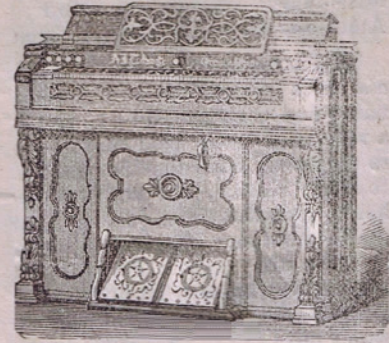


THE DIAPASON

MARCH 2023



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Schantz Organ Company
150th Anniversary
Cover feature on pages 22-24

Cover feature

Schantz Organ Company, Orrville, Ohio 150 years of Schantz organs

This year, the Schantz Organ Company is proud to celebrate its 150th anniversary. Since our 1873 founding, five generations of Schantz family members have led our staff of artisans and musicians. More than 3,000 pipe organs have been built and installed across the United States as well as Australia. They have been installed in churches of every denomination, as well as concert halls, hospital chapels, Masonic temples, sanatoriums, synagogues, orphanages, residences, and even a penitentiary chapel.

This article will examine some of the details of how different mechanisms were developed and used, how tonal designs changed over the years, and the wide range of visual designs that can be found in our instruments.

Evolution of Schantz action

Abraham John Tschantz¹ (1849–1921) started his company in 1873 to build “Ohio Beauty” reed organs. An unknown number of instruments were built, starting on the family farm and moving quickly to a shop in Orrville. We know of seven surviving “Ohio Beauty” reed organs, ranging from fully restored to unusable.

After assisting with the installation of a Votteler pipe organ in 1872 (which we still care for), Abraham decided to grow his company to build pipe organs. Early records are unclear, but Schantz was building tracker pipe organs by 1891. By 1903, we began the transition to tubular-pneumatic action. In this style of mechanism, a lead tube runs from every key, pedal, and drawknob back to the chests. Pressing a key will de-pressurize the tube, which causes the chest to play a note. Most remaining contracts from this time refer to an “individual compartment for each stop” in the chest, i.e., ventill chests. Initially this was used only for pedal stops, while the manual key action remained tracker. A fine example of this is the 1904 instrument still standing in Second United Church of Christ in Tiffin, Ohio. By 1906, tubular-pneumatic key action with ventill windchests had become our standard. Trackers continued to be built until at least 1908; tubular-pneumatic actions were built until at least 1926. We built approximately 100 organs using this mechanism, and we still care for several of these instruments.

Victor A. Schantz (1885–1973) was part of the second generation, and he spent eighteen months working for Wurlitzer in North Tonawanda, New York. There he learned about building dependable electro-pneumatic chest action. In 1918, we built our first electro-pneumatic action for First Baptist Church in nearby Seville, Ohio. This was followed by electrifying two organs during the process of relocating them. By 1923, electro-pneumatic chests were our standard mechanism. This style of chest offers fast and reliable key action. It also allowed us to offer moveable consoles—quite an exciting development at the time. We continue to build pitman chests today, with subtle improvements since 1923. One important development was the Schantz cross-top pitman chest, built of laminated yellow poplar toeboards running perpendicular to the ranks of pipes. Leather gasketing between the toeboards allowed for plenty of expansion in the summer and contraction in the winter in the northern climates where most pre-World War II Schantz organs were installed.

Albert Imhoff (1898–1994) was a long-time employee who made several



Schantz Organ Company, corner of East Oak and South Walnut Streets

important mechanical developments during his time at Schantz. Indeed, we still regularly use several tools that he designed to ease production of pipes and chests. His most enduring contribution might be the tremolo device that he patented in 1959, which we still use today.

In 1980, Schantz rebuilt the 1892 Roosevelt organ at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Syracuse, New York, using slider chests purchased from Organ Supply Industries.² In the mid-1980s Schantz went further, and experimented with building tracker-action instruments again. However, we decided to continue our focus on electro-pneumatic instruments.

When Burton K. Tidwell took on the role of tonal director in 1988, he encouraged the company to explore building slider chests with electro-pneumatic key action. And so in 1993, Schantz built its first “Blackinton-style” slider chest for the Great division at the United Methodist Church in Painesville, Ohio. To maximize space efficiency and tuning stability, these chests often have pipes laid out in an M-M (or tierce) configuration. Speech is also subtly affected by the single valve and common tone channels, which operate just like a tracker. We are proud to continue to build both pitman and slider chests for clients today.

In addition to building our own instruments from raw lumber, our team has also successfully restored historic instruments from many builders throughout the country. Major restorations include the four-manual, 94-rank Skinner built in 1929 for Severance Hall in Cleveland, Ohio.³ More recently, six months ago we completed a restoration of the two-manual, 22-rank Aeolian-Skinner that was built in 1963 for the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.⁴

Tonal designs

As musical tastes have changed over the course of history, the tonal design of instruments has also changed. Comparing stoplists of organs built in the 1920s and 1960s by any company in the country would show a change in musical design. While some companies made dramatic shifts, Schantz was more subtle.

