

Boston Chapter, American Guild of Organists  
Organ Advisory Committee  
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July 12, 2005

Park Avenue Congregational Church  
Report

Park Avenue Congregational Church is a resonant room with E. M. Skinner's opus #716 which was originally built for St. Mark's School in Southboro in 1928. with two manuals, 21 stops, 16 ranks and 1031 pipes. The Lahaise brothers installed the organ at Park Avenue Church in 1961. Although work was later performed on the organ by Robert Morel, the essential character of the original instrument was not lost. E. M. Skinner was noted for his use of orchestral sounds and during the period in which this organ was built a great deal of music was published to exploit these tonal opportunities. Thus any organist must come to this bench with an open mind and a willingness to celebrate the sounds that are offered.

This organ has reached the point in its life where a thorough plan must be made for its future. At some point wind chests must be releathered. We have an 1875 Hook and Hastings that in 1978 was nearly unplayable. In my own case, the Lahaise brothers removed the swell chest while leaving the great and followed this with renovation of the great chest. Doing this in stages, they always left part of the organ playable.

Our organ had been electrified in 1934 and the wiring was in a deplorable state so we replaced it with a solid state printed circuit which Lahaise bought in Britain. It has served us well and I can't believe 22 years have passed since it was installed.

Whether you do the organ repairs in one stage or several, you will have to generate the necessary financial support. I believe Liz speaks to this in her report.

The firms mentioned by Barbara Owen are all reputable. I would add the name of Daniel Lemieux, a young organ builder originally from New Bedford who has shops in Syracuse and in North Attleboro. Last year, Dan and his father did an amazing restoration of the huge 56 stop 1911 Casavant in St. Anthony of Padua Church 1359 Acushnet Avenue in New Bedford. You may want to check out what they did on that organ. Dan's number is 315 256 1230. He has also more recently done extensive work on the 1964 Casavant in St. Anne's Fall River.

In fact, both of these organs will be heard later this week: St. Anne's on Thursday, July 16 at 7:30 and St. Anthony at 11:30 AM on Monday, July 18. But I'm sure you can arrange visits any time you want.

I was thrilled with the sounds on your organ and would love to play a recital there.

Good luck,  
Richard Hill

