

MARY BAKER EDDY MUSEUM  
and Historic Sites



VOL. 14, NO. 1

PUBLISHED BY LONGYEAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 1977

THE SIX LONGYEAR ORGANS



Melodeon in Mary Baker Eddy Historic House, Rumney, N.H. (Photograph taken in 1926)



Melodeon in Garden Room of Amesbury Historic House. This organ was there when Mrs. Eddy, then Mrs. Glover, stayed with Sarah Bagley for two periods between 1868 and 1870.

From the Spanish mission days of the seventeenth century to the present, the history of the organ in the United States mirrors to a remarkable degree its social, economic, and cultural setting. It has unique characteristics that bind it more closely than any other instrument to its location, to social and economic changes, and to fluctuations in musical tastes. Trends in immigration, wars, economic crises, the growth of factories, the availability of electricity, the popularity of orchestral music, and the invention of the phonograph and of the player piano all had a part in determining the course of American organ history.

Thus begins a book flap introduction to a volume entitled *The History of the Organ in the United States*

written in 1975 by Orpha Ochse, an Associate Professor of Music and college organist at Whittier College. The organ collection of Longyear Historical Society provides an opportunity to explore in a small way this connection between the development of a musical instrument and the changes in the society within which the development took place. The six organs in the collection represent an interesting segment of the history of the organ in America and afford a glimpse of social and cultural trends of the times.

The Rumney and Amesbury Historic Houses each have as a part of their exhibits a musical instrument called a melodeon. The melodeon at Rumney, New Hampshire was included with furniture owned by Mrs. Eddy as an item appropriate to the time of her presence in that home. This melodeon was built by A. G. and B. M. Woodman of Amesbury, Mas-

sachusetts. (A recent visitor to the Rumney Historic House reported that as a girl she had lived next door to the Woodman "factory.")

The other melodeon at the Amesbury Historic House, however, is of more historical significance to Christian Scientists because it was actually in the house when Mrs. Eddy resided there with Sarah Bagley. The accompanying photograph shows it in the Garden Room.

These melodeons are quite distinctive in appearance. Each consists of a large box-shaped cabinet placed on four sturdy legs. A keyboard is recessed on the long side of the cabinet. Beneath this keyboard are two foot pedals. The musician pumps these pedals in order to operate the bellows located in the cabinet which provide suction to a row of curved metal reeds. As the organist depresses keys on the keyboard, the reeds corresponding to those keys are sounded.

Quarterly News Spring 1977  
© Longyear Foundation 1977 Vol. 14, No. 1  
Subscription, \$6.00 Annually  
(Includes Activities at Longyear)  
Sent without charge to Members of Longyear





Harmonium in Historic House, Stoughton, Massachusetts



Reed organ used in services at former North Grotton church, now Historic Site

The tone quality is a combination of flute and reed.

Melodeons as a type of organ were known as early as 1825 in the United States. According to Professor Ochse, by 1840 there were forty known melodeon builders in this country. The melodeon came into use in both homes and small churches where there was no pipe organ. Melodeons became popular, quite naturally, because they were self-contained, portable, took up less space and were less costly than pipe organs, although the pipe organ had superior musical quality and was more versatile.

The type of organ at the Stoughton Historic House is a harmonium, the instrument which supplanted in popularity the melodeon in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Both melodeons and harmoniums are known as reed organs as opposed to pipe organs. While the melodeon has a horizontal wind chest resting on legs, the harmonium has an upright cabinet extending to the floor. The instrument at Stoughton is small and unadorned. The cabinet is vertical with the keyboard to the front and an ornamental music rack. Once again foot pedals are necessary to provide wind. "Harmonium" was the name given this instrument by Alexandre Debain in 1840 as he perfected it in his Paris studio.

The principle behind the harmonium and melodeon is discussed

in the *Encyclopedia Americana*. The "free reed idea" of this type of organ is explained this way: "Vibrating back and forth through a close-fitting frame, this type of reed determines the pitch of its tone by its own dimensions and requires no enclosed air columns as do the 'beating' reeds of the clarinet, oboe, organ, and other reed-pipe instruments."