Looking at stoplists from our first and second generation, an abundance of 8' flue ranks will be seen. Upper work usually begins with a 4' Octave and a 4' Flute d'Amour. If the organ included a reed, it was most often a Vox Humana. The Swell would include two strings: an 8' Aeoline and an 8' Salicional—but no celeste to pair with them. The language used for stop names reflected an English influence with names like Open Diapason and Melodia. Often these instruments would also have a “hidden octave” to allow the effective use of super-couplers.

John Schantz (1920–2013) studied organ under Arthur Poister at Oberlin Conservatory (interrupted by military service in World War II), and visited



Abraham Schantz, c. 1910



First United Brethren Church, Canton, Ohio, 1891



Ohio Northern University, Ada, Ohio

Ohio Northern University, Ada, Ohio, 1908



Saint John's United Church of Christ, Evans City, Pennsylvania, 1903



Oliver, Edison, and Victor A. Schantz, 1924



Trinity Lutheran Church, Canton, Ohio, 1958



Tujunga United Methodist Church, Los Angeles, California, 1965



Grace Lutheran Church, Fairmont, Minnesota, 1979

instruments in Europe in 1950. When he took on the role of tonal director, his stoplists reflected these experiences and the *Orgelbewegung* (Organ Reform movement). Chorus structures included more upper work, and nomenclature reflected various national schools. Scale sizes (diameters) of principal pipes decreased slightly to increase the brightness of the sound, and wind pressures were lowered as far as 2.5 inches in a water column. All of this allowed the cut-up of the pipe mouth to be kept slightly lower. Languids and lower lips were nicked less, yielding some subtle initial “chiff” in pipe speech not found in earlier—or current—Schantz organs. Reed pipes also tended to be smaller scale, with chorus reeds primarily using parallel shallots.

Schantz has built wooden pipes in-house since we started building pipe organs. But initially, metal pipes were sourced from suppliers (Gottfried, Durst, and Schopp), as many builders do today. Shortly after World War II, Jack Cook joined the staff. A former Skinner/Aeolian-Skinner employee, Cook helped us design a pipe shop addition that was built in 1966 to allow us to efficiently make our own metal pipes, a practice that continues today.

Following John Schantz’s retirement, Burton K. Tidwell served as tonal director from 1988–1996. Under his leadership, Schantz organs started to retreat from neo-baroque narrow scaling and over-use of upperwork.⁵ Tidwell, an accomplished organist and church musician, insisted on spending significant time onsite doing tonal finishing. This allowed our voicers to carefully maximize the musicality of each instrument by addressing pipe speech and balance.

It should be noted that Tidwell also designed clever unit organs for clients with limited space and budgets. These small instruments have some ranks that share bottom and top octaves to maximize budget and space, but their middle range is independent to maximize musicality. Nearly twenty of these instruments have been built.

Jeffrey Dexter joined Schantz in 1993, and quickly followed Tidwell as our tonal director. He is also a practicing church musician who continues to move us toward even more broadly voiced instruments that play a wide range of repertoire effectively.

Visual designs

In the company’s early years, Abraham Tschantz was responsible for all design aspects of his organs, including visual design. By 1893 there were at least nine instruments by other builders within a short buggy ride of the shop that could potentially inspire his case designs. Contracts from this early time period can be subtly amusing to read:

Case of Oak or other native woods, varnished and polished, all front pipes richly decorated in gold and colors. Width about 12 feet 00 inches; depth about 6 feet 00 inches; height about 13 feet 00 inches. Style of case in harmony with the interior architecture of the Church.⁶

Abraham’s son Edison was interested in both architectural and tonal design, and the case designs between the World Wars are likely his.

After World War II, as Schantz became a truly national builder, Bruce Schantz (1913–2007) took on the role of foreman. One of his many developments was to establish an engineering department of three men: Chester Gable, Wilbur Herr, and Bob Romey. In addition to producing the hundreds of

