

Robert Gundlach

From: "John Sperling" <johns@wicks.com>
To: <robert.gundlach@verizon.net>
Sent: Thursday, August 07, 2008 10:56 AM
Subject: United Evangelical Church, Baltimore, MD

Dear Mr. Gundlach:

Thanks for your inquiry about the organ in the above church, which is Wicks Opus #3716. Here's what we have been able to find in our files.

The contract was signed for the Church by Fred W. Gross, Chairman, in July 1956. The cost at that time was \$15,585.00. An additional contract covering the Music Rack Light and a set of Maas Vibrachimes (Series 70) for \$575.00 was signed in October 1957 by Ernest W. Jones, Financial Secretary. A July 9, 1956, letter from Wicks's Sales Director R. P. Matthews mentions that a stoplist for the organ had been drawn up by Organist-Choirmaster Mr. Donald D. Schnader, but the Building and Finance Committees would not approve it and substituted the actual stoplist of the organ as built, with the intention that it could later be increased to Mr. Schnader's design. (The reason for this isn't given, but we can surmise it had something to do with the cost.) The church building apparently was either new at that time, or being remodeled, as a "completion date" for the building is given, in that letter, as March 1957.

Mr. Schnader described the previous organ thus: "...We are now using a 13 rank Bartholomay pipe organ that has really seen much better days. This is beyond repair as it has been rebuilt by two different companies since it was installed quite a few years ago. Having been originally a water powered, tracker organ you can understand and estimate its age..."

The biggest part of the file concerns details of the installation and delays in the building project. In 1956 there was correspondence about the available height in the organ chambers, which was not as first promised by the architect (Frederick W. Moehle, 2514 N. Charles Street in Baltimore). Then there was a change (January 16, 1957) in the actual completion date of the building from February to May 1, which caused some consternation. On May 4, 1957, the completion date was reported to have been put off again, this time to "the last of July or first of August." On August 2, 1957, Wicks received notice that the organ chamber depth had been reduced, necessitating the elimination of space for the prepared 16' Open Diapason. Then the Blower Room access was made too small, so the blower would have to be dismantled in order to install it; the Church would not provide a wood sample for finishing the console (August 7, 1957); the concrete was poured before the organ cable conduit was installed so the cable as planned was too short; then (August 8, 1957) it was reported that the chamber depth had not, in fact, been reduced; by August 28, 1957, the completion date was advanced again, to "late October"; the wood sample and cable length were finally received on September 5, 1957.

After all this confusion the organ was shipped on October 28, 1957, arrived on October 30, and was apparently installed right away even though the building was not ready because there was no place to store it on site - a November 16, 1957, letter to Rev. Titus Lehmann states: "...We have had the pleasure of learning that the pipe organ has been completed as far as we can go until you have heat in your building, and we understand it will probably be December 15 before you will be ready to have the finishing touches done on the final tuning of the organ..." The installer reported that although the Church had wanted to use the building by Thanksgiving, the pews had not arrived and the building would probably not open till December 15. It was, in fact, dedicated at 3:00 PM on December 15, 1957, even though the pews did not arrive until December 11.

After this flurry of correspondence in 1957, there is nothing in the file until 1965, when there was talk of adding some of the stops that had originally been prepared for. This continued intermittently until 1990, about which time some work was apparently done by someone else (as you mentioned in your message). So that's what our files tell us.

Thanks for your interest - if we can help the Church in any way to realize their dreams, please let us know.

Sincerely,

8/7/2008

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