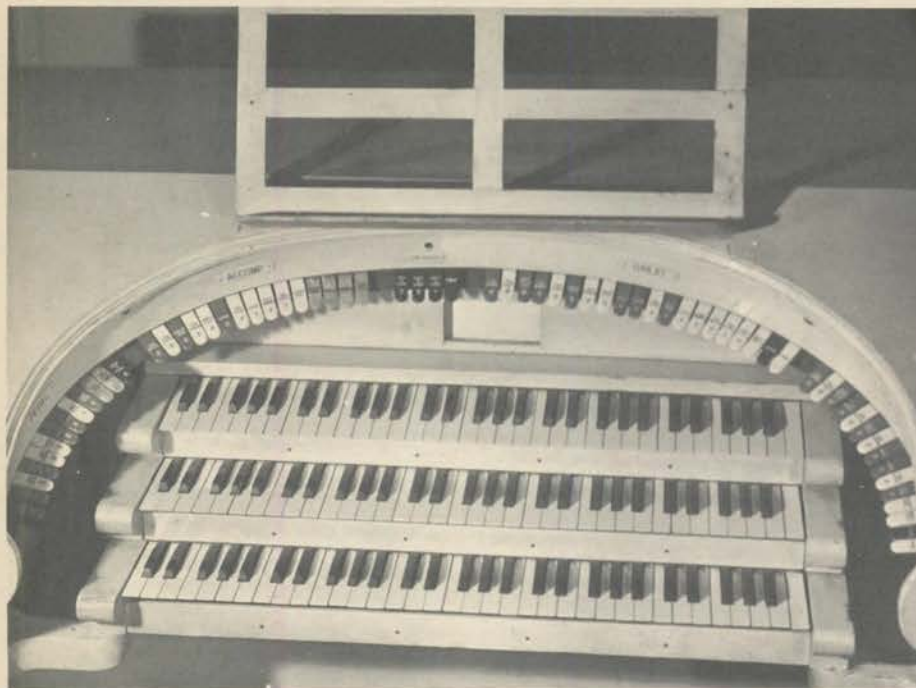


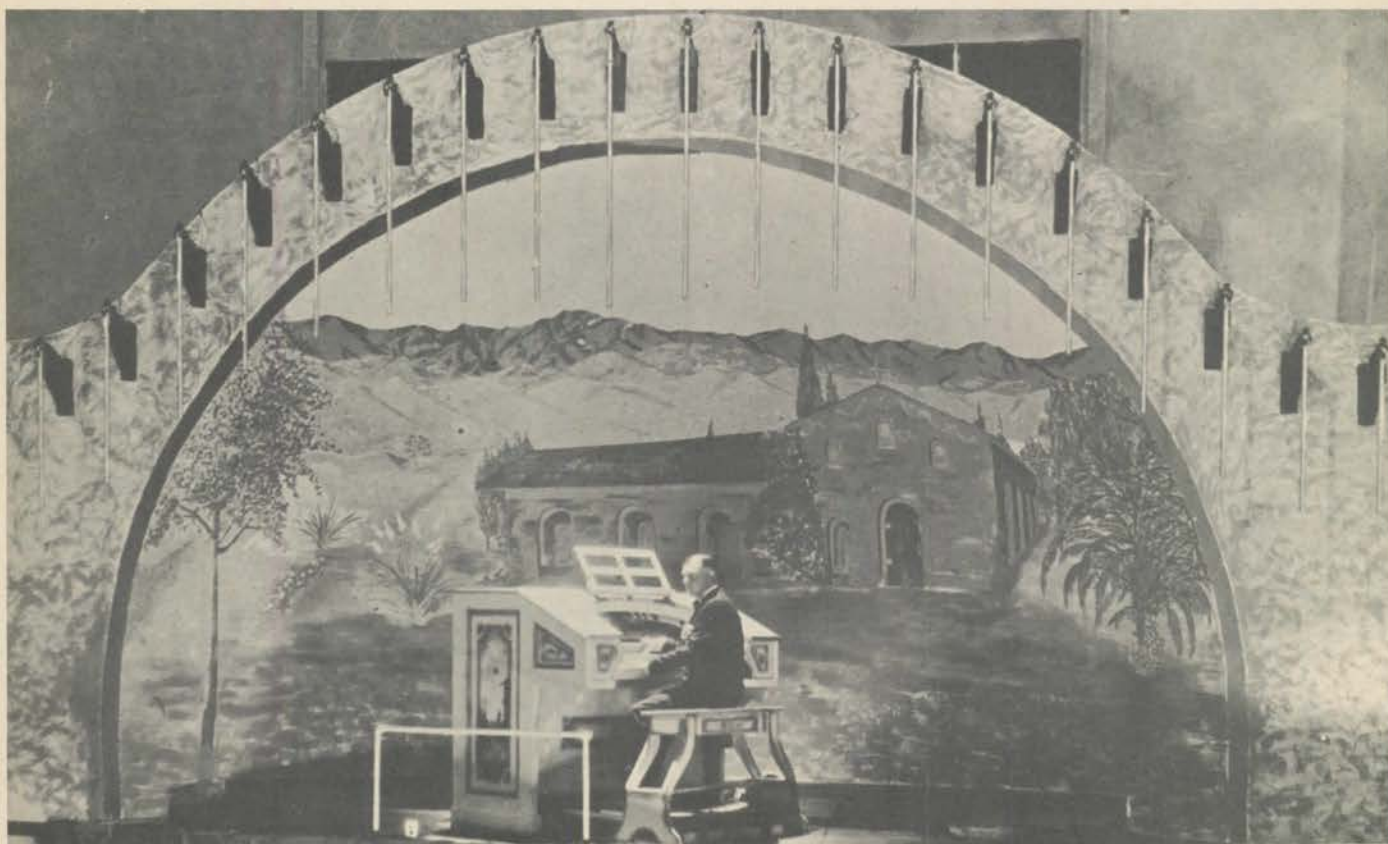
The William Wood Pipe Organ Company

By Bill Peterson



Console of 3/6 Wood Band Organ of 1929 vintage as it appeared in 1963, after 34 years of service!

Available history indicates that the William Wood Pipe Organ Company was born in Portland, Oregon, in the year 1922. The officers who served the company throughout its existence were William Wood, president; George A. Morrison, vice president; and Edward E. Juster, secretary. Several locations were used by the firm during its history. In 1925 the company was located on the west side of Portland at 101 13th Street. The company moved to much larger quarters in 1926, taking over the second floor of a manufacturing plant at 1475 East 27th Street North, corner of Morgan. Although street numbering in Portland has since been changed, the factory, with its large "CHAMPION MANUFACTURING COMPANY" sign on the roof, stood proudly in the middle of what is now Northeast Lombard Street (at N.E. 27th Avenue) on the south side of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. The railroad siding "CHAMP," which serviced the factory and its steam plant and dry kilns, is still there for those of us who like to reminisce.



3/6 Wood Band Organ console as first installed in '29 in Band Shell, Roller-drome Skating Rink, Culver City, Calif. Scenic painting in band shell, and console artistry, by Ray Smith of the Wood Pipe Organ Company.

