



The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament,
Altoona, Pennsylvania (photo: Farragutful)

TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING

The Steinmeyer Organ in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona, Pennsylvania

By Russell Weismann

Nestled in the undulating topography of southwestern Pennsylvania's Allegheny Mountains lies the city of Altoona. Founded in 1849 by the Pennsylvania Railroad, Altoona served as a maintenance center and staging area during the railroad's westward expansion linking Philadelphia to Pittsburgh.¹ As the railway industry grew, so did Altoona's population; the city was incorporated into the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1868.

Altoona's new residents—many of them Roman Catholic immigrant families of German, Irish, Polish, and Italian descent—generated the need for an independent Diocese of Altoona, which was established in 1901 from territory previously governed by the Diocese of Pittsburgh.² Following its formation, the Altoona diocese elevated the first parish church built in

The cathedral nave, with a view of the organ in the gallery (photo: Russell Weismann)

the city, St. John the Evangelist, founded in 1851, for use as its first cathedral.³ By the 1920s there was a desire for a much grander cathedral—an edifice that would reflect Altoona's burgeoning industrial prestige.

The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament was designed by Philadelphia architect George Lovatt Sr. in the Italian Renaissance style; ground was broken on September 17, 1924, and the cornerstone was laid on May 30, 1926. Beyond its sumptuous, massive proportions, the cathedral's most impressive feature is its Florentine-inspired dome, which rises nearly 200 feet and dominates the city's skyline. When viewed from afar, the dome, framed by the surrounding hills, calls to mind the horizon of a quaint town in the Umbrian countryside.

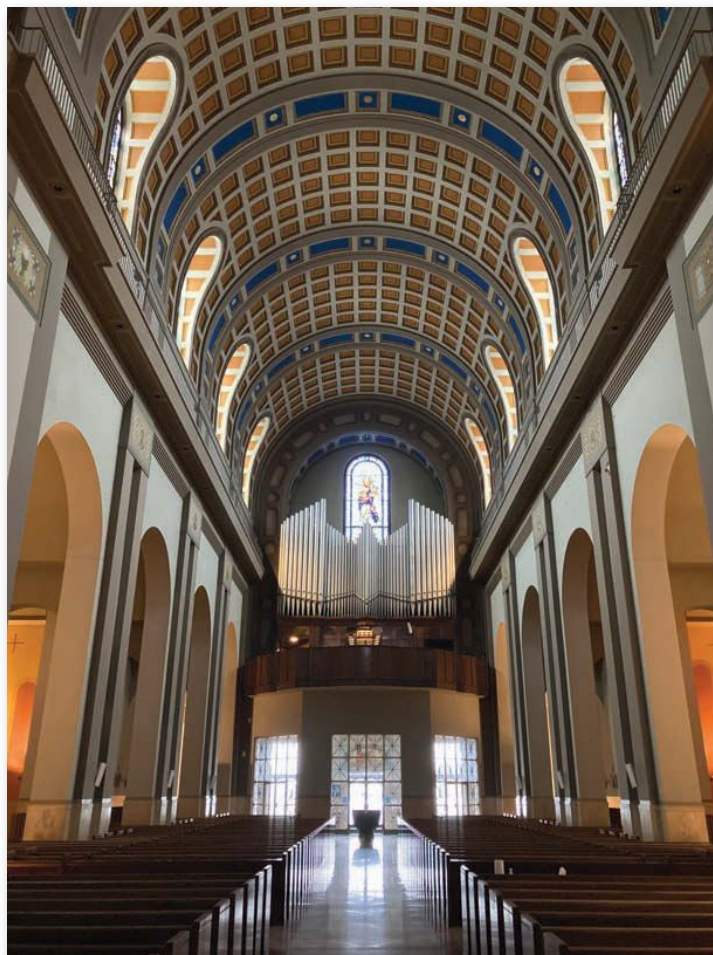
Exterior construction on the cathedral was largely completed before the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. However, with the economic downturn and the decline of the railroad industry, much of the building's interior remained unfinished. Although the first public Mass was celebrated on September 7, 1931, the church was not formally completed until November 13, 1960,

when interior renovations covered the remaining rough concrete and brick wall surfaces.⁴ The cathedral was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1992 and remains the mother church of the diocese.⁵

