessible until sometime after the Miss America Pageant and the 're-dedication' ceremony planned for October. Until the construction work is completed and the dust settles (literally!) it will not be feasible to access the organ. Funding the restoration has not yet been made possible by the state authorities due to the large cost overruns for Phase I, which was originally budgeted at \$74 million. Nevertheless, we are continuing to pursue the matter of funding and are hopeful that some monies will become available as part of the next phase of renovation

The following editorial, reprinted with permission, appeared in the May 2001 issue of *The American Organist* magazine and speaks for itself. This is the official Journal of the American Guild of Organists and the Royal Canadian College of Organists.



From the President

The Eighth Wonder. In *The IAO Millennium Book*, edited by Paul Hale and published last year in England, we find an article by Patrick Burns titled “A Visit to the World’s Largest Organ, with Some Impressions, Views, and Opinions.” Calling it “the eighth wonder of the world,” Burns describes the famous Midmer-Losh pipe organ in Atlantic City’s Boardwalk Hall and characterizes the instrument’s seven manuals and over 33,000 pipes as being able to deliver a musical experience unlike that of any other organ in the world. Designed by Emerson Richards in 1928 for what was then called the Atlantic City Convention Hall, the organ was built under his supervision by the Midmer-Losh Organ Company of Long Island, N.Y. The first recital on the completed organ was played in 1932 by James Scott Winter. Damaged by a hurricane in 1944, only a small part of the organ has been operable in the ensuing years. The building is on the National Park Service Registry of Historic Places. The Midmer-Losh Organ and its ballroom companion Kimball Organ are included as a part of this Historic Places designation.

In 1997, a group of enthusiasts formed the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society (ACCHOS), which, in 1999, commissioned a study to determine the feasibility of restoring the organ. The society is presently involved in a capital campaign to raise funds for the restoration of what many call “A Great American Musical Treasure.” Pictures of the organ and information about the project can be seen on the society’s Web site: < www.acchos.org > . The refurbishment will take several years to complete. The State of New Jersey, which owns Boardwalk Hall and the pipe organ, will be responsible for contracts, schedules, and oversight of the project. The ACCHOS, which is a not-for-profit organization, will be responsible for fund-raising efforts in the private sector.

At its meeting on November 14, 1999, the AGO National Council sent a letter of congratulations to the Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society in which we stated that “A Declaration of Support in Principle” was unanimously passed by the National Council, that we commend the society for its admirable efforts to bring this legendary instrument to new life, and that we thank the society for its outstanding efforts to create a greater public awareness of the Boardwalk Hall project.

This monumental undertaking, so full of exciting promise, cannot help but capture our imagination. It is highly unlikely that an instrument of this size will ever be built again. One is reminded of the narrative by Honore de Balzac that describes the awesome grandeur of the organ: “The Organ is in truth the grandest, the most daring, the most magnificent of all instruments invented by human genius. It is a whole orchestra in itself, it can express anything in response to a skilled touch. Surely it is, in some sort, a pedestal on which the soul poised for a flight forth into space, essaying on her course to draw picture after picture in an endless series, to paint human life, to cross the Infinite that separates Heaven from Earth! And the longer a dreamer listens to those giant harmonies, the better he realizes that nothing save this hundred-voiced choir on earth can fill all the space between kneeling men and a God hidden by the blinding light of sanctuary. Out of the dim daylight, out of the dim silence broken by the chanting of a choir in response to the thunder of the organ, a veil is woven for God, and the brightness of His attributes shines through it.”

Philip Hale

This article from the November 1, 1930 issue of THE DIAPASON is re-printed with permission. It provides a rare and important look at the Midmer-Losh organ before the Main Left and Main Right chambers were operational. Installation began just one year before these concerts were given.



PLAYING ATLANTIC CITY ORGAN PROVES RARE EXPERIENCE

By Rollo Maitland. Mus. D.

