

# the benson organ

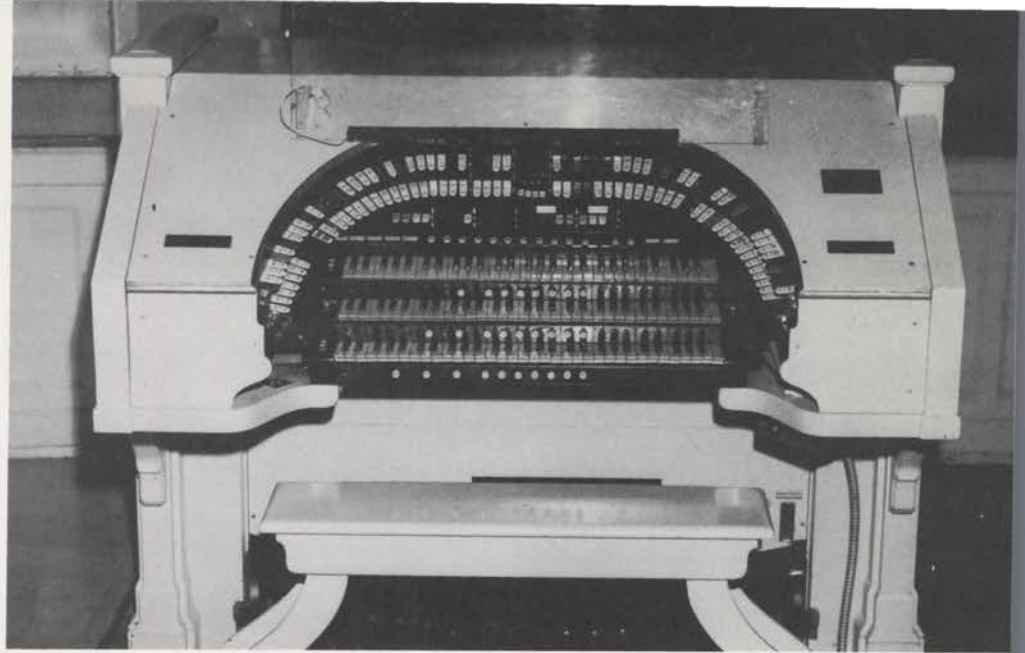
by Bob Burke

"Fifteen men on a Dead Man's Chest - YO HO HO and a Bottle of Rum" Well, isn't that what you are supposed to sing when you dig for buried treasure? Here is a story of the Oregon Chapter project to rebuild Portland's Benson High School Kimball organ.

"Here's the key." Gee, all cleared through the school board, the school, the chapter and the ghosts of what had been.

But who needs the key to the Benson Polytechnic High School Organ? The chambers were never locked anyway . . . not for several years since the windstorm of '62 damaged the roof, and the rain wet half of the chests. Of course, attempts had been made to repair the chests but there was too much for patchwork, and too, the expert repair work, such as cutting the tops out of the French Horn to make them louder didn't accomplish much, especially when they sat on a chest without wind. The school had taken steps to convince one student it was better to return two sets of pipes rather than "store" them at home . . . so it was Discovery Island to climb the ladders and enter the caves really searching for buried treasure.

Of course, nobody starts looking anyplace for secreted valuables without some hint of the past history of what might be. All we knew was that the school had a theatre pipe organ that would barely play . . . the details came later . . . that the student body had purchased the instrument which had been in a Longview, Washington theatre. We saw the writing on the



The 3/24 Kimball console in Benson High School, Portland, Oregon. — (Claude Neuffer Photo)

wall and filled in bits and pieces of history later.

It is a three manual Kimball with a tremendous double bolster console, two double touch manuals and all double touch pistons. Had been nine ranks with piano in the theatre, installed in divided chambers on either side of the stage. The console was set three feet down in a pit. We believe the original organ was enlarged on installation at Benson and that some additions were made later. In all there were added a six and a four rank straight chest and another Diapason and a three rank mixture . . . a total of 24 ranks.

So, when I said 15 on a dead man's chest, I wasn't far wrong. Yo Ho Ho and . . . So, chapter would renovate and maintain the organ for the right to use auditorium and organ four times a year.

Job started. Lots of enthusiasm to start. Two nights and all day Saturday for over a year, including summer . . . never a miss. Thanks to Benson Dad's Club . . . The Chapter members and leader Gerald Duffy . . . I'll take a

bow too, if you ask.

But you need a break . . . money. About the time we were ready for money, the parents of a former student contacted Principal Mr. Anderson asking for some student activity to sponsor in the name of their late son, an accident victim. Mr. and Mrs. Brandt generously donated \$1,000 toward the organ fund in memory of their son Ronald, so you will see the gold plaque in dedication of the work. With a Gaylord Carter concert and the auctioning of a donated Kimball electronic organ, we just about came out even (except for the \$200 "borrowed" by the basketball team to go to Hawaii).

Guess we will have to leave it to you to judge the value of that treasure that seemed so buried. The chests are battened down again, but we'll let you hear the music at the convention. We think we made a good blueprint for fun and music.

You'll have a chance to play our chapter treasure as well as see, hear. But please include me out of the next treasure hunt. □

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AND

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