The acquisition of the cathedral's Steinmeyer organ is a significant chapter in American organ history. G.F. Steinmeyer & Co. was founded in the Bavarian town of Oettingen, Germany, in 1847 by Georg Friedrich Steinmeyer; it remained a family-run business until it ceased organbuilding operations in 2001.⁶ During its 154-year history, the company built nearly 2,400 organs, and although most Steinmeyer instruments are found in Germany, a handful are located elsewhere. The Altoona organ is the company's first and largest North American installation.

Hans Steinmeyer (1889–1970) was the third-generation owner of the family business at the time of the Altoona contract. He was no stranger to North America; in 1913 he temporarily relocated to the United States for training in organbuilding and worked for the Hook & Hastings and E.M. Skinner companies.⁷ Following his training, he became a branch manager at Welte & Sons in New York, and he later entered into an organbuilding partnership with H.W. Muller in Toledo, Ohio.⁸ Hans moved back to Germany in 1920, but not before marrying an American wife, Anne Langhorst, in 1916. He became the managing director of G.F. Steinmeyer & Co. in 1928. Under his leadership, the company embraced the emerging Neobaroque aesthetic in organ design, pioneered at the time by Albert Schweitzer.⁹ In addition to building the landmark instrument in Altoona, Hans further influenced American organbuilding by training a number of future American builders, including Herman Schlicker and Otto Eberle, both of whom immigrated to the United States and established successful careers.¹⁰

In Altoona, the city's considerable German American population affected the local culture in numerous ways and was a motivating factor for the Steinmeyer acquisition.¹¹ Given the city's close proximity to the dominant and prosperous M.P. Möller Company in Hagerstown, Maryland, and the rise of anti-German sentiment during World War I, the choice of a German organbuilder for such a significant project was extraordinary for the time.¹² The





The console (photo: Bill van Pelt)

decision was heavily influenced by a pastor in the neighboring city of Johnstown, Rev. Louis Maucher.

Maucher, a native of Bavaria, was ordained a priest in 1887 after having studied medicine at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Upon his recommendation, in 1928 the diocese hired another German-born American priest, Rev. Joseph Hauber, as the first organist and choir director of the yet-to-be completed cathedral.¹³ Because the building's expected completion date was not until 1930, Maucher persuaded Hauber to go to Germany to study church music for two years under the tutelage of Rev. Ludwig Berberich, professor at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Munich and choir director at the cathedral in Munich, the *Frauenkirche*, where a large Steinmeyer organ was built in 1880.¹⁴

During Hauber's stay in Munich, he received word that funds for an organ in the new cathedral in Altoona were being donated by Mrs. Annie C. Wolf in memory of her husband, Charles, a founder of the Wolf Furniture company.¹⁵ In a letter dated March 26, 1930, Hauber wrote to Steinmeyer upon Berberich's recommendation and inquired if the company had interest in building an organ in Altoona, mentioning that it would need to be installed and finished before the planned opening of the cathedral on November 30 of the same year, a mere eight months away. Enclosed with the letter was a proposed 50-stop specification drafted by Berberich and reflective of the growing influence of Schweitzer's ideas on organ reform.¹⁶

There is no documentation of Hans Steinmeyer visiting Altoona during his previous seven-year stay in America, but his in-

terest in building an organ for the new cathedral was certainly piqued; he responded to Hauber just one day later and invited him to visit the Steinmeyer shop within the week, so as to view a new organ being completed for Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, Norway. Perhaps predicting American competition, in his response to Hauber, Steinmeyer also emphasized that his American experience uniquely qualified him to build organ consoles with the combination actions “commonly used in the USA.”

