

# THE SMITH UNIT ORGANS



F. W. Smith, designer and inventor, playing a three manual Smith Unit Organ.

By Douglas Marion

Can you imagine how a Model T buff of today, perhaps born several years after the last such car was built, would feel if he could meet the late Henry Ford? Or even be able to be in the shop where the first Model T was built? Such was my feeling when I met Charles F. Smith, son of Frederick W. Smith, founder of the SMITH ORGAN COMPANY. Such an opportunity is rare indeed, and perhaps I can extend to you through the medium of the printed page some of the thrill that I experienced on this occasion!

But first, Charlie's story. His dad, F.W. Smith, who passed away in 1948, was an Englishman who was an organ builder in 1892 when he met Robert Hope-Jones in England. They combined forces at the Birkenhead shop, and later, in 1903, Smith came to America. He associated himself with Ernest M. Skinner as designer, and it was Smith who, in 1905, first conceived the horse-shoe-shaped console arrangement of the stop tabs.

It was during this association that Hope-Jones said of his friend and collaborator, "The man at the head of our building department is Mr. F. W. Smith, than whom there is not a more skilled or scientific organ builder in America. Mr. Smith has been closely associated with me for many years."

In 1912, Smith established his own organ business at North Tonawanda, N.Y., which he called The Smith Organ Co., Inc. His product was called "THE SMITH ORCHESTRAL ORGAN." From that date on, the chronological development of the Smith Organ is

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quite complex and interesting, taking on many names in combination with Smith.

In 1917, Smith combined forces with the J. P. Seeburg Company, and the plant was moved to 419 West Erie, Chicago, Ill. Thus the famed Seeburg-Smith got its name. Then in 1922, Seeburg's interest was purchased by Mr. Harry Hogan, and the operation was moved to Geneva, Ill. It was then that the organs were called Geneva-Smith Unit Organs.

Smith separated himself from this partnership after a few years, and moved to Alameda, California, in November of 1923. He established the Smith Organ Company, assuming the original company name for the operation. Some of the organs produced in Alameda by Smith were sold by the Leatherby Company of San Francisco, and these were called Leatherby-Smith Organs.

Finally, in 1924, Smith sent for his son Charles, who joined his father in a partnership called F. W. Smith and Son at the Alameda location. There the operation continued until the company ceased activity entirely in early 1928. This, then, accounts for the many names found on the Smith Organs.

Basically, the Smith organ construction did not change even though business relationships did. The chests were built with a side-mounted pneumatic which opens the pipe valve on the old Roosevelt Chest pattern.\* Or-

gans for theatres were built with relay and chest primaries, and those for churches were built without primaries. The price differential was about 10%. Pipes were never made by this firm, but were purchased from Gottfried (reeds) and from Samuel Pierce, Reading, Mass., (flues), now known as Dennison. Percussions were from Lyon & Healy of Chicago and Deagan and Kehler. Actually constructed, therefore, were the consoles, relays, chests, reservoirs, actions and other appurtenances.

Charlie Smith estimates that about 1000 instruments were made and sold during the companies' career, mostly theatre organs. They were designed for 8 and 10 inch pressure. A complete list of installations does not exist, although a partial list is included here.

Charlie has continued in the organ game ever since the close of the business in Alameda, except during the last World War. He has rebuilt many organs in the Bay Area, and continues his regular service work today. He has all of the factory drawings, patent papers, tools, catalogues, and correspondence in his possession and this is fantastically interesting reading! He still makes switches, valves, pneumatics, and relay parts for Smith organs.

\* Small chests holding one rank were commonly used; three ranks was the maximum size built. They are very compact.

It was he who finally convinced his father to give up making the Smith Magnet (which gave trouble due to its slow operation) and to adopt the Reissner Magnet, used in all of the companies, later work. He still makes chests for Smith organs on order.

In other words, in a real sense, the

Smith THEATRE ORGAN still lives today through the efforts and devotion of Charlie Smith. Persons interested can contact Charlie by writing to him at 1295-78th Ave., Oakland California.

I give you Charles Frederic Smith, an organ factory worker at 12, draftsman at 17, general organ building superintendent, installer, builder and all-around fine fellow!