My engagement at the Atlantic City Auditorium was in connection with the American Fair, which extended over a period of six weeks, from July 17 till Aug. 27. The whole situation was an entirely unusual one, and perhaps different from any previous use of the organ. The organist and organ occupied the position of an orchestra or band at one of our national or international expositions. There was this great difference, however. Instead of there being

an auditorium set apart where those who desired could sit quietly and enjoy the music, the organ and organist were in the midst of the exhibitors. The floor space of the auditorium covers about two and a half to three city blocks, there being 168,000 square feet of exhibition space. The center of this vast arena — a space 200 feet long and ninety feet wide — was occupied by an ice skating rink, on which exhibitions of fancy skating were given during the day,

at stated intervals. The remainder of the floor space was occupied by a great variety of commercial and industrial exhibits. These included a full-sized tri-motor airplane, a club traveling bus, a sewing machine exhibit, a Coast Guard exhibit, a clothing manufacturer's exhibit, an exhibit from Puerto Rico consisting of clothing, hats, fruit and vegetable growing, etc., a nut house exhibit (the kind we eat), and many, many others, including even an organ pipe making exhibit, by Midmer-Losh Inc., builders of the organ.

Here it was my privilege and duty to give six recitals a day from noon to 12:30, from 1:30 to 1:50, from 5 to 5:30, from 7:30 to 8, from 8:30 to 9 and from 10:25 to 10:40. It might be said that there were two groups of listeners composing the audiences — those included in the much larger group who heard the music as they went around among the exhibits and those of the smaller group who sat on aluminum chairs on the stage, furnished by an aluminum exhibit, or else sat in the galleries. The attendance during the period of the fair was estimated at more than a million, the actual count showing this number, but, of course, many people came oftener than once, and not all of these heard the organ. It might be estimated that from 700 to 1,000 a day sat behind the organist on the stage. These persons evidently came there to hear and see the organist. They were usually very attentive and orderly.

The organ itself was not more than 50 percent completed. Still, there were 18,000 pipes available. None of the main great, the main swell or the main solo was playable, and only a few pipes of a metal 34ft. stop in the main pedal division were operational. The following gallery divisions were available:

The medium string organ, described by Mr. Losh as "including thirty ranks of pipes, ranging in tone from a geigen quality to an exceedingly slim-scale string, reinforced with octave and mixture intervals, also with a gedeckt, 8 ft., and a flute twelfth, and fattened with a new chorus reed called 'reed string',

highly suggestive of large gamba tone, but adding a meaty richness to the ensemble." This division is in a chamber in the right gallery near the front of the auditorium.

The brass chorus, adjoining the medium string, and consisting of a full chorus of harmonics from 16 ft. to tierce.

The echo organ, consisting of thirty sets of pipes extended to provide fifty stops, situated in the ceiling about one-third the distance down the right side.

The flute organ — a dozen flute stops, mostly harmonic and double languid, and on very high wind pressure, placed in a chamber under the echo organ.

The enclosed choir, a department of thirty sets, extended to fifty registers, and located in the left gallery directly across from the brass and string divisions.

The diapason chorus, comprising "a division of double languid diapasons of very large scale, complete with harmonic corroboration, providing the dominant organ voice of the gallery organs,." This is in the left gallery opposite the flute organ. The solo reed division, in a gallery chamber adjoining the diapason chorus, consisting of clarinet, orchestral oboe, musette, Egyptian bazu and others of like calibre, with a bold trumpet. All are of a large scale and timbre. These blend surprisingly well with the diapason chorus.

The fanfare organ, probably the most powerful single division found in any organ, in the ceiling vault above the diapasons, consists mainly of most powerful flutes and reeds, with a stentorphone and probably the most powerful seven rank mixture ever designed. (The diapason and fanfare divisions are at present un-enclosed.) A soft string division is in the same location as the fanfare and serves as an accompaniment to the echo organ in the vault opposite.

These divisions were controlled by a movable console of five manuals and 700 stopkeys, placed in the center of the stage. Of course not all of the 700 stops were working. The main console is to have seven manuals and 1,400 stops.

Numbering the manuals from the bottom, the echo and the diapason chorus were available by floating couplers on 1 or 5, the medium string division on 4, the brass-wind on 2, the flute division floating on 4 and 5, the enclosed choir on 1, and by manual couplers to 2, 3 and 4, the solo reeds, fanfare and soft string divisions by floating couplers on 3 and 5. A rather limited pedal section was available, made up mostly of pipes from the echo, medium string, enclosed choir and fanfare divisions. Each of the divisions could be coupled to the pedal in the ordinary way. An important consideration was that no combination pistons of any sort were available, so one had to do all the registration by hand or with that makeshift for registration, the crescendo pedal.