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"Billy" Wood, as his friends and co-workers knew him, was a man of rare attributes. His genius for electrical mechanics, his profound knowledge of music and musical instruments, and his devotion to perfection in the building of pipe organs endeared him to all who knew him. His musical education apparently began very early in his life, for it is known that he and his brother Darwin, both of tender age, played a duet on pipe organ and piano before Her Majesty, The Queen of England! Thus, "Billy" took an early step in a career which led him to build many fine pipe organs and carve a niche in the musical history of the Pacific Northwest.

During the early days of the Silent Screen, the Jensen and Von Herberg theatre chain installed many fine organs in their theatres, and for a time William Wood was their service man for these organs in the Portland area. Most of these organs were WurliTZers, and included the 4/32 Hope-Jones WurliTzer (Opus 164) in the Portland Liberty Theatre. During this time "Billy" maintained a Marr & Colton theatre organ in suburban Forest Grove, Oregon. Since the pipe organs, which he later built, contained similar chestwork of excellent character there is no doubt that "Billy" was influenced by Marr & Colton in his own designs.

Most of the wooden pipes used in a "William Wood" organ were made in their own factory, a great many of them by the founder himself. Wood designed his own "scales" for the wooden pipe work and his "Tibia Clausa" of special scale is something to hear! In the 16 foot register, his wooden "Violone" and "Double Open Diapason" ask no quarter. To his specifications of wind pressure, scale, and voicing, all metal pipe work was purchased from Anton Gottfried and Son, Erie, Pennsylvania. Musical percussions, of appropriate scale, were purchased from J. C. Deagan, Inc., Chicago, Illinois, and the electric magnets from Reisner Manufacturing Company, Hagerstown, Maryland.

