

# DAN BARTON vs. THE EDITOR

## ... some interesting correspondence

Dear Bob:

Dan Barton once wrote an article for the *Bombarde* concerning the Hope-Jones failures. When it arrived I noted that he stated that H-J put his ideas re unification to work while he was in England. Something in that assumption got my curiosity up, and I gave the article to Lee Haggart for checking. Like me, he caught the alleged error — that while H-J worked out the principles of unification in England, he never had an opportunity to put these ideas into effect until he opened his Elmira factory in 1907, which was after he had worked for the Austin company (straight organ builders, and no nonsense about that newfangled unification). When I questioned Dan he became vitriolic, as the letter indicates. In fact, he and I maintained a friendly adversary relationship as long as we corresponded; I made him come through with facts, and he resented it. After all, he was DAN BARTON, famous organ-builder, and a whippersnapper like me had no right to question his statements. Yet, he defended his claims, but often with circumstantial evidence rather than facts. I wrote to several people in Britain who knew the H-J story and I found no evidence that he ever unified one rank of pipes while there. Dick Simonton said he ran across one rank in an H-J organ which had a 4' Flute "extension," which indicates that H-J might have experimented but he did not build any complete instruments based on the unification principle. That left me with a diplomacy problem; one does not tell one of the patriarchs of the theatre organ world that he is dead wrong. The story about H-J's failures appeared in *Bombarde*. I must have done a lot of hedging but I never received any complaints about the story. After all, who but a fool would challenge Dan Barton, as — up! — I did?

STU GREEN

December 9, 1965

Dear Stu:

I enclose an article on Robert Hope-Jones written from a new

angle. Many articles and a few books have been written describing Hope-Jones' many inventions and creations. He is credited with selling many organs and some very prestigious installations, but he failed three times, twice in England and once in the United States.

I have collected over the years much of the Hope-Jones material and in only once instance is there any direct reference to the reason for his failure and that is in George L. Miller's book *The Recent Revolution in Organ Building*, written in 1909, one year before Wurlitzer took over. Miller was a personal friend of Hope-Jones and a member of the church in Birkenhead, England, where Hope-Jones taught Sunday school and played the organ. He followed Hope-Jones to the United States and knew him for thirty years. Miller describes the damage that was done to a number of Hope-Jones' organs and just touches on the opposition to Hope-Jones and his organ ideas. He does it in one sentence. I quote: "For nearly fifteen years he has met concerted opposition that would have crushed any ordinary man, attacks in turn against his electrical knowledge, musical taste, voicing ability, financial standing and personal character."

I think pretty well of Hope-Jones and I should, for I did pretty well using his inventions and creations. I also know about the opposition to unit organs by classic organ builders and church organists, for after the theatre business blew up I tried to sell unit organs to churches, and I did sell a few — very few! The lack of explanation for Hope-Jones' failure in most of the written material, combined with my personal experience, gave me the idea for the article.

I have used an explanation of Hope-Jones' electro-pneumatic action so I can describe the earlier actions such as the tracker, Barker lever and tubular pneumatic. I am sure many enthusiasts know little about them. Hope-Jones is generally credited with being a poor businessman — an endless inventor with no ability to op-

erate factory production so it would show a profit — and I presume much of this is true, but at Elmira, Robert Elliott was with him and Elliott was a sharp organ man who had already proven what he could do. He was with the Welte Mignon Company, then picked up an organ man in Hartford, Connecticut, John Austin, who was also a great organ technician and inventor and credited with being so busy inventing and building that he forgot to run his operation on a businesslike basis. Elliott organized a company with Austin doing the work and Elliott running the business, and the Austin Company became one of the biggest in the country. So, I say Hope-Jones did not lack business management at Elmira and it was the classic builders and organists who gave him the "business."

Regards,  
DAN BARTON

February 17, 1966

Dear Stu:

In your letter of February 4 I note you have referred my "WHY" article to Lee Haggart for appraisal and improvement in the accuracy of the article. Judging from the frequency with which you have referred to Mr. Haggart in your past correspondence I conclude you have referred most of my articles to him for such appraisal. I have no objection, as I am not above making mistakes, and I don't think Mr. Haggart is, either.

I refer to Item 3. The statement, quoting from your letter, that "Hope-Jones did not make any public installations which were unified in England; he did that in the U.S.A. just before he opened his Elmira factory." So you took Haggart's statement for solid fact and rearranged the paragraphs on the invention of unification to fall after Hope-Jones left England. I also note that "Lee is aware that there are books which tell about unification before that time." I do not buy any of that — the change in the paragraphs takes the guts right out of my story.