In these unusual circumstances the best plan of registration was what might be termed "multiplying one's effects" — for instance, for a combination of strings with 8 and 4ft. flutes, twenty or thirty stops might be necessary for an effect obtainable with three or four stops on an ordinary organ. This procedure proved most desirable for many of the solo effects. Another very desirable procedure was to play the organ divisionally. For instance, the choir, the medium string and the brass could be used together, being in the same section near the front, although in opposite galleries; also the echo flutes, diapasons, fanfare and soft string could be used together, being near the same location. But try to play anything requiring a staccato or non-legato on echo and choir, for instance, or medium string and fanfare, and no matter from what part of the auditorium one was listening, the effect was never clean-cut because of the distance between the two divisions. This was not a result of slowness of action but because sound travels much more slowly than light or electricity. Also, if one were sitting in the gallery near the medium string and this division were coupled to the enclosed choir, 350 feet across the room, the string division was heard nearly a quarter of a second ahead of the choir. If one were in the center of

the hall or on the stage, the effect was normal and very beautiful.

Each division was, in effect, a full organ having its own characteristic. The medium string was thrilling in orchestral transcriptions. The melody coupler on this division was most useful — in fact, I seldom played an overture, symphonic movement or any other orchestral work without using it. The strings, brass, enclosed choir and solo reeds were the divisions best adaptable to orchestral coloring and some wonderful orchestral effects were possible. The full echo gave somewhat the effect of a mammoth full swell. The enclosed choir, with a very snappy French trumpet and a very bright Acuta (mixture) was a brilliant division and, as before stated, the fanfare was overwhelming. In fact, the full fanfare was very seldom used, as was the case with the full choir.

Certain exhibitors had their booths directly under these divisions, and during the first part of the engagement there was much complaint from them about the organ being too loud. So we had to cut down on the tone considerably. One amusing incident in this connection comes to my mind. One Sunday evening I had just finished the Tannhäuser Overture, using only the full choir and the medium string for the big climax. There were 400 or 500 persons seated on the stage, and nearly five times that many thousand in the hall. Up comes a lady from the booth directly under the choir divisions, with 'Doctor, please play softer; we can't hear our ears!'

For the lovely delicate effects so common in modern organs, the echo, the solo reeds and the softer stops of the medium string, the soft string and the choir were most adequate. The most satisfactory of the big full organ effects, suitable for such passages as the introduction to Guilmant's First Sonata, were the diapason chorus, the solo reeds and the full echo, played from the top manual. The full choir and the brass made another thrilling effect. However, these divisions were not intended originally to be used in this way. They were designed only as

auxiliary effects for the great main organ, of which it is hardly possible to imagine the dignity and grandeur of tone it will give forth when completed. As Mr. Losh wittily remarked, "the side shows are all working, but the circus hasn't arrived."

Naturally the programs were of a most cosmopolitan character. There were 752 numbers played during the six weeks — 421 exclusive of repetitions. Of these, sixty-two were original compositions for the organ; the rest were drawn from every conceivable source — music for piano, violin, voice, orchestra, opera, sacred and secular chorus, etc. All this was done from memory. There were three daily "features," occupying the position of the time honored "Storm" at Ocean Grove. At noon there was the "Return of the United States Marines," bringing them home on a world cruise by way of England, France, Germany and Italy and treating them to a storm at sea. This gives opportunity for English, French, German and Italian folksongs, together with the regulation "Sailors' Songs". At 5 o'clock we had "A Trip to Atlantic City," frankly descriptive, with many so-called imitations. Each evening to close the fair there was "One Hundred and Fifty Years of American History" with patriotic and camp songs from 1776 to the present, and an attempt to suggest the world war, the American soldiers in France and the signing of the Armistice (we all remember the tumult of whistles, bells, etc.).

Of these three "features" the "Trip to Atlantic City" was the least popular; the other two gave more opportunity for real music, and I can frankly say that I believe they were much more enjoyed than the "imitations." Also, the miscellaneous programs attracted fully as many persons to the stage as the "features" — perhaps more.

Following is one day's program — that of Aug. 15:

Noon — March, *Semper Fidelis*, Sousa;
The Return of the United States Marine Corps

1:30 — *Aufschwung*, Schumann;
The Sweetest Flower that Blows;

Caprice, H. A. Matthews; *Barcarolle*, Wolstenhorne.