Less than a month later, in mid-April, it was agreed that the organ contract would be awarded to Steinmeyer, and blueprints for the unfinished cathedral were sent to Oettingen. Steinmeyer met with Hauber on April 16, 1930, to draft a stoplist. Following that meeting, Steinmeyer sent a letter to Maucher, who was in charge of managing the project back in Altoona, specifying that Hauber was considering a three-manual organ with 61 stops and a prepared-for fourth-manual Sanctuary division, to be installed at a later date and positioned downstairs in the chancel apse.¹⁷ The price of the instrument specified in the letter was 23,350 Reichsmarks.¹⁸ Because of the limited time frame for completing the organ, Steinmeyer requested additional measurements of the cathedral’s choir loft, and attention quickly shifted to the visual character of the instrument’s facade. Steinmeyer ended the letter by saying, “Rest assured that you will receive from us this excellent organ of high quality, both musically and technically. Our company is among the most important in Europe.”¹⁹

One day after writing to Maucher, Steinmeyer wrote to Berberich (who by now was serving as the project’s consultant) and mentioned that, having reviewed the cathedral’s blueprints with Hauber, revisions needed to be made to the disposition in order to match the building’s immense “spatial conditions.” At a meeting in Munich on April 22, 1930, Steinmeyer, Berberich, and Hauber finalized the organ’s disposition as a 62-stop, 83-rank instrument.²⁰ Questions of appearance were delayed for several more weeks while correspondence circulated between George Lovatt (the cathedral’s architect), Maucher, and Steinmeyer on who should design the organ’s facade. Lovatt’s priority during this time was the completion of the cathedral’s elegantly coffered ceiling, and thus he delegated the organ’s visual design to Steinmeyer. Because of numerous construction delays and the financial setbacks brought on by the Great Depression, the cathedral was not to be dedicated by the anticipated November 1930 date. The completed organ remained in storage in Oettingen until it was shipped to the United States via Hamburg aboard the SS *Roosevelt* and installed in the church during the late spring and summer months of 1931.²¹

In July 1931, Berberich arrived in Altoona for a ten-day stay in order to inspect the instrument and play its dedication recital, scheduled for July 24. Due to the popularity of the event, he repeated the recital on the following day; an estimated combined audience of over 10,000 persons attended the dedicatory events.²² Berberich’s program—with its inclusion of works by early composers such as Pachelbel and Bach alongside Romantic works by Guilman, Widor, Rheinberger, and Liszt—was progressive for its day. Absent were the in-vogue orchestral transcriptions that dominated recital programs during the early 20th century.

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|---|---------------------|
| Prelude in G Major | J.S. Bach |
| Chorale Prelude on <i>In dulci jubilo</i> | Bach |
| Toccata and Pastorale | Johann Pachelbel |
| Fugue in D Major | Bach |
| Sonata No. 1 | Alexandre Guilman |
| I. Introduction and Allegro | |
| II. Pastorale | |
| Fourth Symphony | Charles-Marie Widor |
| I. Andante cantabile | |
| Sonata in D Minor | Josef Rheinberger |
| I. Agitato | |
| II. Cantilene | |
| Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H | Franz Liszt |



Organ nameplate, Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament (photo: Russell Weismann)




Schweizerflöte stop tab. The numbers ascribed to each stop tab are common for German organs of this era; they were an aid for quickly writing down registrations. (photo: Russell Weismann)

In his appraisal of the instrument, signed September 9, 1931, Berberich wrote that Steinmeyer had achieved “technical perfection” and mentioned that, because the organ was built in Germany, it would attract the “greatest of attention” in America. He ended by remarking, “The overall sound is of impressive size. And yet the organ does not contain any more stops than the imposing cathedral needs.”

Qualities representative of the emerging 20th-century Neobaroque organ reform are in essence limited to the instrument’s tonal landscape: plentiful upperwork, generously scaled mixtures and mutation stops, a largely independent Pedal division, and lowered wind pressure throughout.²³ However, alongside these progressive attributes, the organ’s disposition retains an abundance of tonal influence from the previous era in organbuilding: prismatic and plentiful 8’ tone in each manual division (albeit excluding any 8’ open flutes), as well as a distinctive 4’ Euphone (a free reed whose tongue beats through the shallot, not against it) in the Swell division.²⁴ Another peculiarity is the generously scaled 1’ Schweizerflöte, also located in the Swell division. Translated as “Swiss Flute,” the Schweizerflöte is an open flute reminiscent of a fife. Curiously, this rank appears more frequently on Steinmeyer instruments of this era—perhaps a veiled homage to Albert Schweitzer.²⁵