If Mr. Haggart's statement that Hope-Jones built no unit organs in England can be made to stand up, then I am looking pretty damned foolish and the "WHY" article isn't worth the paper it is typed on. The entire premise of my article is the fact that when H-J showed up with his unit organ and started taking business away from the English builders they became so incensed that they did everything possible to stop H-J, even to burning churches and doing great damage to his organs. As I say in the article, H-J changed the entire form of the organ, the unified form against the traditional chest organ. H-J's unified organ was an exact contradiction to all the rules of organ building existing through four centuries.

Now, if H-J made no unit organs in England then I am way out in left field making such statements and you had better dispose of the article in the nearest waste basket.

But I am entitled to a bit of rebuttal. It is my opinion that Mr. Haggart is a bit mixed up on his facts, or that James Nuttall was pulling his leg in return for Haggart's pumping him mercilessly for H-J information right up to the time of Nuttall's death — this being a quote from your letter.

There is no denying that H-J built and sold organs to churches and auditoriums in England. If he did not build unified organs then he must have built chest organs. *There was no other kind!* Why would the English builders give a new builder the treatment H-J received if he was building traditional chest organs, the same as the other builders? It would not be because of his new electro-pneumatic action, for the English builders had been trying since 1868 to perfect an electric action, documented in William L. Sumner's book, *The Organ*. Would it not seem reasonable to suppose that a new and entirely different type of organ — unit construction, high wind pressure, new voices and pipe scales — that was losing the English builders business would be more apt to arouse great resentment?

Let's check the books. *The Recent Revolution in Organ Building*, by George L. Miller; *The Contemporary American Organ*, by William H. Barnes; *The Organ of the Twentieth Century*, by George A. Audsley; *The Organ*, by William L. Sumner. Four well-known and highly respected

authors, Miller and Sumner both Englishmen. All referring to H-J's plan of unification or transference of stops, or treating the entire organ as a unit and making it possible to draw any or all stops on all of the keyboards at any reasonable pitch. Announced by H-J at a lecture before the Royal College of Organists on May 5, 1891. Is it not a reasonable conclusion that after making such an announcement H-J built the type of organ he had described to the Royal College and that he did not build chest organs, and that he must have invented such an organ before that time or he could not have described it, and that the invention of unification did not fall after his exodus from England, but certainly before 1891? The records show that H-J came to the United States in the spring of 1903. No book or article I have ever read states that H-J did not build any unit organs in England or that he did build chest organs. I do not buy the fact that Lee Haggart has more accurate information on H-J's history than the combined statements of these four eminent authors, regardless of what Haggart says James Nuttall told him.

Let's try a little circumstantial evidence. When Wurlitzer began moving in on the California theatre business the California Organ Co. started to develop an H-J-type unit organ. And who had charge of the work? Stanley Williams, because of his knowledge of H-J's unit system, was the man they put in charge. I quote: "Head voicer Stanley Williams was well qualified to build a fully unified theatre organ. He had learned the unit organ building business as an apprentice to the famed organ building genius, Robert Hope-Jones." Stanley Williams started working for H-J at age 18 and worked in all departments. He came to the United States in 1905 after several years with H-J. I am now quoting Stanley Williams' own words from a tape recording made in 1962: "Hope-Jones was a very controversial figure, either loved or hated. The old standard organ builders all frowned on him and his work as being amateurish. Hope-Jones was building organs along quite different lines. Some people loved his work because it was different. I was the one man on the West Coast who could put this sort of instrument into production (meaning unified organs)." Sounds like H-J was building units in Eng-

land, doesn't it, and if he was not building units where did Williams gain the knowledge that enabled him to build the first units produced by the California Organ Co.? That he did so is undeniable.

Mr. Williams was 81 years old in 1962 and I sincerely hope he is still alive and active. He lives in your locality and I suggest you contact him and verify whether or not H-J was building unified organs in England.

Here is another one. William H. Barnes states in his book, *The Contemporary American Organ*, third edition, page 200: "Mr. John Compton, the eminent English organ builder has been the only one in England to follow along the lines of Hope-Jones." It is a well known fact that Compton built unit organs. How could Compton "follow along the lines of Hope-Jones" with a unit organ if H-J was not also building unit organs?