5:00 — *Scarf Dance*, Chaminade; *Fantasia Impromptu* on "Ben Bolt"; *A Trip to Atlantic City*.

7:30 — *Concert Overture*, Rogers; *At Sundown*, Maitland; *Love's Dream After the Ball*, Czibulka; *Polacca Brillante*, Weber.

8:30 — *New World Symphony*, Dvorak (first movement); *None but a Lonely Heart*, Tschaikovsky; *Butterflies*, Grieg; *Babes in Toyland*, (excerpts) Herbert.

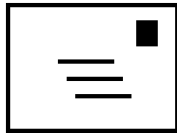
10:25 — *One Hundred and Fifty Years of American History*.

Bach was seldom heard, although he was not entirely absent. The Toccata and Fugue in D minor was played twice, the Great G minor Fugue was played once by request; the Aria, and one or two of the chorale preludes were also played.

There were obviously no printed programs. The auditorium is equipped with an excellent public addressing system, magnifying the voice twenty-eight times. At the beginning of each session the regular announcer in charge introduced the organist, who announced his own numbers, giving a short description of each. The loudspeakers were at the opposite end of the auditorium, some 500 feet away, and it was a strange sensation at first to hear one's own voice coming back to him, each syllable about a quarter of a second after he had spoken it.

Atlantic City surely is, as its name implies, the "playground of the world." The writer believes he met more persons he knew, had read about, or heard about, during those six weeks than at any other time in his career. There was hardly a session at which the writer was not greeted by one or more persons from all parts of the country.

Atlantic City may well be proud of her Auditorium and organ; when completed the great instrument will offer possibilities for the entertainment, education and uplift of humanity, which very few musical instruments, if any, have as yet possessed. ☺



we get mail

Dear friends,

There are many reasons why this national treasure, the Atlantic City Convention Hall pipe organ must be preserved; may I list a few?

1. In this era of everyone trying to convince us that "less is more", the world's largest pipe organ is a stellar reminder of the exuberance of a "go gettem" time in this country's history. I believe that we should preserve a major reminder of that period of American history
2. Because of its association with many of the notables of the organ world earlier this century, many of us became interested in the Atlantic City instrument as youth and then went on to have fine careers as organists, myself included (I studied with Dr. Robert Elmore, who recorded BACH ON THE BIGGEST in 1956.)
3. In many features, such as an unenclosed positv division on low wind pressure, it was way ahead of its time. Thus, it would not in ANY way be a 'fossil' when restored, but rather an exciting and contemporary instrument.
4. Major instruments have a way of attracting top-notch performers AND good audiences. There is every reason to believe that, upon proper restoration, the instrument would have plenty of use and would contribute mightily to Atlantic City's cultural life.
5. It is extremely unlikely that the Wanamaker and Atlantic City organs could ever be surpassed, which would cost many millions of dollars. An entire retail store revolves around the Wanamaker store because of the size and fame of its pipe organ. Is it unreasonable to think that a restored Atlantic City organ, the world's largest by pipe count, would enable the city to, over time, capitalize on the fame of its trophy pipe organ?
6. If one MUST be practical, the instrument is a fine restoration candidate. Thanks to the loving care of its curators, it's intact and unaltered tonally... mechanical rebuilding would return it to its original sound.

Please, Atlantic City folks, now is the time to plan to restore this noble instrument!

Bill Miller
Director of Music
First Presbyterian Church, Trenton NJ

The case of the missing pipes...and some good detective work!

Eugene Hayek tells us the following story:

In November 1962, I had the great pleasure of being guided through a tour of the organs at the Convention Hall in Atlantic City. Bill Rosser was the technical curator at Convention Hall. I was in Atlantic City attending our Police PBA convention as the president of New Jersey State PBA, local 155. My interest in pipe organs went back to my early childhood.

Bill was quite concerned that recently he had been missing some pipes from the Midmer-Losh organ and suspected that a skater with the Ice Capades had taken them with him as a souvenir. Bill asked if I could check the fellow out and gave me a schedule of upcoming productions of the Ice Capades.

He remembered the skater by his first and partial last name. Checking on the pipes was a pleasure for me, and after a few phone calls, the pipes were located and promised back to Bill.

Eugene Hayek
Ramsey Police Sergeant (retired)
Ramsey, New Jersey

[Eugene Hayek has an interesting organ website with sound files at: <http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Chamber/2175/> —Ed.]