The company's most popular organ model, both musically and price-wise, seems to have been the 2/8 with a horse-shoe console. In the Main Chamber: Flute 16', Open Diapason, Viol d'Orchestra, Viole Celeste, and either a Clarinet, Krumet, Oboe, or French Horn. A metal bar Harp, if ordered, was also placed in the Main Chamber. In the Solo Chamber: Tuba (16' if ordered), Tibia Clausa, Vox Humana, Percussions and Traps. Theatre acoustics (with people) determined the final wind pressures used. The consoles were equipped with two swell pedals and usually a crescendo pedal. Three tremulants were standard: Solo, Main, and Vox Humana.

Perhaps one of the company's better sounding organs was the 3/9 (with piano) installed in Gellers (now the Aladdin) Theatre near the intersection of Powell Blvd. and Milwaukee Avenue, Portland. The "brassiest," no doubt,

was the Special 2/8 installed for Chris Jeffries at the Imperial Roller Rink, Portland. The largest was surely the 4/13 installed for Bob Bollinger in the Roller Rink at The Oaks Amusement Park on the beautiful Willamette River near Portland. This organ was originally installed as a 2/5 Special but was enlarged set by set, right at the skating rink, to its eventual 4/13 size.

"Billy" Wood and his brother Darwin, "The Professor," were both accomplished musicians, and both were employed as organists at various Portland theatres. However, "Billy" devoted the major portion of his talents to the building of pipe organs while "The Professor" became very popular with movie fans of the period with his impressive accompaniments to the silent screen. Darwin made many friends while teaching the organ, broadcasting on radio, and playing at the Blue Mouse, State, Oregon, and Gellers Theatres.

In 1929 the company built and in-

stalled a Special 3/6 organ in the Roller-drome Skating Rink in Culver City, California. This organ stood unenclosed (see photos) in the West balcony of the Rink (opposite the entrance) and, thanks to "Billy's" special voicing, thrilled many thousands of skaters throughout the many years of its use. This organ is now the property of Daniel F. Haworth of Burbank, California. Mr. Haworth worked for the William Wood Pipe Organ Company from June 1927 through October 1929. The photos and much of the information used in this story are through the courtesy of Mr. Haworth. After the arrival of "talkies", the William Wood Pipe Organ Company slowly went out of business and "Billy" moved to Los Angeles, California. He installed one of his last pipe organs in the Shrine Roller Rink, adjoining the "Al Malaikah" Shrine Temple in Los Angeles, and later became manager of this rink.

Both the Wood brothers passed away in Los Angeles, William in 1938 and

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 A PARTIAL LIST OF PIPE ORGANS BUILT BY THE WOOD PIPE ORGAN COMPANY OF PORTLAND, OREGON

Radio Station KEX	Portland Oregon	2/?	
Church	Twin Falls, Idaho	2/?	
Laurelhurst Christian Church	Portland	2/8	
State Theatre (now Cinema 21)	Portland	2/8 divided	
(the first console in Oregon, on an elevator)			
Walnut Park Theatre	Portland	2/?	"
Sellwood Theatre	Portland	2/8	"
Oregon Theatre	Portland	2/8	"
(This organ went to KXL Radio, in Multnomah Hotel, Portland)			
Theatre	Dalles, Oregon	2/8	" (Piano and Orch oboe)
Liberty Theatre	Camas, Washington	2/8	"
Hippodrome Theatre (now Fox)	Portland, Oregon	2/7	" (Piano & accordion)
Gellers Theatre (now Aladdin)	Portland	3/9	" (Piano and Krumet)
Temple Theatre	Lewiston, Idaho	2/5	
(later moved to Lotus Isle Amusement Park - Portland)			
Jefferson Theatre	Portland	2/6	"
Imperial Roller Rink	Portland	2/5	(later 2/8 plus Clar., Eng. horn, Kin., Sleigh bells)
(later combined with a 3/10 WurliTzer from Hollywood Theatre in Portland.)			
Oaks Roller Rink	Portland	2/5	
(later enlarged twice by Wood, right at the rink, ending up as a 4/13. Later, organ was replaced with the 4/18 WurliTzer from the Broadway Theatre - Portland.)			
Rollerdrome	Culver City, Calif.	3/16	(16' tuba)
(now owned by Dan Haworth - Burbank, Calif.)			
Theatre	Vacaville, Calif.	2/?	
(now in church in Vacaville)			