Timeline

- 1824–Tschantz family emigrates from Switzerland to America, and settles in Ohio.
- 1849–Abraham Tschantz born
- 1873–Abraham starts building Ohio Beauty reed organs in a shop on the family farm near Kidron
- 1875–First factory built in Orrville
- 1891–First known pipe organ built for First United Brethren, Canton, Ohio
- 1899–Family name changed to “Schantz”
- 1901–New factory built at the corner of East Oak and South Walnut Streets; still used today.
- 1904–Oldest extant Schantz pipe organ built (Tiffin, Ohio, Second United Church of Christ, II/15)
- 1908–Last known tracker-action instrument built (Byesville, Ohio, First Methodist Church, II/9)
- 1913–Second generation takes on leadership:
 - Edison (visual and tonal design) (1878–1974)
 - Oliver (sales) (1882–1938)
 - Victor A. (foreman) (1885–1973)
- 1914–Zephyr blower patented
- 1926–Last known tubular-pneumatic action instrument built (New Philadelphia, Ohio, Trinity Episcopal Church, II/7)
- 1946–Third generation takes on leadership:
 - Paul (son of Oliver, sales) (1911–1997)
 - Bruce (son of Victor A., foreman) (1913–2007)
 - John (son of Victor A., tonal director) (1920–2013)
- 1947–Jack Cook hired as pipe shop foreman from Aeolian-Skinner; helps Schantz start making more pipes in-house
- 1953–Delivery of the Schantz “magnum opus” to the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark, New Jersey, IV/154
- 1966–Pipe shop built for making new pipes
- 1973–Jack Sievert hired as sales director from Reuter. Retired in 2008.
- 1985–Fourth generation takes on leadership:
 - Victor B. (son of Bruce) (b. 1953) executive vice-president (becomes president in 1998)
- 1988–Burton K. Tidwell hired as tonal director
- 1992–Eric Gastier hired as architect
- 1993–First Blackinton-style chest built (Painesville, Ohio, Painesville United Methodist Church, III/50)
- 1994–New three-story assembly room completed
- 1995–First CNC installed for efficiently building wooden parts
- 1996–Jeffrey Dexter becomes tonal director
- 2000–First international project completed in Melbourne, Australia
- 2014–Fifth generation takes on leadership:
 - John P. (son of Victor B.) (b. 1986) becomes comptroller

engineering drawings required during the post-war boom years of the 1950s and 1960s, each man developed his skills as a visual designer.

Many instruments were installed in chambers of churches during this time, with little or nothing to be seen. But late in the engineers’ long careers, Schantz clients became more interested in seeing as well as hearing the organs they



Trinity Lutheran Church, Hagerstown, Maryland, 1996



Mees Hall, Capital University, Columbus, Ohio, 2006



Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Baltimore, Maryland, 2007



Saint Joseph Catholic Church, Tiffin, Ohio, 2021



Trinity Episcopal Church, Ambler, Pennsylvania, 1989



Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, 2009

were commissioning. Bruce Schantz responded to the demand by seeking the advice of Reverend Arnold Klukas, an art historian who had taught at Oberlin College and Smith College. Klukas provided guidance for the Schantz engineers as they designed their cases. The Schantz cabinet shop began building the sort of cabinetry that had not been a mainstay at the company for decades. Our 1989 instrument at Trinity Episcopal Church in Ambler, Pennsylvania (III/49), was our first modern, free-standing case.⁷

In 1991 Romey, Gable, and Herr were nearing retirement.⁸ For the first time Schantz looked outside the company for one of its engineers and hired Eric Gastier, a registered architect and organist. He was mentored by Wilbur Herr and quickly designed his first case for Painesville (Ohio) United Methodist Church.⁹ With Gastier, Schantz made the transition from drafting boards and tracing paper to AutoCAD. That move was soon followed by the installation of the company's first CNC router, a machine that allows the efficient production of casework, pipe shades, console cabinet carvings, mechanical parts, and even metal pieces to solder into new pipes.

Anniversary celebrations

We are looking forward to celebrating our 150th anniversary over the course of the entire year. You can follow our Facebook page for some historic photos. A highlight will be our open house on Saturday, April 29, from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Our team will also be present at other local events—including sending a reed organ on a float through Orrville's Independence Day parade! And we are proud to look to the future by sponsoring scholarships with both the Akron and Cleveland chapters of the American Guild of Organists.

Notes

1. The spelling of the family name was officially changed in 1899 to ease pronunciation as the business was growing. Other branches of the family retained the original spelling.
2. It should be noted that Schantz provides chests, consoles, and pipes, as well as Zephyr organ blowers to almost every organbuilder in North America.
3. Featured as the cover instrument for *The American Organist*, January 2001, page 52.
4. For more information, see "New life for the Metropolitan Opera's organ," by Craig Whitney, *THE DIAPASON*, November 2022, page 12.
5. For more information about his tonal design, see his article, "The Small Church Organ: A Rationale Towards Integrity," *The American Organist*, April 1990, pages 95–98.
6. From the contract for the 1903 instrument built for Grace Reformed Church in Tiffin, Ohio.
7. Featured as the cover instrument for *The American Organist*, October 1990, page 66.
8. It should be noted—with deep appreciation—that many long-term employees at Schantz would "retire" to become part-time employees.
9. Featured as the cover instrument for *The American Organist*, October 1994, page 44.

Cover photos

- Ohio Beauty Reed organ advertisement, c. 1878
- Family: Bruce, John, and Paul (third generation), c. 1970
- Horse-drawn wagon of pipes, c. 1916
- Saint Paul Reformed Church, Butler, Pennsylvania, 1903

—Luke D. Tegtmeier
Jeffrey D. Dexter
Eric J. Gastier

www.schantzorgan.com