Mr. Robert McClintock
General Manager
The New Atlantic City Convention Center
2001 Kirkland Blvd.
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

Dear Mr. McClintock,

I was very happy to learn that you and your organization are considering the preservation and restoration of the great Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ. Being the largest and most impressive organ in the world is certainly enough reason for saving it, but I also look at it in a little different light.

As a professional in the field of tourism promotion for the past 35 years, I can tell you that this organ has a great commercial appeal for tour groups and visitors -- especially from Europe where pipe organs are revered century after century.

We Americans can be proud that we can boast having this one-of-a-kind-in-the-world musical instrument.

If I can be of any help to you in this most important project please let me know.

Cordially

Hal Haney

21 Apr 1998

I would like to add my voice in support of restoration of the historic Atlantic City Convention Hall organ. In recent years, a number of similar vintage organs have been returned to their original condition and given new life as part of their home venue's attraction to visitors.

Although I refer to such organs as those in the Portland, Maine City Hall Auditorium, the former Wanamaker's (now Lord & Taylor) department store in Philadelphia, and numerous movie theaters across the country - no instrument excels the ACCH's Midmer-Losh organ in sheer magnitude and effect. As these other restorations have clearly shown, there is a huge potential following for appropriate programming in these halls where the organs are integral to the visitors' experience.

Not too long ago, "everyone" "knew" that James Cameron's Titanic would be the flop of the century. But he persevered and brought to life an epic ship so gargantuan as to defy most people's experience. In its every detail, it revealed a kind of life that is barely glimpsed today. Atlantic City's Titanic is safely on dry land, in a great space, and awaits the visionary decision to restore it to glory. Picture opening night....

Sincerely,

Peter C. Storandt
Miami, FL

As a monument to what can be accomplished by humankind, and as a singularly American achievement during a time when this country endured its darkest hour of depression, the Convention Hall Organ stands as proud testament. That it was built for Atlantic City during this period shows the foresightedness, optimism and faith possessed of the city fathers at the time. Today, with the resurgence of interest in Atlantic City and its reborn optimism in restoring it to the premiere resort position it once so proudly enjoyed, this wonderful, unique instrument should be incorporated into the plans for the restoration of the Convention Hall.

It stands, not only as the greatest musical instrument ever devised and built, but also, as a living link to a glorious, golden era in Atlantic City's history. I would hope that you recognize, and act upon, your responsibility to preserve and restore this grand work of art so that one day it will again breathe in fresh air and thrill new generations with its majestic voices.

Sincerely,

Robert Zeman

"The Full Organ...was the most fantastically glorious sound I ever heard."

—Reginald Foort

"I regard this instrument as the eighth wonder of the world."

—Patrick Burns

"This organ can move men's souls as no organ anywhere."

—Robert Elmore



10 Hymn, Abide With Me *William Monk* 3:18

“When it comes my time I want them to rent a rock concert sound system and play ‘Abide With Me’ from the Atlantic City CD at full volume”.

—Excerpt from a letter to a Board Member

Membership

Yearly ACCHOS membership dues are:

Regular	\$20	Benefactor	\$250
Contributor	\$40	Sponsor	\$500
Donor	\$75	Life Membership	\$1,000
Supporter	\$100		

Overseas Regular membership is \$30 to defray postage costs.