When R. P. Elliott organized the H-J factory in Elmira, New York, in 1907 he needed men who knew unit organ construction. Elliott brought over from England a number of H-J's former employees. Among them James Nuttall, the head voicer, Earl Beach, Dave Marr, John Colton, Joe and Harry Carruthers and others. Why did Elliott bring these men (paying the expenses of their families) to the United States to build unit organs in Elmira if they had not learned the unit business from Hope-Jones in England? If H-J built only chest organs in England they would not be of great value to Elliott building unit organs in Elmira. He could have re-

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cruited plenty of chest organ mechanics in this country. Why all this trouble and expense unless they were all unit organ specialists? Especially Nuttall, with his experience in voicing on high pressure — 15-, 25-, 35- and up to 50-inch wind. High pressure H-J-type voicing is entirely different from low pressure chest-type voicing. Incidentally, the high pressures used by H-J are indicative of unit construction. I question that 35- or 50-inch wind was ever used on a straight organ chest as a common practice.

Wurlitzer took over in 1910 and gave H-J the management of the organ department. With his propensities for tearing organs down and making changes and delaying promised shipments, and his total lack of business and factory management ability, Wurlitzer planned to ease H-J out of the picture, but they needed an experienced unit man to take his place, a man highly experienced in unit construction and management. Whom did they secure? Meakam Jones from England. Why Meakam Jones? Because he was experienced in unit construction and management from his association with H-J building units in England. Meakam Jones arrived in the United States from England in 1912. Documented in Farney Wurlitzer's speech at the 1964 ATOS convention. You have recently met with Edward Jones and a letter of inquiry to him will quickly decide whether his father was a unit or a chest organ specialist.

Now to your other accuracy points. No. 1. The use of the generator is controversial. I know that batteries were used on organs at one time, but I am going to stand on my statement on generators. H-J was an electrical engineer, and with his inventive mind and electrical engineering knowledge he invented the hairpin magnet which revolutionized organ actions. He lengthened the magnet and figured out a winding, the factor being the length and size of the copper wire. As early as 1868, English builders were working on an electric action operated with a generator. William L. Sumner, the English author of the book, *The Organ*, names the companies and describes the equipment — large and crude magnets attached directly to the pallet valve inside the chest, compelling the magnet to work against the air pressure in the chest and using such an amount of electri-

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city that the contacts burned off. He describes the generators as stock models that could not maintain a steady voltage with the variable load created in playing an organ. Sumner states that, had the builders consulted an electrical engineer and had the generators been equipped with the proper winding to keep the voltage constant, the English builder's generator trouble would have been over. I am using the assumption that H-J, with his ability to perfect the proper winding for his hairpin magnet, would also have been able to perfect a proper winding for a generator.

Accuracy Item No. 2. I had the names of the short partnerships in the first writing. There are two other items I had in the first writing. Items that anyone acquainted with H-J history should have known. Despite Haggart's "mercilessly pumping Nuttall for H-J information right up to the time of Nuttall's death," Haggart failed to come with this information. (1) After H-J finished the work on the Birkenhead organ and before he started with the unified organ he invented duplexing, which allows a single stop on an organ chest to be played on either of two manuals. (The M. P. Möller company has duplexed straight organ chests for many years.) H-J spent little time on duplexing, for he had advanced to the unit form and dropped the duplex idea. (2) H-J had patents on his construction, whether it was on the action and unification and duplexing or only on one or two is not clear. H-J licensed several English builders to use his inventions under a royalty arrangement. This arrangement did not work out and his next move was to start his own factory. I had all three items, short partnerships, duplexing and patent licensing in my first draft of the "WHY" article. The article was getting very long and I did not want you to run it as a two-part article. To shorten the article and because I did not consider any of the three items very pertinent to the theme of the article, the persecution of H-J, I dropped them out on a rewrite. This will give Mr. Haggart some H-J information he evidently

did not get from his pumping of Mr. Nuttall.

Accuracy Item No. 4. Just change the word "shallots" to "lips" (on big Flutes and Diapasons) and see if Haggart agrees with that.

You make note that H-J's insistence on perfection as being too expensive, and that this trait may have led to his failure. I did not use it in the article because I did not want to cover two subjects in the same article. I am using the persecution of H-J by classic builders as my point and did not want to confuse the issue.

I agree that this trait caused his downfall with Wurlitzer and probably was a factor in his failing in England, but it is my opinion it was not a factor at Elmira, based on conversations I had with R. P. Elliott when he spent a short time with Kimball in Chicago after Wurlitzer took over in 1910 and Elliott was dropped. The Elmira company was headed by Jervis Langdon, head of the Elmira Chamber of Commerce and a prominent businessman. There were some prominent stockholders and the company was well financed. H-J worked under the supervision of R. P. Elliott, who was not only a good businessman but a very sharp organ man. He had successfully put over the Austin company. H-J was with Elliott at Austin and Elliott knew all about his nutty traits and was alert for them. Hope-Jones had nothing to do with the finances — they were handled by Langdon, and Elliott had Hope-Jones under his orders. It is my opinion that Hope-Jones' traits had nothing to do with his failure at Elmira. The American failure was caused solely by the persecution of classic organ builders and the opposition of organists. Farney Wurlitzer stated in his speech at the 1964 convention that one of the reasons they quit building organs when the theatres folded was because the unit organ had the antagonism of 99% of the church organists of the United States, and no one knows that better than I do.