As mentioned, the time between 1860 and 1900 saw the reed organ — the harmonium in its many perfected forms — rise to the height of its popularity. In its many versions, depend-

ing on the innovations added by the builder, the harmonium became known as the parlor organ, the cabinet organ, the reed organ, or, in Europe, the American organ. (It was even referred to as the melodeon through a blurring of distinction between the two, perhaps because inventions used in one were also used in the other. This confusion of terms is compounded when one notes that before the mid-nineteenth century the name "parlor organ" was used to designate a small pipe organ for home or church use.) Later improve-



First organ owned by The Mother Church and used in Chickering Hall, Boston, and later by First Church of Christ, Scientist, Dover, N.H.



ments made the reed organ sound more like a pipe organ.

Two organs in the Mary Baker Eddy Museum are examples of the further development of the harmonium or reed organ. The first, the smaller of the two, is the organ salvaged from the weathered remains of the North Groton, New Hampshire church, now an Historic Site. Despite having been exposed to the winter weather for an extended period, the cabinet of this instrument still evidences the type of workmanship of the later 1800's. A rack for music and two small circular shelves, possibly for lamps or candies, are elements of the decoration. On either side of the organ are horizontal bars by means of which it can be lifted and moved. This organ is currently on display in the solarium at the Museum.

The larger of the two is the organ given to the Museum in 1965 by First Church of Christ, Scientist, Dover, New Hampshire. This instrument with its beautifully finished cabinet has had an interesting history. It was the first organ owned by The Mother Church, and was used at early Christian Science services in Chickering Hall, Boston, until the Original Edifice of The Mother Church was constructed in 1894. Then in 1906 Mr. J. H. Thompson of Boston, who had purchased the organ from The Mother Church, offered to let the Dover church enjoy the use of it. It was first installed in the Dover

Y.M.C.A. where the church held its services, and later it was incorporated in the new church edifice. When the organ was no longer needed after the church was remodeled in 1965, it was given to Longyear.<sup>1</sup> It is currently on display in the rotunda of the Museum to the left as one enters the main door.

Both reed organs at the Museum were built by the Estey Company of Brattleboro, Vermont. This firm, along with the Mason and Hamlin company, were two of the best known reed organ builders, with roots extending back before the Civil War. The Estey Company beginnings can be traced to 1846. The company continued to manufacture reed organs into the 1960's. In the early 1880's the company, then in its heyday, reported that it employed 500 people and turned out as many as sixty organs a day.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the popularity of the reed organ had waned. Evidently the market for this instrument had reached its saturation point. Also, the public's tastes were changing; people were becoming fascinated with mechanical music-making devices for the home such as the player piano and the phonograph.

The largest organ in the Longyear collection is also at the Museum. It is

the electric player pipe organ Mrs. Longyear had installed in the music room in 1910. Alice E. Neale, Mrs. Longyear's interior decorator, arranged for the delivery of this organ to the Brookline mansion at a cost of \$7150, including her commission. The builder was the Aeolian Company of New York. This company had its early organs built by a partnership, Farrand and Votey. Edwin Scott Votey entered this partnership after training with the Estey Company in Brattleboro. Farrand and Votey made the organ installed in 1895 in the Original Mother Church edifice. The pair built organs for Aeolian until 1897, at which time Farrand turned to making reed organs and Votey formed his own company to produce pipe organs. Votey's company merged with Aeolian in 1899 and the new company came to the forefront of manufacturers of player instruments. Votey invented the Pianola in 1895 and then the Duo-Art Organ and Duo-Art Piano.

Longyear's player organ fits with the turn of the century fascination with mechanical music-making devices. Behind the music rest on the console is the player mechanism. The Museum has forty-four Aeolian Company organ rolls which can be inserted into this mechanism for playing. Selections include concert and opera pieces transcribed for organ, and a few hymn tunes. Beethoven's Third and Fifth Symphonies,

1. See *Quarterly News*, Spring 1965, Vol. 2, No. 1.



Longyear player pipe organ in Museum's music room. The two-manual console and the player mechanism with an organ roll in place are shown to the right.