The instrument is controlled by electropneumatic key and electropneumatic ventill stop actions, and several of its console features are typical of German Romantic organs.²⁶ The most obvious of these is a *Rollschweller*, a wheel-like crescendo device that brings stops on when rolled toward the organist and off when rolled away—extremely useful in playing the music of Max Reger and his contemporaries. Also particular to this instrument is its rudimentary combination action. When built, the organ included three blind adjustable combination pistons. Above each stop tab are three small celluloid pegs that can be set to engage the selected stop on any of the three available pistons.²⁷

Following the organ’s installation, the most noteworthy attention that it received was from the English American organbuilder G. Donald Harrison, who emigrated to the United States in 1927 to work with Ernest Skinner, the most prominent American builder of the early 20th century. In 1933, following the merger of the Skinner and Aeolian companies, the board of directors ousted Skinner and appointed Harrison as president and tonal director of the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company. By the 1930s, the growing tide of European organ reform, then centered in Germany, was reaching American soil. However, few American builders, including Harrison, had visited Germany before then to experience the manifestations of the reform. As noted in a 1935 letter from the English organbuilder Henry Willis III to New Jersey senator Emerson Richards, G. Donald Harrison visited Altoona following the organ’s installation and was amazed by the tonal makeup of the instrument.²⁸ In his letter, Willis wrote that the Altoona Steinmeyer caused Harrison to “visualize . . . perfectly well” historic Germanic organ sounds.²⁹ Harrison’s experience in Altoona offered him a foundation upon which to build his conceptualized approach to organ reform: the American Classic organ.³⁰



Harrison returned to Altoona in 1954 to make mechanical repairs to the organ's windchests. Curiously, an Aeolian-Skinner opus number (1291) was assigned to the instrument upon completion of the work; however, the tonal makeup of the organ was not altered during that time.³¹ In the later 1950s, according to the Steinmeyer archives, the cathedral reached out to two American companies, Holtkamp and Estey, seeking proposals to restore the instrument from damage brought on by drastic seasonal changes in humidity and the cathedral's overactive heating system.³² Both companies forwarded their correspondences to Steinmeyer, and in 1958, Hans returned to Altoona to assess the state of the instrument. He tried at this time to convince the cathedral authorities to install the proposed Sanctuary division in tandem with the building's forthcoming interior completion. However, all that was agreed upon was a major overhaul and cleaning of the existing instrument.³³

In 1959 two employees from Oettingen and Hans's youngest son, Georg (who immigrated to the United States following World War II and was working for the Estey Organ Company in Brattleboro, Vermont), arrived in Altoona to complete the restoration project.³⁴ During this time, all of the pipes were removed and cleaned, some of the relay system's wiring was replaced, and cracked windchests were repaired. Additionally, tonal alterations were made to several ranks in the Choir division: the 8' Violin Diapason and 4' Fugara were moved up an octave to play at 4' and 2', respectively, and the two-rank Larigot, originally playing at 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ' and 2', was moved up an octave to play at 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ ' and 1'.

The following year, Altoona's fourth bishop, Howard Joseph Carroll, died unexpectedly. When the news of his death reached Oettingen, Hans wrote to his son Georg in a letter dated April 21, 1960, requesting that he travel from Vermont to Altoona to offer the family's condolences. Hans also asked that, if he found it

appropriate, Georg inquire with the cathedral authorities whether they might wish to continue with discussions to install the planned Sanctuary division.³⁵ Unfortunately, Georg's efforts were futile, and the Sanctuary division remains uninstalled, leaving the organ incomplete to this day.

