

Pacific Northwest Tracker Organs in the USA: A brief history
By David Dahl

A high-level organ building culture emerges in the second half of the 20th century in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. This lecture explores the first organs to come to the region, leading up to the establishment of several indigenous organ shops formed to build mechanical action organs (tracker) from 1965 to the present time.

Four stages of development can be described:

Stage 1: 1846-1860's: Tracker organs built for and sent to the Northwest

From outside the region. No regional tracker builders existed prior to 1960.

Organ by Johann Philip Bachman, 1819; arrives in Tacoma, WA, 1901

Organ by Ernst Kessler, 1846, sent to New Archangel (Sitka), Alaska

Organ by Hook & Hastings, 1883, to Portland, OR, from Boston, MA.

Organ by Whalley & Genung, 1889, to Port Townsend, WA, from Oakland, CA.

Organ by J. E. Bergstrom (?), 1882, to Seattle, WA, from San Francisco, CA.

Organ by Geo. Kilgen & Sons, 1890, to Seattle, WA, from St. Louis, MO.

Stage 2: Renewed interest in pre-Romantic organs: European imported organs

Organs by Werner Bosch for Tacoma and Puyallup, WA.

Organ by Gebrüder Spaeth, Germany, for St. Paul's Episc. Ch. Seattle, WA

Organ by Werner Bosch for St. Mark's Anglican Cathedral, Portland, OR.

Organ by D.A. Flentrop, The Netherlands, for St. Mark's Cathedral, Seattle, WA

Organ by Beckerath, Germany, for Immanuel Episcpal, Mercer Island, WA

Organ by Metzler & Wilhelm, Switzerland/Canada, St. Thomas Ch, Medina, WA.

Organ by Jürgen Ahrend, Germany, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.

Organ by Rieger Orgelbau, Austria, Sunnyside S.D.A. Church, Portland, OR.

Stage 3: Relocation of 19th c. American tracker organs to the Pacific Northwest

Organs by E.&G.G. Hook, Jardine, Adams, Haskell, Hutchlings-Plaisted,

Roosevelt, Odell, Koenken & Grimm, Cole & Woodbury, Jesse Woodbury,

Kilgen & Pilcher

Stage 4: Two Parts: (1) Tracker organs from U.S. and Canadian builders outside the region; (2) Establishment of tracker builders in Washington and Oregon states

Olympic Organ Builders (first tracker builder in the 20th c., Seattle, WA

Organs arrive from Fritz Noack, Schlicker, Martin Ott (USA), and from

Karl Wilhelm, Casavant (Canada)

Newly established tracker organ building shops after 1970

John Brombaugh & Associates, Eugene, OR (first in Middletown, OH)

Paul Fritts & Co, Tacoma, WA (began as Fritts-Richards, 1976)

Bond Organs (Richard Bond), Portland, OR

Kenneth Coulter, Eugene, OR

René Marceau, Seattle, WA (formerly a shop in Portland, OR)

Frans Bosman, Moasier, OR

Pasi Organs, Martin Pasi, Roy (Tacoma), WA

Stephen Cook, Las Vegas, NV (formerly a shop in Edmonds, WA)

Petty Organs, David Petty, Eugene, OR

Recent American built tracker organs of note sent to the Northwest

Rosales Organ Builders, Los Angeles, CA; C.B. Fisk, Gloucester, MA.