## PARTIAL LIST OF SMITH ORGANS

### California

Orpheum	Oakland
Garden	Burlingame
Golden Gate Theatre	Oakland
Lincoln	San Francisco
Orpheum	San Rafael
1st Cong. Church	Oakland X
California	Pittsburg
Turlock	Turlock
Verdi	San Francisco
Piedmont	Piedmont
	(Oakland)
Art Gallery	Coronado
Pasadena	Pasadena
Liberty	Fort Bragg
Hotel Leamington	Oakland
Hippodrome	Napa
Glendora	Glendora
Christian Sci. Church	Oakland X
Egyptian	Long Beach
United	Eagle Rock
New Fruitvale	Oakland
Home	Long Beach
Hayward	Hayward
United	Anaheim
15th St. M. E. Church	Oakland

### New York

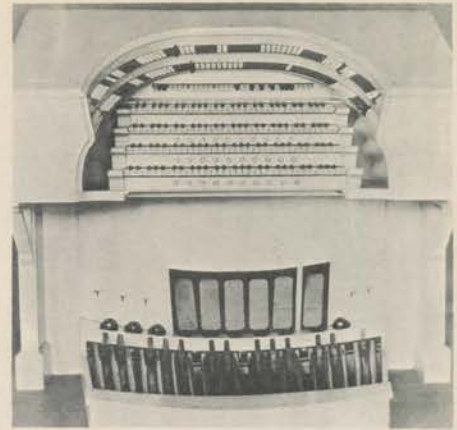
West Chester	Mt. Vernon
34th Street	New York City
R. Catholic Church	Buffalo
Superior	New York City
Belmont	New York City
Strand	New York City
Cosmo	New York City
Plaza	New York City
De Lancy	New York City
R. Catholic	Buffalo
Capitol	New York City
Belmont	New York City
Rivoli	New York City
Columbia	Far Rockaway
Mason Lodge	Buffalo
Beverly	Brooklyn
Forest Hill	Long Island City

### Pennsylvania

Shiloh	Mt. Washington
Metropolitan	Pittsburg
Frederick	East Pittsburg
Bison	Brownsville
Wick	Kittaning
Bellevue	Bellevue
Iris	Vandergrift
Sedler	East Pittsburg
Charles Johns	Republic
Venango	Oil City
Orpheum	Franklin
Main	Sharpsburg
Grant	Millville
Braddock	Braddock
Regent	Beaver Falls
Wm. Penn	New Castle
Majestic	Rochester
A. S. Maple	Point Marion
Beedle and Sons	Cannonsburg
Stahl	Homestead
Grand	Butler
Lyric	Butler
Polk	Mt. Washington
Smith	Greenfield
Grand	Greensburg
Brown	Brooklyn
Elliott	Elliott
Strand	Greensburg
Eagle	Jeanette
Liberty	McKeesport

### Illinois

New President	Chicago
Swedish Church	Chicago
Biltmore	Chicago
Brookline	Chicago
Blaine	Chicago
Bell	Chicago
Fischer	Danville
M. E. Church	Chicago
Peerless	Chicago
Wicker Park	Chicago
Fox	Aurora
Rialto	Elgin



The largest Smith built was this four manual installed in Forest Hill Theatre, Long Island City, New York (see next page). Smith Organs had the stops arranged by family, i.e., Bourdon 16', Flute 8', Flute 4', Twelfth 2-2/2', Piccolo 2' followed by perhaps String 8', String 4', rather than the usual groupings of all 8' stops together in order of their loudness, followed by the 4' stops, etc.

### Virginia

Olympic	Portsmouth
America	Norfolk
Wells	Norfolk
Granby	Norfolk
Bijou	Richmond

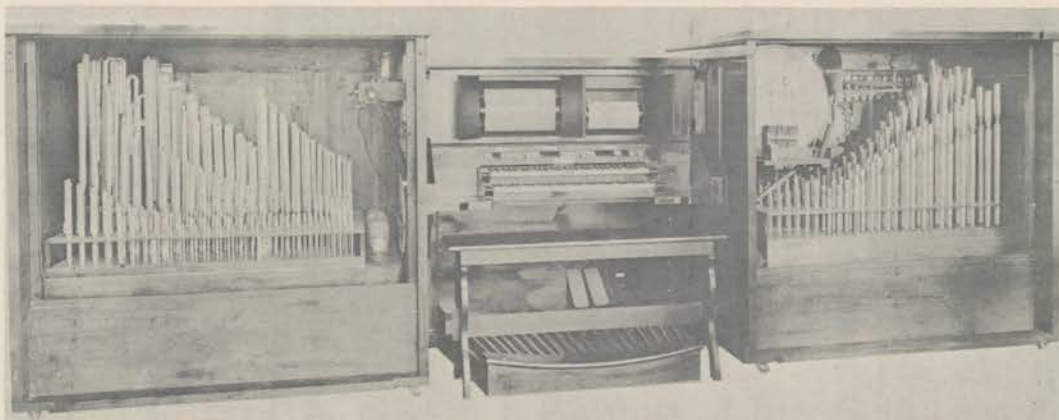
### Indiana

Washington	Richmond
Rialto	Indianapolis
Sourwine	Brazil
Riviera	Anderson
La Salle	South Bend
Castle	South Bend
Orpheum	Elkhart
Lincoln	Goshen
Alhambra	Indianapolis
Luna	Lafayette
Mars	Lafayette

### Miscellaneous

Palace	Muscatine, Iowa
Fulton	Jersey City, N.J.
Strand	Wichita Falls, Tex.