In 1992 the organ received painstaking restoration work by Columbia Organ Works, located just outside of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Aside from the addition of a multilevel solid-state combination action that added twelve general pistons and six divisional pistons for each division, the primary scope of this work was to replace, along historically informed guidelines, the aging leathers used in the instrument's electropneumatic key action.³⁶ Additional work was done to restore the three free blind combinations (still operable alongside the new combination action), the *Rollschweller*, and the Reeds Off vents. Lastly, while not part of the formal contract, Columbia also reversed the tonal changes made by Steinmeyer in 1959, returning the organ to its original disposition.³⁷

As the monumental Altoona Steinmeyer instrument approaches its centennial anniversary, its significance as a consequential juncture in American organ history is increasingly acknowledged by all who encounter it.³⁸ While it is neither the first nor the last notable German-made organ installed in the United States, its unique identity as a paragon of the emerging European organ reform that is nevertheless unabashedly inclusive of regal Romantic attributes categorizes it as an instrument of exceptional influence on American builders. As the organ enters its second century, the completion of its Sanctuary division remains a long-awaited goal—one that would be helpful in meeting the needs of post-conciliar liturgical practices in the cathedral. However, even in its incomplete state, the instrument remains a treasure of the church and a proud testimony to the working-class citizens that built the city of Altoona.

The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament
Altoona, Pennsylvania
G.F. Steinmeyer & Co. • 1931

GREAT

- 16 Diapason
- 8 First Diapason
- 8 Second Diapason
- 8 Gamba
- 8 Gemshorn
- 8 Bourdon
- 8 Quintadena
- 4 Octave
- 4 Spitzflöte
- 2½ Quinte
- 2 Superoctave
- Cornett III-V
- Mixtur IV-VI
- Scharff IV
- 16 Trompet
- 8 Tuba
- 4 Clarine

SWELL

- 16 Lieblich Gedeckt
- 8 Diapason
- 8 Cor de Nuit
- 8 Viola
- 8 Spitzflöte
- 8 Unda Maris (TC)
- 4 Octave
- 4 Blockflöte
- 2½ Nasard
- 2 Schwiegel
- 1½ Tierce
- 1 Schweizerflöte
- Grossmixtur V
- Cymbel IV
- 16 Bombarde
- 8 Feldtrompete
- 4 Euphone (free reed)
- Tremolo

CHOIR

- 16 Salicional
- 8 Violin Diapason
- 8 Rohrgedeckt
- 8 Aeoline
- 8 Vox Coelestis (TC)
- 8 Fernflöte
- 4 Fugara
- 4 Flauto Traverso
- Harmonica aetherea III
- Larigot II (12th and 15th)
- 8 Krummhorn
- 4 Kopffregal
- Tremolo

PEDAL

- 16 Diapason
- 16 Violin
- 16 Subbass
- 16 Salicional (Ch.)
- 16 Lieblich (Sw.)
- 10½ Grossquinte
- 8 Octave
- 8 Violoncello
- 8 Cor de Nuit (Sw.)
- 4 Octave
- 2 Waldflöte
- Rauschpfeife IV
- 32 Kontrabombarde
- 16 Posaune
- 8 Trompet
- 4 Clarion

Couplers

- Great to Pedal
- Swell to Great
- Swell to Great Sub
- Swell Unison Off
- Choir Unison Off
- Swell to Pedal
- Choir to Great
- Swell to Great Super
- Swell Sub
- Choir Sub
- Choir to Pedal
- Swell to Choir
- Swell Super
- Choir Super

1931 Accessories

- Sforzando I
- Sforzando II
- Three sets of free combinations
- Reeds Off
- Rollschweller
- Balanced Swell pedal
- Balanced Choir pedal

1992 Accessories

- 29 memory levels
- General pistons 1-12
- General toe studs 1-12
- Great pistons 1-6
- Swell pistons 1-6
- Choir pistons 1-6
- Pedal toe studs 1-6
- General cancel

SANCTUARY ORGAN (prepared for)

GREAT

- 16 Quintade
- 8 Diapason
- 8 Violfloete
- 8 Gedeckt
- 4 Diapason
- Mixture IV
- 8 Trumpet

SWELL (enclosed)

- 8 Gemshorn
- 8 Rohrgedeckt
- 4 Octave
- 4 Spitzfloete
- 2 Cor de nuit
- 2½ Nasard
- Cymbel III
- 8 Vox humana
- Tremolo

PEDAL

- 16 Subbass
- 8 Octave
- 4 Spitzflöte (Sw.)
- 2 Cor de nuit (Sw.)