One thing I do not understand. You state that Haggart was a lifelong friend of James Nuttall. This puts Haggart in England for the early part of his life. Nuttall was H-J's head voicer in England, which would put Haggart close to Hope-Jones. Nuttall did not leave England until 1912, when Elliott brought him to the



United States. How come Haggart did not know what type of organ Hope-Jones was building in England, and why did Haggart have to press Nuttall so hard late in Nuttall's life and in the United States to gain this information as to when Hope-Jones invented unification?

Perhaps I should apologize for writing you a book instead of a letter, but I spent more time researching, writing and rewriting on the "WHY" article than on any article I have ever done for you, and thought it was a damn good one, and, judging from the comment on the card you sent me at Christmas, you had the same idea. It is a bit rugged to accept the evaluation Mr. Haggart has put on the article, and I am surprised that before referring the Haggart accuracy report to me you changed the paragraphs to make the invention of unification fall after H-J left England in 1903, instead of around 1889 in England. With your background you surely realized the change in the paragraphs would destroy the article, which is based on hatred for H-J because he invented and sold unit organs in England, production starting around 1892. You apparently accept Haggart's clarifications, opinions and statements as infallible. He was 100% wrong when he stated that small reeds should be curved on a block and just as wrong when he changed "condensers" to "capacitors" in the Bartola article, and seems unable to answer my inquiry about R. P. Elliott's involvement with the Morton company. Instead, he offers a list of names — Carlsted, Ferris, Kingsley, Eaton, Marsh — and states that Leo Schoenstein was the man who put across the Morton company. I have considerable material on the Morton company, and some is other than Tom B'hend's account. I find only one name mentioned, Marsh, as a voicer. There is no mention of Schoenstein as a top man or otherwise, or of Haggart either, for that matter.

He is also wrong in listing the Diaphone as being the invention of James Nuttall. Neither H-J nor Nuttall invented the Diaphone. Two Englishmen, Blackett and Howden, invented the Diaphone for use as a fog horn. Haggart is also wrong about the Tuba Mirabilis. Neither H-J nor Nuttall invented it. It is a very large-scale Tuba with resonators of thick metal which has been called both Tuba Mirabilis

and Contra Tuba, and was used in organs before either H-J or Nuttall were born. I believe Haggart is wrong again when he says the invention and use of unification falls after H-J's exodus from England, and I think this rebuttal will prove it.

The theme of Haggart's proposed book (*The Men Who Were Hope-Jones*, never written -ed.) seems a bit petty, perhaps a sour grape. No question H-J received assistance from Nuttall and others. So did I from my "disciples." I built Bartolas and Barton organs for 21 years, and some of the best improvements were made by employees. It happens in every manufacturing organization. If Haggart can make Hope-Jones out to be a faker, then old Hope will have had it all.

Now for the last chapter in this "book" of rebuttal. I do indeed have objections to the changes proposed by Mr. Haggart. Clarification numbers 1, 2 and 3 I do not accept, number 4 change shallots to lips. As to your "full organ" summation, I agree to its use if it is added to my summation and is not used in place of mine. It was

not my intention to show what a helluva guy H-J turned out to be, but to make the point that his failures were caused by a campaign of hatred from classic organ builders and classic organists.

Now you are the judge in this matter and I respectfully await your decision. Does the "WHY" article go into *Bombarde* as I wrote it with your closer added, or into the waste basket as decreed by Mr. Haggart?

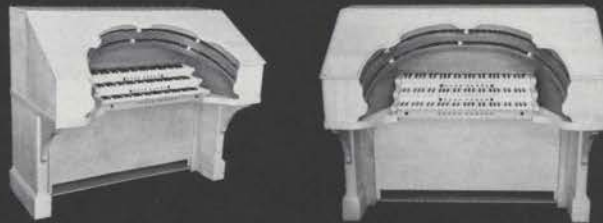
It's pretty rugged to spend the time and research to write and rewrite what one considers a very good article and then have to spend even more time and research and writing defending the article from a criticism which one does not believe has any basis in fact.

Your slightly exasperated friend . . .

*Wan Barton*

□

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