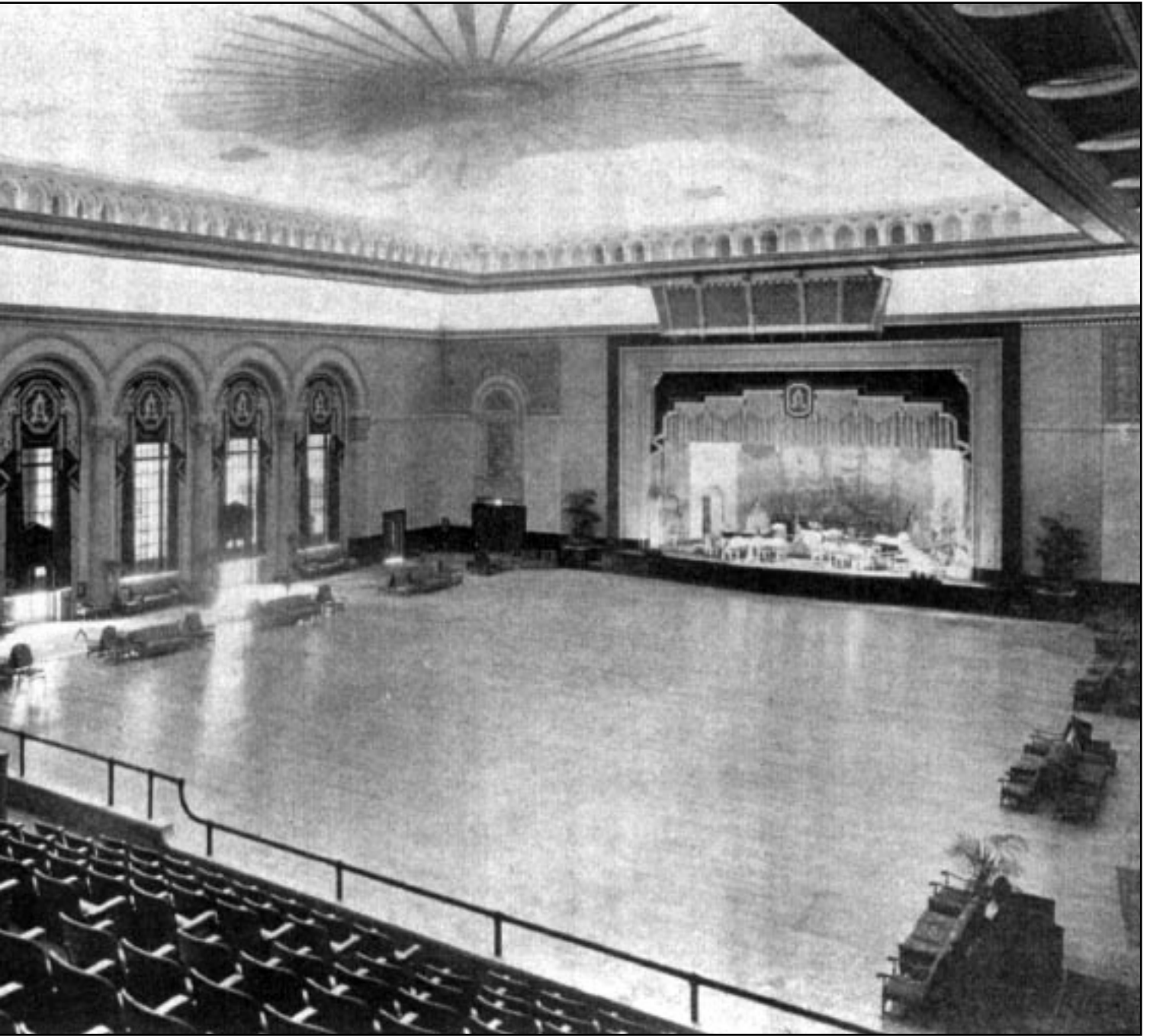
Please make checks payable in your currency to ACCHOS and mail to:

Atlantic City Convention Hall Organ Society, Inc.