Acknowledgements

My first encounter with the Altoona Steinmeyer was through my great-uncle, Rev. Msgr. Paul Panza, who was rector of the cathedral from 1987 to 1995. Thank you to Suzanne Steinmeyer, great-niece of Hans Steinmeyer, for providing access to the company's archives in Oettingen.

NOTES

1. Upon completion of the expansion, travel time from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh was reduced to 15 hours, as opposed to the three-day journey via rail, canal, and horse-drawn carriage that was previously required. Julia Plummer Schokker et al., *First Frontier: A Sesquicentennial History of Altoona, PA* (Altoona, Pa.: Blair County Historical Society, 2018), 13.
2. Schokker, *First Frontier*, 73.
3. *The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament* (undated diocesan pamphlet), 5.
4. The original baldachin altar was removed during this time. *Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament*, 7.
5. In 1957 the name of the diocese was changed to the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.
6. The company remains active as an archival center for historic organs.
7. Hermann Fischer, *Die Orgelbauerfamilie Steinmeyer in Oettingen* (Berlin: Pape, 2011), 52.
8. David H. Fox, *A Guide to North American Organbuilders: Compiled from Historical Sources and the Work of Various Researchers* (Richmond, Va.: Organ Historical Society Press, 1997), 220.
9. Schweitzer sparked an Alsatian organ reform movement that later advanced in Germany and was known as the *Orgelbewegung*. The reactionary movement sought to steer organbuilding away from the popular late-19th century symphonic style and return it to principles of 17th- and 18th-century design.
10. Hans Steinmeyer was also a close friend of the influential New Jersey state senator H. Emerson Richards, who during the 1920s made several trips to Germany to study historical organs, with Steinmeyer as his guide. Charles Callahan, *The American Classic Organ: A History in Letters* (Richmond, Va.: Organ Historical Society Press, 1990), xxii.
11. "It has been said that if German-Americans had done nothing more than bring music to America, that would have been a major contribution to American life." Don Heinrich Tolzmann, *The German-American Experience* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2007), 392.
12. In 1918 the Altoona city school board voted to stop teaching German in public schools as a result of rising anti-German sentiment. Schokker, *First Frontier*, 15.
13. "Father Hauber Organist and Choir Leader," *Altoona Tribune*, Sept. 3, 1931, 28.
14. This organ was lost during World War II and replaced by an instrument built by the Swabian firm Zeilhuber in 1957. The Zeilhuber was later replaced by the current organ, built in 1994 by Georg Jann.
15. The Wolf Furniture Company was founded in 1902 by Charles Wolf and John Fox.
16. The disposition reflected Schweitzer's influence and included more aliquot ranks (mixtures and mutations) and Renaissance-inspired reed ranks (e.g., Regal and Krummhorn) than the previous era in European organbuilding, which was characterized by an abundance of 8' tone and orchestral-inspired, high-pressure reeds.
17. In some correspondence, this division is also referred to as an Echo.
18. In 1930, 23,350 Reichsmarks would have been equal to \$72,548, nearly \$1.3 million in today's currency.
19. Just prior to the Altoona contract, Steinmeyer completed its magnum opus at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Passau, which, although altered from its original state, remains one of the largest organs in the world. In the correspondence between Oettingen and Altoona, Steinmeyer mentions the Passau installation frequently as a means of boasting about the company's achievements.
20. Minor differences in German and English nomenclature appear on the contract's stoplist as compared to the console's stop tabs.
21. Emerson Richards wrote to Henry Willis III on June 19, 1931, and stated that Steinmeyer was leaving Bremen, Germany, for New York City on June 28 and arriving on July 4 to be able to complete the installation in Altoona. His planned return was on August 16. Callahan, *The American Classic Organ*, 81.
22. Joseph Hauber, "Cathedral Organ among World's Finest," *Altoona Tribune*, Sept. 3, 1931, 19.
23. The organ uses 4" wind pressure throughout.
24. Free reeds were discontinued in organbuilding as the reform movement progressed.
25. Schweitzer was also a personal friend of the Steinmeyer family. Fischer, *Die Orgelbauerfamilie Steinmeyer in Oettingen*, 55.
26. As the reform movement continued to develop in the 1950s, additional elements of 17th- and 18th-century organbuilding were reintroduced, including mechanical key and stop actions, encased instruments, unenclosed Positiv (including Rückpositiv) divisions, and *Werkprinzip*-conceived dispositions with spatially and tonally independent divisions.
27. When any of the three original pistons are pressed, they bring on stops but do not turn off stops that are already engaged.