( Turn to next page )



A Smith pit organ with flute, string, clarinet, trumpet, vox, percussions and traps, double tracker bar player on piano console. Lower manual did not have 88 keys as found on Wurlitzer, but 61 keys.

# Forest Hill Theatre Smith Orchestral Organ, Long Island, N. Y.

MAIN Chamber	Compass Pipes Pres.		Pedal		Accomp.		Acc. 2nd T.	Great	Great 2nd T.	Solo	Echo
Tuba	8'-4'	73	10''	8-4	8	8	8	8-4	8	8	
Trumpet	8'	61	10''	8		8		8		8	
Open Diapason	16'-4'	85	10''	16-8-4		8		16-8-4		8	
Oboe Horn	8'	61	10''	8		8		8		8	
Kinura	8'	61	10''					8		8	Amplex 8
<b>SOLO CHAMBER</b>											
Tibia Clausa	8'-4'	73	10''	32r-8-4	32r	8-4		8		8-4	
Gamba	16'-4'	85	10''	↑16-8	↑8	16-8-		8	16-8-4	8	16-8 Amplex 8
Violin	8'-2'	85	10''			8		8-4-2		8	Amplex 8
Viol Celeste	8'-4'	73	10''			8		8-4		8	
Clarinet	8'	61	10''	↓8	↓	8		8	16-8	8	8 Amplex 8
Flute-Bourdon	16'-2'	97	10''	32r-16-8	32r	16-8-4-2 2/3-2		16-8-4-2 2/3-2		8-4	
Vox Humana	8'	61	6''					16-8-4		8	
<b>ECHO CHAMBER</b>											
Flute	8'-2'	85	6								8-4-2
Violin	8'-4'	73	6								8-4
Cor Anglais	8'	61	6								8
Vox Humana	8'	61	6								16-8-4
Chimes		20									x
<b>PERCUSSION CHAMBER</b>											
Marimba		49				x		x vib. stroke	x	8-4-2 2/3	Single Stroke
Xylophone		37						x	x	x	
Glockenspiel - re-it.		37					x	x		x	
Orchestra Bells*		37						x		x	
Chrysoglott		49						x			
Chimes		20						x		x	
Bass Drum*				x							
Kettle Drum - re-it.				x							
Cymbal*				x							
Roll Cymbal - re-it.				x							
Chinese Crash Cymbal	Toe Piston			x							
Snare Drum						x					
Tambourine						x					
Castenets						x					
Chinese Block						x					
Tom Tom						x					
Triangle									x		
Surf			ToePiston								
Couplers			S8-G8-A8		S8		S8	G4-G16-S8-E8	S8		Amplex - S8
Pistons			3		10		10			10	

## NOTES ON CHART

- \* means single stroke
- Tubas to be very bright and penetrating
- Vox Humana Large Scale
- Clarinet larger scale
- Echo Cor Anglais made with Brass Bells
- Marimba - vibrato double touch (we presume re-it)
- General Crescendo
- General Swell
- One Swell for Flutes, Strings, Vox Humana, etc.
- One Swell Pedal for Percussions
- One Swell Pedal for Heavy reeds and remainder of organ.
- Three stop keys for connecting all 3 swell pedals to the General Swell Pedal
- One stop key for controlling Swells from Manual on all Swells from Great Organ Orgoble 1700 rpm.
- Generator
- Tenuto Arrangement - organist can hold chord on one or two manuals by holding down toe piston after chord is played.
- Console and stool old ivory finish
- Console light
- Toe Pistons - Chinese Crash Cymbal
- Surf
- Manual Tenuto Hold

## PARTIAL LIST OF SMITH ORGANS

Miscellaneous ( Con't ).

Rex	Wierton, W. Va.
Rialto	Stanford, Conn.
Lincoln	Union Hill, N.J.
Casino	Greenville, S.C.
Castonian	Castonia, N.C.
Imperial	Charlotte, N.C.
Rialto	Boone, Iowa
Strand	Waterloo, Iowa
Riviera	Niles, Mich.
Liberty	Beaumont, Tex.
Lyceum	Winnipeg, Man.
Strand	Bandon, Man.
Paramount	Lake Charles, La.
Garrick	Madisonville, Ky.
Stoughton	Stoughton, Wis.

AND MANY OTHERS

(X-Rebuilt)