THE STOCK WOOD THEATRE ORGAN WAS 2/8, AND ARRANGED AS FOLLOWS:

MAIN, OR LEFT SIDE CHAMBER

Flute 16', to 1-3/5'
 Open Diapason 8', 4'
 Viol d'Orchestra 8', 4', 2'
 Viole Celeste 8', 4'
 Clarinet 8', 4'
 (Clarinet in this chamber sometimes exchanged for French Horn or Orchestral Oboe.)
 (Krumet at Gellers Theatre, in this chamber.)

SOLO, OR RIGHT SIDE CHAMBER

Tuba Profunda 8', 4'
 Tibia Clausa 8', 4'
 Vox Humana 8', 4'
 Usual traps, drums, bells, etc.
 Piano (if installed)

The Wood Company usually made their own wooden pipes. All metal pipes were purchased from Anton Gottfried and Son - Erie, Pa.

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Darwin in 1946. Ed Juster, secretary of the company, passed away in the late 1940's in Portland. Ray Smith, who worked for the firm from its inception, passed on in Hollywood in 1960. He was a fine artist, painter and repairman, and some of his leatherwork is still going strong. An example of Ray's fine artistry can be seen in his paintings on the console and background scenes in the accompanying photo of the 3/6 Roller-drome installation. The writer has had the pleasure of talking with two other past employees of the company: Glenn Mendenhall of Vancouver, Washington, and Arthur Morey of Portland, Oregon, who have some fine memories of their associations with "Billy" and his pipe organs.

Although some 33 years have passed since the William Wood Pipe Organ Company installed its last organ, several remain in regular use today. The organ in the Portland Imperial Roller Rink was combined with the WurliTzer (Opus 1327, Special Model H) from the Hollywood Theatre, Portland, and is still in daily use. A "William Wood" theatre organ (1926) originally installed in a theatre in Vacaville, California, is now in regular use in a church in that city. Everett Nourse, former house organist at the San Francisco Fox Theatre, was instrumental in obtaining the Wood organ for the Vacaville church. Incidentally,



4/13 Wood, originally in Oaks Roller Rink, Portland (showing Bill Blunk).

the residents of Vacaville are quite proud of their organ today - it's the only PIPE organ in the city!

Two fine examples of Wood church organs were installed in Bethlehem Lutheran Church, near East 39th and Sandy Boulevard, Portland, and Saint Mark's Episcopal Church, at Northwest 21st and Marshall. The 4/13 "band" organ that was installed in the Oaks Roller Rink has been replaced with the 4/18 WurliTzer (Opus 1380 - of Oliver Wallace, "Bobby" Burns, and Dow LeRoy fame) from the Broadway Theatre in Portland.

Unfortunately, there is no known complete listing of all the organs built by the company. The list included with this article is only partially complete, for no "Opus" numbers were ever kept at the factory. Also, pictures of William Wood and his brother Darwin are known to exist but are unobtainable at this time. Perhaps some reader will have a useful picture and send it along for a "Post Script" story in the future. Having enjoyed many wonderful hours of listening to some of the fine "William Wood" organs mentioned in this article, the writer will greatly appreciate any additional information in regard to The William Wood Pipe Organ Company of Portland, Oregon. Contact Bill Peterson, 2708 North Portland Boulevard, Portland 17, Oregon.



2/6 Wm. Wood Theatre Organ built in 1926 for Vacaville, Calif., later moved to Vacaville church by Everett Nourse & Associates. - Daniel F. Haworth Photo.

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WurliTzer 2 manual Theatre Organ, good or repairable condition. Charles Costan, 7202 Buffalo Ave., Niagara Falls, N.Y.

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2 manual 5 rank WurliTzer, vintage 1928. Trumpet, Tibia, Salicional, Flute, Vox, Chimes, Xylophone, Glock and complete original percussions, etc. All authentically restored, brown leather, in excellent condition. Equipped with beautifully restored Cherry console. All working perfectly in home installation. \$1950. Bob Foody, 138 Mountindale Road, Yonkers, New York. Area Code 914, SP. 9-6343.

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