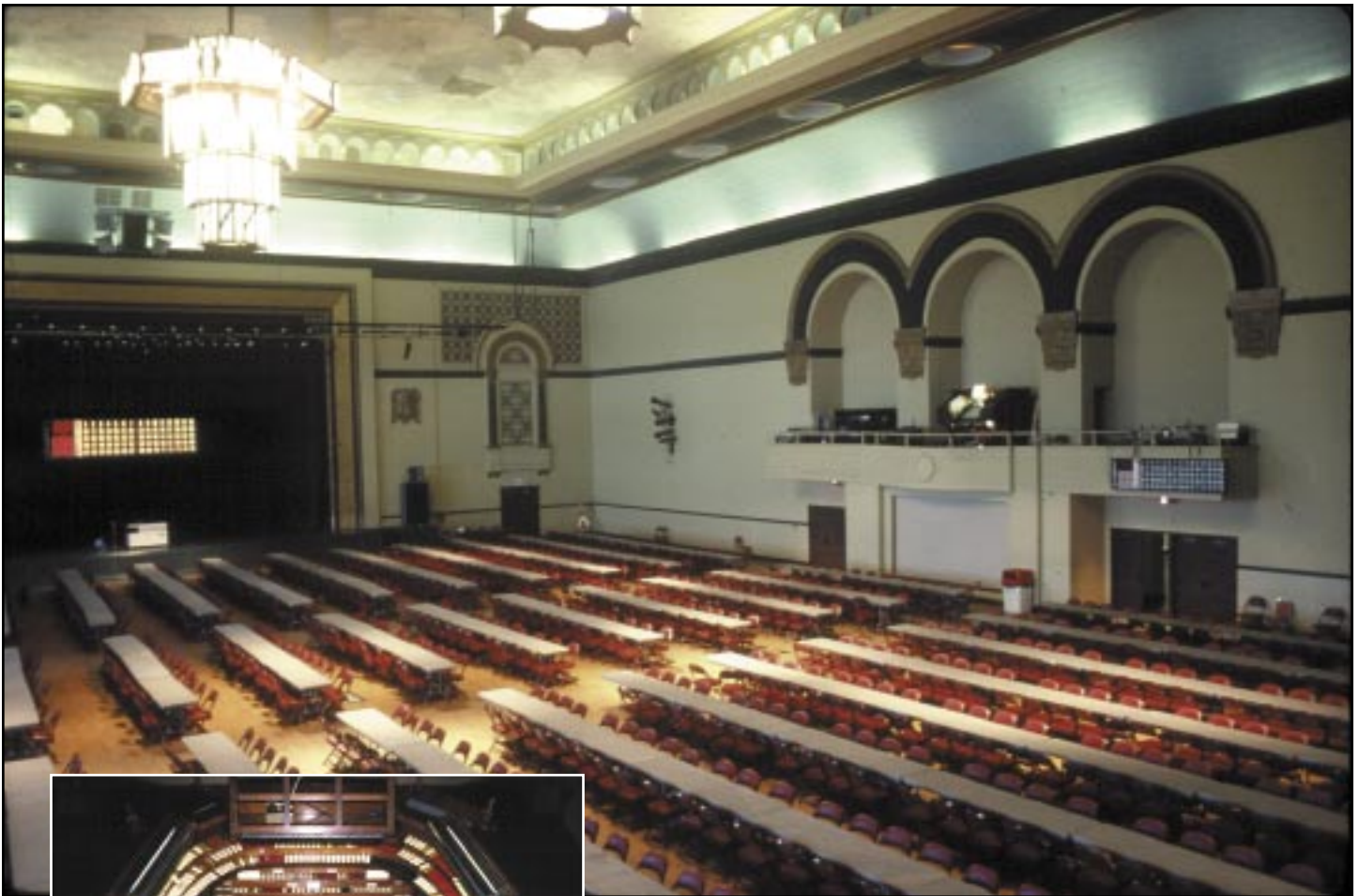
1009 Bay Ridge Avenue, PMB 108, Annapolis, Maryland 21403

The ACCHOS is a 501 (c)(3) organization incorporated in the State of Maryland.





The Boardwalk Hall Ballroom as it appeared in 1932



**View of the Ballroom and the organ balcony;
The console of the Ballroom Kimball organ (inset)**

Two Jewels in the Crown

As if having a seven-manual, 449-rank pipe organ in its main auditorium wasn't enough, the Atlantic City Boardwalk Convention Hall also boasts a second jewel in its pipe organ crown; the splendid 55-rank instrument in the Ballroom by W.W. Kimball of Chicago, Illinois

The Kimball organ, like its sister in the main auditorium, was designed by Senator Emerson Richards who also supervised the installation and tonal finishing of both instruments. The shape and dimensions of the ballroom, together with its hard maple dance floor afford an elegant and rich acoustical setting for the organ, which speaks from two separate chambers, via decorative grills, flanking a large stage at one end of the room. The console is located on a balcony to right of the right chamber.

The Kimball is extraordinarily versatile and is intended to serve as a classical and theatre organ. It has 19 straight voices and 23 units, totaling 55 ranks and 4,155 pipes. The four-manual console has 357 stop keys and was the largest horseshoe console ever built by the firm. A Kimball "Soloist" roll-player action for 13 ranks is located near the console. The instrument was designed in 1929 and the completed in April, 1931.

In 1999, the relay and high pressure blower for the organ were removed to make way for a new stairwell as part of the building renovation. Estimates are under preparation for the repair and restoration of this fine instrument.