## THE MUSEUM'S FORTIETH 1937—1977

"L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" by Debussy, selections from Wagner's "Parsifal," and "I Love to Tell the Story" are a few examples of the pieces available. Longyear intends to repair the player mechanism so it can be put into operation once again.

The Aeolian Company interests were purchased in 1901 by George S. Hutchings, an organ builder from Massachusetts. This new company had as its vice president Ernest M. Skinner. Skinner, who came to exert great influence on organ making in America, bought out the Aeolian Company in 1931, forming the Aeolian-Skinner Company, a familiar name on the American organ scene until about 1972. This company built the present organ in The Mother Church Extension in 1952 and rebuilt the Farrand and Votey organ in the Original Edifice.

In 1910 Mrs. Longyear began furnishing the music room which houses the Aeolian organ. The accompanying photograph of the room shows how sumptuous and beautiful it appeared at that time. The decorations for the organ itself are described in Miss Neale's invoices as follows:

"Old grille for organ

Two perforated ornaments at top of organ and drop ornament on pilasters of organ case

One music cabinet for organ rolls — mahogany case

Stool for organ"

The furnishings of the room have changed somewhat over the years although the organ has not.

One end of the room is taken up to house the organ pipes, wind chest and the built-in two-manual console. Above the console and along the long side of the enclosure are a row of ornamental organ pipes. The operational part of the organ is located behind this facade. In a swell box are the eight stops of the organ, technically called ranks of pipes. There are metal pipes (made of lead, tin and zinc) and square wooden pipes. Each rank of pipes includes one pipe for each note on the keyboard. The size of the 457 pipes ranges in height from eight feet to about one-quarter inch.

What a rich legacy for enjoyment and inspiration the Longyears left behind in this organ. Visitors to the Museum have the opportunity to see the organ and enjoy its music when it is played at the Christmas Concert for

The Mary Baker Eddy Museum is the result of the foresight and perseverance of its founder, Mary Beecher Longyear. Longyear Foundation had been established by her in 1926 but it was not until 1937, after her passing, that the doors of the Museum were opened to the general public. They have been open every year since then, and it seems desirable to mark this milestone with a brief review.

In 1937 there were only about seven galleries assigned to Longyear as the Museum building was shared by the Zion Research Foundation library which had also been established by Mrs. Longyear for Bible scholars. Records do not exist as to what exactly was on display in 1937, although it is believed many of the Baker family memorabilia and a number of portraits of pioneer workers in Christian Science were on exhibit. The open hours were then lim-

ited to afternoons although the Museum was available to visitors in the morning by special appointment.

With the Zion Research Library's move to Boston University in 1966, the Museum was able to expand into other rooms in the building. By 1971 all of the present galleries were opened, and they now number twenty rooms or areas. In 1967 the name of the Museum was changed from Longyear Museum to the Mary Baker Eddy Museum, with the consent of The Christian Science Board of Directors, to reflect correctly its purpose.

The Museum's hours over the years have been extended, so that they are currently comparable to those of most large museums. The Mary Baker Eddy Museum is now well recognized and is a member of the American Association of Museums and of other professional organizations.



Music room in 1917 while the Brookline mansion was still the home of the Longyears

Members and at other concerts and special events during the year. On rare occasions the Chickering Hall organ is also played.

Longyear Historical Society is certainly fortunate to have these six

examples of the organ maker's art. The pipe organ in particular sounds so rich, so regal, that it indeed justifies its name, the "king of instruments."

Charles D. Gordon

LONGYEAR FOUNDATION: *Board of Trustees:* Mrs. Marian H. Holbrook, Frederick D. Herberich, Robert C. Dale, Mrs. Marion D. Pierce. *President:* Richard C. Molloy. QUARTERLY NEWS is published four times annually, in the Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, at the headquarters of Longyear Historical Society, 120 Seaver Street, Brookline, Massachusetts 02146. Inquiries about memberships, subscriptions, and its services are welcome.