28. Richards, a New Jersey state senator, was an organ enthusiast and was largely responsible for the installation of the world's largest pipe organ, built in Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall by Midmer-Losh between 1929 and 1932.

29. Callahan, *The American Classic Organ*, 132.

30. Prime examples include the Groton School in Groton, Mass. (1935), and the Church of the Advent in Boston (1935). The stoplists of these organs, like the Steinmeyer, feature plentiful, generously scaled upperwork, greater independence in the Pedal, and Renaissance- and Baroque-style reeds.

31. According to an October 2017 evaluation of the instrument by its curator, Joseph Zamberlan, the scope of Harrison's work was limited to the replacement of cracked bottom boards on several of the windchests.

32. Suzanne Steinmeyer, email to the author, Sept. 5, 2022.

33. In an April 21, 1960, letter to his son Georg, Hans implied that the completion of the Sanctuary division was verbally agreed upon with the cathedral authorities and was to be executed in a separate contract following the restoration of the main organ.

34. Suzanne Steinmeyer, email to the author, Sept. 11, 2022.

35. Also in this letter, Hans offered several revisions to the Sanctuary division's original plan. These included an openness to adjusting the original disposition, the possibility of adding a second console, located on the chancel floor, and the option for a less-cumbersome casework footprint. The letter implies that, while the originally planned location of the division was in one centralized spot, Hans was now open to dividing it into two separate cases on either side of the chancel. In addition to the information obtained from this letter, it is interesting to note that the Sanctuary division was originally planned for 19 stops plus a Swell Tremulant, but the original console was built with only 17 blank stop tabs (eleven placed above the fourth manual and positioned with the couplers, four included on the right stopjamb with the Choir division, two included on the right stopjamb with the Pedal division, and one with divisional sub-, unison, and supercoupler tabs). It is unclear whether the original console was to be retrofitted with additional stop tabs at the time of the Sanctuary division's installation, or if Hans's suggestion to revise the division's

disposition was raised to reflect the limited number of available blank stop tabs.

36. Matching console controls were manufactured by Laukhuff, who is thought to have supplied parts for the original console's construction. Additionally, unique to this organ's design, the note pneumatics found within the windchests are rectangular (as opposed to the more common circular shape used by American builders) and are located on the chests' bottom boards, with air being fed to the pipes above via cardboard tubes.

37. Original pipes for the 8' and 4' ranks were found on-site, while Columbia ordered replicas for the missing octaves of the 2½' and 2' ranks. Larry Pruett (president of Columbia Organ Works), email to the author, Aug. 15, 2022.

38. Until now, a concise history of the Altoona Steinmeyer had not been produced. Scant references to the organ appear in published materials, but mention of it is regrettably absent in most of the current literature on American organ history. In 1993, John Speller, then working for Columbia Organ Works, published an article in *The Tracker* detailing some of the instrument's historic and technical characteristics, but it lacks the modern scholarship acquired from the Steinmeyer company's archives, as presented in this essay. John J. Speller, "The Organ in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona, Pennsylvania," *The Tracker* 37, no. 1 (1993).

Only two recordings have been made on the instrument since its 1992 restoration: *Maximum Reger*, performed by Peter Sykes and released on the Raven label in 1997, and *Sigfrid Karg-Elert: The Complete Organ Works, Vol. 3*, performed by Stefan Engels and released on the Priory label in 2005. Both demonstrate the impressive tonal capabilities of the instrument as well as the rolling acoustics of the cathedral.

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