

Description of the Berkshire Organ at the Time of the 1988 Reconfigure and Repairs

The organ was revoiced and ranks moved around on the slimmest of shoestring budgets in 1988. The chassis was Hutchings, the pedal unit chests were kept from Frazee, and the pipework was literally 'floor sweepings.' The original Frazee was a unit organ in a side chamber now made into the organists office. There was a faux facade by the architect front and center which had dummy pipes of string scale. The blower in the cellar was from the old Frazee, reservoirs were supply house and new from Berkshire.

Not a single rank was from less than two sources, except the string and celeste which were Frazee and good. The Open Diapason was from 5 different sources -- the randomness mostly in the new facade pipes. The Stopped Diapason was from 5 different sources. The Chimney Flute was a cut down Skinner First Diapason. The Mixtures were new. There were two prepared-for stops in the Swell, that didn't have enough room for what they were supposed to be, especially the prepared Sesquialtera. The Gedackts were signature Cogswell -- cut off at the top of the block, body trimmed to lower cut up, then glued back together with epoxy, end grain to end grain. Then painted glossy barn red with cap and stopper handles painted glossy black. The stoppers had not been re-leathered, and had rotting leather, but a couple basses were super tight and the pipes split. The Swell had a 4' flute that was made from an old Skinner narrow mouth line metal diapason, cut ups lowered to 1/4 with squares of aluminum glued on with 5 million ton epoxy. The tone was very unattractive -- chuff and windy basically. That became the Great Nazard to go with the 8' flute, aluminum removed. Still unattractive, but better than it was. An Erzahler was removed to do that, which became the Swell Twelfth. The Rohrflute was too loud to accompany Swell stops nicely. The Pedal Serpent was a half length bassoon, also from 4 or 5 sources, including the top 7 pipes from the Murray Harris long gone from Second Congregational in New London, CT. which were the "best" pipes in the rank, but were probably 435 and wanted to growl at 440.

Mechanically, the Hutchings action, predictably, played like a truck. The electric stop action for the Pedal was poorly executed, knobs travel 3/4". Therefore, the pivot pins on all the mechanical stop action traces were moved so those stop knobs only move 3/4". They were stiff with lots of torque, and didn't travel the same distance each time you pulled unless you yanked them hard and fast. Foam slider seals were all leaking in the treble. The pictorial representation stop labels were given away. They got the whole organ for \$50K -- cheap even then.

The organ is still there, but the Church is making serious noises about junking it and removing the chamber which sticks into a conference room behind. The blower was sold, so the organ is silent and disconnected from all power sources. The strings, Subbass and new Mixtures are worth saving, but nothing else. Inexplicably, the chamber had unmanageable temperature fluctuations. Partly because it was surrounded by a heated conference room, but opened into an unheated sanctuary that was only heated from early Sunday morning until noon. We installed tiny fans behind the facade to circulate air, with minimal improvement.

